The influence of teacher beliefs on their assessment practices

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Educations in Assessment and Quality Assurance in Education and Training

Faculty of Education

at the

The University of Pretoria

2009

Supervisor: Professor Saloshna Vandeyar
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my only daughter

Motlalepula
DECLARATION

Student Number: 25244010

I hereby declare that THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ON THEIR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

..............................................
SIGNATURE
Mr. I.K.M. KEETSHABE

..............................................
DATE

16th February 2010
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the exceptional skill and experience of my supervisor, Professor Saloshna Vandeyar, and for the way in which she directed my studies at all times. Her unwavering demand for precision and clarity, and her limitless patience and understanding, enabled me to rise above circumstances during those times when I felt overwhelmed by the necessary demands of this study.

I am grateful to the office of the Student Attaché in Pretoria for his kindness and moral and financial support when I needed them, and for always being a willing and gracious host who provided me with a home from home.

I am grateful to my children for minimising the inevitable unhappiness that attended our frequent separations and for always filling me with happiness and joy on every occasion when we were re-united.

I am grateful to my wife for graciously accepting the necessity for frequent separations and for giving the necessary courage and confidence to complete this study.
Abstract

After decades of implementing a teacher-centred curriculum in Botswana, a learner-centred curriculum was introduced into the education system in 1998. The course of this, teachers had to make a paradigm shift that radically affected the manner in which they were expected to assess learners. I utilised a qualitative case study as the basis for this research which sets out to investigate how the release of teachers influence their assessment practices. The following three findings emerged from this study: Firstly, although the curriculum recommended a learner-centred approach, teachers have been inadequately trained and prepared for learner-centred assessment. Secondly, despite their inadequate training, it seems that teachers had developed confidence in their ability to carry out these new assessment practices. Thirdly, despite this radical policy change, many teachers are still utilizing teacher-centred assessment practices.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>B.A</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>BELS</td>
<td>Botswana English Language Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSSCS</td>
<td>Botswana Senior Secondary School Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCB</td>
<td>Botswana Curriculum Blueprint</td>
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<tr>
<td>BELSSSAS</td>
<td>Botswana English Language Senior Secondary Assessment Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>BGCSE</td>
<td>Botswana General Certificate of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Continuous Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
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<td>DCDE</td>
<td>Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELS</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>ERTD</td>
<td>Examinations, Research and Testing Division</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBA</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Assessment</td>
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<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGDE</td>
<td>Post Graduate Diploma in Education</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1. Introduction

In Botswana, the style of instructional delivery has always been teacher-centred (Fuller and Synder 1990). In order to change this entrenched style of delivery, the curriculum delivery the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced the revised Botswana Curriculum Blueprint (BCB) in 1998. The BCB requires the curriculum to utilise various learner-centred approaches. Such learner-centred approaches are also supported by the Botswana English Language Syllabus (BELS 1997), which states that the teaching methodology that should be used in English teaching should consist of various learner-centred communicative approaches. This study sets out to investigate the extent to which the assessment practices of Botswana English teachers comply with both the requirements of the BCB and the BELS, and whether or not these teachers receive the support services that they need to be educated in the correct and creative use of assessment skills. After I have described and examined the classroom practices of the sample of teachers I have selected, I will also investigate the beliefs, opinions and attitudes of the teachers who work with these techniques.

The study commences with an examination of the concepts that comprise learner-centred and communicative teaching. A review of literature reveals that a number of studies have already investigated various aspects of learner-centred classroom practices (Hart, 1994; Cole, Ryan, Kick and Mathies, 2000; Taylor, 2004; Maree and Fraser, 2004; Nitiko, 2004; Killen, 2000; Pretorius, 1999). While some of these studies investigated classroom assessment (Huinker and Karp, 1995; McMillian and Lawson, 2001; McMillian and Nash, 2000), my research sets out to determine the extent to which the assessment practices of English teachers in Botswana comply with what the education authorities in Botswana require and whether or not they utilise any of the methods and techniques recommended by the various researchers whom I have identified in the literature.
Some studies have found that support services for teachers are an indispensable element for improving teacher classroom assessment practices (Czerniak et al., 1999; Kathrine 2003; Cimbricz, 2002). These studies state that such support services include good quality in-service training for teachers, the necessary facilities for accomplishing their purposes in this regard, and active encouragement from their principals and supervisors. It is therefore necessary for this study to establish the extent of support services that English teachers receive in Botswana and the impact that these support services make on the beliefs and opinions that teachers have about the efficacy of assessment practices. A number studies such as those undertaken by King et al. (2001) have determined that the beliefs of teachers are at variance with what they actually do in their classrooms. Cohen and Fass (2001) established that teachers entertain a number of different beliefs or opinions about the efficacy of classroom assessment. In view of this, I need to determine what the beliefs or opinions of Botswana English teachers actually are in this regard.

1.1 Background of study

Curriculum planning in Botswana is centrally coordinated by the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (DCDE) by the Ministry of Education. As its title indicates, this department is responsible for developing and evaluating the curricula that are used in Botswana. The DCDE is divided into two sub-departments: the section responsible for examinations, research and testing which is known as the Examinations, Research and Testing Division (the ERTD), and the section responsible for curriculum development. While the ERTD is responsible for assessing the suitability, comprehensiveness and applicability of the syllabi that are used, the curriculum department is responsible for actually developing the curriculum and delivering and presenting it to those teachers who will use it. The development of curriculum materials is the sole responsibility of the DCDE, and it is charged with gathering useful information and inputs from a variety of qualified and experienced personnel such as field education officers, secondary education officers, teachers, curriculum specialists, and technical area specialists (Robb et al., 1990:142).
The curriculum is divided into core subjects and non-core subjects. The core subjects include Setswana, English and Mathematics. The non-core or optional subjects are grouped into the following four sub-categories: 1) Humanities and Social Sciences (which is composed of History, Geography, Social Studies and Literature in English); 2) Sciences (which is composed of Single Science, Double Science, Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Human and Social Biology); 3) Creative, Technical and Vocational (which is composed of Design and Technology, Agriculture, Art, Food and Nutrition, Computer Studies, Fashion and Fabrics, Business Studies and Home Management); 4) Enrichment (which is composed of Third Language, Physical Education, Music, Religious Education and Moral Education) (Botswana Curriculum Blueprint 1998:9).

The minimum number of subjects that a learner may select is eight (8). Why learners are expected to take all the subjects in the core group, they may select at least one other subject from one of the other groups. Those learners who select Physics, Chemistry and Biology as subjects are not allowed to a select any of the Enrichment options (Botswana Curriculum Blueprint, 1998:10).

In the words of the Botswana Curriculum Development Division (1997:i), the Senior Secondary English Language curriculum “is intended for students who have completed the ten (10) years of basic education in Botswana or have an equivalent experience”. The English language syllabus is learner-centred and focuses on the development of the basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It has been envisaged by those who compiled the curriculum that these skills will be taught in an integrated way that will result in an enthusiastic attitude towards the subject, the inculcation of values and a broadening and extension of each learner’s knowledge base. The teaching methodology is based on a communicative approach that consists of the integration of basic language skills, the use of English in real-life situations, the teaching of grammar in the context of written and spoken exercises and activities, the use of authentic teaching materials that will arouse the interest and enthusiasm of learners, as well as various other learner-centred communication activities such as role-play, project work, drama, group work, and so on.
So far as the assessment procedure itself is concerned, it has been envisaged by the compilers of the curriculum that all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing will be tested when all the necessary facilities are available. Teachers are also required to base their certification on continuous assessment as well as on the results of the final examination. In spite of this, the Botswana English Language Senior Secondary Assessment Syllabus (BELSSAS) of 1999 offers no information or guidance about how continuous assessment should be carried out, but offers instead a summative assessment scheme. According to this assessment scheme, learners are required to sit for two papers at the end of their two-year study programme. Paper I is divided into Sections A and B. Section A consists of a composition task for which learners must select one task from a list of possible descriptive, factual or narrative titles. Section B requires learners to either write a letter, a report, a speech, a notice or a memorandum on a predetermined topic. Paper 2 is also divided into two sections, Section A and Section B. Section A consists of a variety of possible short answers to questions that relate to two separate texts. The short answer questions may include multiple choice questions, true/false options, and factual and interpretive questions. Section B consists of a comprehension test and summary questions.

The current senior secondary school syllabus was introduced in 1997. Studies that have investigated the Botswana curriculum reveal that the teaching methodology for the syllabus is strongly teacher-centred. Prophet and Rowell (1990:9) undertook a study in which they investigated teacher-pupil interactions in the context of the secondary school syllabus. They the following conclusions from their research:

The uniformity of the daily routine for junior secondary students is startling, but even more so, is the uniformity of teaching strategies used by teachers. In all subject areas, four strategies are prevalent: question and answer exchange, written exercises, notes and tests.

A similar study conducted by Fuller and Snyder (1990:57) reached similar conclusions. Their findings were as follows:

Teachers (in Botswana) follow routine scripts: dryly lecturing at children, uninventive marching though textbooks, asking few
questions to individual pupils, or simply checking to see whether a small bit of knowledge remains lodged in the passive pupils’ head. Children have few opportunities to discuss information, apply it to practical problems, or to express their opinion.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers’ beliefs in Botswana influence their assessment practices.

1.3 Research Question

How do teachers’ beliefs influence their assessment practices?

1.3.1 Sub-research questions

♦ What beliefs do English teachers hold about classroom assessment?
♦ How do English teachers conduct assessment?
♦ What is the influence of English teachers’ beliefs on their assessment practices?

1.4 Research problem

The revised BCB (1998), which mandates learner-centred practices, has been implemented in Botswana for the past ten years. In spite of this, very little has actually been done by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to ensure that English teachers have been empowered to adjust their pedagogical practices so that they are able to teach in the way that the new curriculum requires. The shortcomings of the Ministry of Education in empowering teachers include all of the following deficiencies: an absence of the necessary in-service training, a lack of suitable teaching and learning materials for English teachers and their learners, and the teaching of pedagogical methods in teacher training institutions in Botswana that have long been superseded by modern English teaching practice. It is therefore abundantly clear that the English teachers of Botswana, who are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the curriculum, are hopelessly unprepared and ignorant of what they have to do to teach the curriculum in the way that it should be taught and to conduct the various forms of assessment that the curriculum requires. For the reasons mentioned above, these teachers – through no fault of their own
are in no position at all to implement the kind of assessment techniques and practices that are envisaged in the curriculum.

1.5 Rationale

There is an abundance of literature about learner-centred approaches and assessment from various scholars and researchers around the world (Hub and Freed, 2000; Coombe and Kinney, 1999; Butler, 2004; Halloun, 1998; Malan, 2000; Fakier and Waghid, 2004). In spite of this, very few inquiries into the state of how well (or otherwise) the English syllabus is being implemented, have been conducted in Botswana. As has already been noted above, Fuller and Synder, (1990) and Prophet and Rowell (1990) investigated the teaching methodologies that are used in both Botswana primary and secondary schools, and they reached the conclusion that these teaching methodologies are still completely teacher-centred. Another study that was undertaken by Ntshambiwa (2000) and Taiwo and Hulela (undated) in Botswana investigated the views and practices of teachers who were engaged in implementing continuous assessment. The study established that teachers were in favour of the inclusion of continuous assessment marks in the final results of the Physics examination.

While the above-mentioned studies investigated the teaching methodologies that were used by teachers and the perceptions of teachers about the inclusion of continuous assessment scores into the final Physics examination results, they neither investigated the beliefs and opinions of teachers nor described their classroom assessment practices. There therefore seems to be a critical lack of information about the beliefs and opinions that teachers hold and their actual assessment practices in Botswana. There is also no information or dedicated guidance from the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in Botswana about how they intend to empower, train and educate teachers so that they will be in a position to implement the requirements prescribed by the curriculum.

It was this absence of information about what teachers actually believe and think (and do) about classroom assessment practices in Botswana that motivated and inspired me to undertake this study. My intention was therefore to make a useful contribution to our
knowledge about what teachers in Botswana believe and think and do about the practice of continuous assessment in the classroom.

1.6 Definition of key concepts

1.6.1 Learner-centred education

There is agreement in the literature that learner-centred education attributes a great importance to the background knowledge of learners and to their experience and appreciation of the environment in which they live (see, for example, Kimberly & Martin 2005:2, Killen 2000, Killen 1998, Maree & Fraser 2004, O’ Neil & McMahoon, New Publishing Opportunity, Student-Centred Learning, and Arizona Board of Regents 2000). Learner-centred education equips learners with the basic skills they need to achieve a variety of predetermined learning objectives in order to provide a sound basis for growth in skills and learning and for the acquisition for a desire for life-long learning. Learner-centred education is crucially different from teacher-centred education because learner-centred education places the responsibility for learning on the learner. It does by inviting learners to construct their own meanings and to evaluate their own experiences in terms of their prior knowledge and experience of life, and what they experience on a day-to-day basis. This is a process that makes the learner the centre of his or her learning experiences in life.

On the other hand, the teacher’s responsibility in learner-centred education is to facilitate learning by unobtrusively creating conditions in the classroom that maximize learner productivity, the acquisition of knowledge, and the personal development of learners. Such learners the teacher regards as unique human beings who are capable of taking the initiative, gathering their own data, asking critical questions, raising objections, and describing their conclusions a variety of clear, meaningful and expressive written and spoken language formats (drama, dance, debate, mime, reportage, song). To do this is to honour many time-hallowed themes in African life and tradition that have somehow been supplanted by eurocentric attitudes and practices.
Learner-centred pedagogy therefore utilises a variety of methods, tools and techniques in the context of flexible arrangements of time and place. Authors such as Killen (2000), Killen (1998) and Maree and Fraser (2004) state that learner-centred methods include direct instruction, discussion, small-group work, cooperative learning, problem solving, research, role-play, drama, imitation and the ongoing compilation of personal portfolios. According to Pedersen and Williams (2004), the responsibility of the teacher in a learner-centred classroom is to facilitate and create situations in which learners will be able to tackle complex and interesting tasks with a maximum of support and a minimum of interference on the part of the teacher. In such situations, it is the teacher’s responsibility merely to provide the necessary conditions in which learners will be able to do what they have to do with a maximum of creativity, personal initiative and commitment. Such teachers are quite happy not to occupy centre-stage in the classroom as the authoritative droning talking head to pontificates with little skill to bored, passive and inwardly vacant learners. No, the responsibility of teachers is to remain in the background as friendly and accessible facilitators who are happy to empower their learners and observe how they are free to construct their own meanings and opinions.

As learners go about addressing their tasks, they realize that they need certain information, skills and resources if they are to be able to complete their tasks satisfactorily. They then identify the resources and information that they need to accomplish the tasks they had been set. In order to orientate themselves and empower themselves successfully, learners should be given opportunities to discuss what they need with their peers and their teacher (and anyone else they like), as well as opportunities to refine their finished product in accordance with the creative feedback that they receive from other learners and from their teacher.

1.6.2 Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a learner-centred approach that holds that the purpose of language teaching is to enable a learner to be able to communicate competently both in writing and in speech (Richards & Rodgers, 2006; Gonzalez & Minaya-Rowe, 2006). These authors also emphasize the importance of interaction
between learners and learners, and between the teacher and learners, as one of the most important means for achieving these language proficiency goals. They also note that the CLT is the most important technique that is used in second language and foreign language teaching. There are a number of teaching strategies that the literature recommends for success in CTL (Gonzalez et al., 2006; Richards et al., 2006; BSSSS, 1997). These strategies encourage learners to improve their communicative powers by information sharing, the negotiation of meanings, and various forms of interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2006:165). In order to achieve these ends, learners are encouraged to engage in simulations, mime and role-play, project work, creative activities such as drama, information gap and opinion gap activities, information transfer activities, problem solving, and the use of multi-media.

1.6.3 Definition of assessment

Zhang (2003:324) offers a classic definition of classroom assessment when he says that “it is a broad continuum that embraces activities from constructing paper-and-pencil tests and performance measures, to grading, interpreting standardized test scores, communicating test results and using assessment results in decision making.” Zhang (2003) is in general agreement with Hart (1994), Maree and Frazer (2004) and Nitiko (2004) when asserts that “assessment is the process of gathering information about learners in relation to what they know and what they can do”.

Classroom assessment practices before the mid-1990s utilised teacher-centred techniques (Seifert, 1991; Airasian, 1991; Hills, 1981; Borich & Kubiszyn, 1990). The assessment techniques used during that period were mainly pen-and-paper tests such as selection tests, completion and free response tests. Assessment practices after the mid-1990s became learner-centred (Hart, 1994; Cole, Ryan, Kick & Mathies, 2000; Sieborger & Macintosh, 2004; Taylor 2004; Maree & Fraser, 2004; Nitiko, 2004; Pretorius, 1999).

The definitions of assessment in the post-mid-1990s period concur with the definition provided by earlier authors when they defined assessment as the process of gathering information about what learners know and what they can do (Hart, 1994; Maree & Fraser,
2004; Nitiko, 2004). Although teachers in the post-mid-1990s period utilised learner-centred techniques, they continued to utilise some of the teacher-centred techniques that were in use in the pre-mid-1990s era. These techniques include completion tests, multiple-choice tests, matching tests, true-false tests and essay tests (Maree and Fraser, 2004; Nitiko, 2004; Sieborger & Macintosh, 2004).

The greatest difference in the two assessment periods is that, as stated above, the period before the mid-1990s assessment was exclusively teacher-centred and was not derived from the ongoing authentic performance of learners. By contrast, the post-mid-1990s period characterised assessment as a continuous holistic exercise that included the cognitive, psychomotor and psychological aspects of the performance of learners in a variety of contexts (Tayler, 2003; Nitiko, 2004; Maree & Fraser, 2004; Sieborger & Macintosh, 2004). These post-mid-1990s researchers introduced new kinds of performance assessment that separated their practices from what had gone before. By “performance assessment” these researchers referred to the type of assessment by means of which learners are observed as they are exposed to various hands-on tasks that are judged in terms of predetermined guidelines and criteria that had been devised for the purpose of assessment (Nitiko, 2004; Maree & Fraser, 2004). The strategies that are used in performance assessment include (among others) interviews, questionnaires, assignments, case studies, demonstrations, projects, role-plays and portfolios.

Performance assessment observes learners while they are engaged in learning situations for which they have been given assessment criteria in the form of rubrics, check-lists, benchmarks and rating scales. These assessment criteria help them to develop and assess their own work from the beginning of the engagement of the completion of the task (Hart, 1994). In other words, they know in advance what actions they need to perform in what skills, knowledge and artefacts may need to produce in order to achieve the outcomes on which the performance assessment is based. These instruments create a database of a learner-performance information from which feedback can be given to learners and which can be used for the information of whatever stakeholders are involved in planning for the welfare of learners and creating the conditions in which they will be able to realise
the outcomes that are appropriate to their grade (Maree & Fraser, 2004:145). In my opinion, these assessment paradigms function in a complementary way to the other means of assessment from the pre-mid-1990s paradigm which had been described in great detail above. Both these assessment paradigms are relevant to my study because they both include pen-and-paper tests and performance assessment as an integral part of learner-centred assessment. I have therefore taken both these assessment paradigms into account in my description of the actual assessment practices that are prevalent in classrooms in Botswana, and have systematically examined the assessment approaches and techniques of teachers who operate in terms of one or another of these two paradigms.

1.6.4 Definition of “beliefs”

According to Rueda and Garcia (1994), beliefs may be defined as “a reflective, socially defined interpretation of experience that serves as a basis for subsequent action […], [and] a combination of […] intentions, interpretations, and behaviour that interact continually”. They state that any particular belief may be regarded as situation-specific and action-oriented. They clarify their definition by stating that beliefs are what teachers believe about the work in which they are involved. This amounts, in other words, to the personal philosophy of teaching and education of individual teachers – whether or not they have ever made such a philosophy explicit to themselves or not. In this sense, the beliefs of teachers could be said to comprise the teacher’s convictions and opinions about the following elements of the pedagogical process:

- the purposes that teachers believe themselves to be fulfilling when they engage in actual acts of teaching
- their knowledge-based opinions about the nature of the school-going children and how children learn, develop and mature physically, psychologically and spiritually
- the methods that they (the teachers) habitually used to motivate and inspire learners to achieve the educational outcomes that are appropriate to their grade and level of emotional and intellectual maturity
• the way in which the curriculum has been crafted and developed to meet the educational needs of children
• the kind of relationship that will maximise the educative process in interactions between a teacher and learners in learning situations
• the provisions that should be made for learners who are underachieving or who suffer from serious disabilities and/or psychological problems and/or family problems and deficiencies
• the actual physical structure of classrooms and whether or not it is organised in a way that maximises the pedagogical process that that guides the teacher’s actions and self-presentation in the classroom

1.7 Conclusion

It is clear that the revised BCB (1998) is intended to be a learner-centred curriculum. The approach to teaching and is recommended in this document envisages that learners will be the chief agents of their own learning and that teachers will be transformed into facilitators of the learning process. This has important implications for various aspects of learning such as (1) the ability to provide and create an environment that is conducive to learner-driven education, and (2) offering a variety of learning resources to learners that will enable them to fulfil the vision of the revised BCB, and (3) giving learners adequate time in which to experience in an intensely personal way all aspects of the learning processes in which they are engaged. Killen (2000) is on the opinion that learner-centred teaching should include methods such as group discussion, research, cooperative learning and contact with real-life situations. The BELS (1997) is predicated on a communicative approach which also recommends learner-centred approaches such as role play, project work, drama and group activities. It is therefore my intention in this study to investigate the classroom assessment practices of teachers in Botswana and the beliefs and opinions that they hold about such classroom assessment practices.
CHAPTER 2

THE ASSESSMENT PARADIGM

Introduction

This chapter begins a description of the methodology that English teachers are most likely to use when they are practising learner-centred instruction. It then incorporates a review of the beliefs and opinions of teachers about classroom assessment, and it concludes by examining various classroom assessment studies that have been conducted in Botswana. The purpose of the literature review is to summarise and describe the results of research that has been conducted both locally and in countries overseas, and to establish the relevance of these studies to my research. It is necessary to review all the most recent findings in the literature in order to establish what has already been established and recommended with regard to the research questions that guide my study.

2.1 How English teachers conduct assessment in their classrooms

A study by Adams and Young (1998) investigated what a select sample of mathematics teachers thought about various assessment processes and described the actual assessment techniques, strategies and tasks that they personally implemented in their own teaching practices. This study came to the conclusion that the majority of assessment techniques used by contemporary teachers include various forms of homework, teacher-constructed tests and other forms of standardized tests. The study also established that the qualifications of teachers influenced the kind of assessment that they apply to learners. This study by Adams and Young (1998) is similar in certain respects to my own in the sense that it investigated the assessment practices of teachers and the conceptions, opinions and beliefs that they entertain with regard to classroom practices by Adams and Young’s research has identified the main assessment practices utilized by teachers and factors that exert an influence on what they believe about various assessment practices. Later in this study, I shall compare the findings of the research undertaken by Adams and Young (1998) and observe the extent to which their conclusions are similar to mine.
Another study conducted by Huinker and Karp (1995) in the field of elementary mathematics teaching came to the conclusion that the most commonly used assessment techniques that were used in that context were individual learner presentations in the classroom, essay tests and the keeping of journals. Huinker and Karp also established that the second most common group of techniques used by the teachers and their sample included portfolios, group assessment, quizzes, peer assessment, short-answer tests, and forms of self-assessment. The least common methods of assessment, according to their conclusions, were the use of emails, anecdotal records, letter writing, and the interpretation of video and interviews. These practices were obviously influenced to some extent by the nature of the subject that the teachers in the sample were teaching.

Findings from Huinker and Karp (1995) also indicated that the most common forms of assessment that the teachers in the sample used to judge assignments and projects were based on the possibilities inherent in selected newspaper articles, the development of learning centre games and activities, a compilation of lesson plans for lessons that would be taught in elementary school classrooms, and reports of interviews with children. Huinker and Karp also noted that software evaluation, lessons taught to peer-groups, the attendance at conferences, the video-taping of lessons and the production of research papers were some of the assessment tasks that were least utilised.

The conclusions from the research undertaken by Huinker and Karp (1995) has also proved to be immensely valuable for my study because it provided me with a clear description of the learner-centred assessment methods that are used both in the United States of America and Canada. The consideration of the frequency of use of the various kinds of assessment techniques that are mentioned in the research by Huinker and Karp (1995) and Adams and Young (1998) make it abundantly clear that there has been a definite paradigm shift away from the more traditional forms of assessment such as pen-and-paper tests and examinations to an acceptance of performance assessment and all that this implies in practice in the classroom. This seems to be somewhat at variance with the findings of Cole et al. (2000), Freeman and Lewis (1998), Maree and Fraser (2004) and
Nitiko (2004) who all regard the various forms of pen-and-paper tests as legitimate elements of learner-centred assessment practices. But any contradiction between the findings of these researchers and those of Huinker and Karp (1995) and Adams and Young (1998) are probably more circumstantial and apparent than essential and categorical because learner-centred assessment may incorporate any number of methods and techniques provided that the overall pedagogical aim is to establish the learner rather than the teacher at the centre of the learning process. My research, in contrast to the research described above, utilises a qualitative case study rather than a survey because it was designed to conduct an in-depth investigation into how the beliefs and opinions of teachers influence their day-to-day assessment practices. The research undertaken by Huinker and Karp (1995) and Adams and Young (1998) is also substantially different from mine because my study focuses on the assessment practices of English teachers in Botswana whereas their research focused on the assessment practices of preschool mathematics trainee educators in the United States and Canada. While their research provided me with valuable suggestions and findings wherewith to assess my own, it is understandable that the kinds of assessment that would be most useful to mathematics teachers and English teachers would be substantially different.

A study undertaken by McMorris and Booth (1993) investigated the types of tests that teachers construct. They came to the conclusion that teachers did not include material from previous tests in unit tests, but that they did include material from previous tests in mid-term and final tests. They also found that while multiple-choice tests were still the most common form of assessment, teachers also resorted to a variety of other forms of assessment such as matching exercises, short-answer tests, completion exercises, essays, computation problems, and alternate-options assessment exercises. (Computation problems were mainly used by mathematics and science teachers because of the emphasis on numeracy and computational ability in these subjects.) The study by McMorris and Booth also brought to light the fact that teachers used the term in extent to which learners had mastered the subject content, and they used the results from these tests as indicators of the kind of material in the curriculum that needed to be emphasised and also of the identity of those learners who needed remedial teaching and special assistance. The study
by McMorris and Booth also helps us to appreciate that although the paradigm shift from traditional assessment occurred round about 1994/5, various forms of alternative assessment were already being utilised by some teachers before the transitional period.

A similar study conducted by Frisbie, Miranda and Baker (1993) set out to examine and analyse the quality of the chapter-end tests that accompany the textbook series that were being used in elementary and middle school grades at that time. Frisbie, Miranda and Baker came to the conclusion that these chapter-end tests were thoroughly inadequate because they only related to about half of all the unit objectives described in these textbooks and because the forms of the exercises were dominated by items are concentrated on measuring the knowledge level of the learners rather than on how completely they had understood the content of the implications of the content for learners at their level of maturity. Most of the test items that these investigators examined were in the format of multiple-choice questions and matching-item exercises. Most of the tests that were examined very rarely required any kind of writing on the part of learners, and when writing was required as a part of an exercise, only a response of one to two sentences was required. When these learners were required to write essays, such essays were not designed to assess their creative problem solving abilities or their ability to synthesise (both of which are major advantages of the use of essay writing as a form of assessment). The study by Frisbie, Miranda and Baker (1993) was also useful to this research because it suggested lines of investigation into the utility and comprehensiveness of the textbooks that they used by teachers and learning in classroom assessment. This study was also valuable to me because I could compare their findings with my own.

The study undertaken by Mason and Dobbs (2008) as set out to investigate classroom assessment strategies and to describe how and when teachers the assessment strategies that were identified. This study came to the conclusion that teachers and other specialists such as literacy coaches and reading specialists constantly use results from various methods of assessment to inform their own instructional practices. Such professionals also used assessment (1) to prepare their learners for those crucial examinations that are a
feature of many education systems throughout the world, and (2) to monitor the progress of learners and the effectiveness of the methods that the teachers used to accommodate the diversity of the learners. This study was valuable for my own research because it identified the reasons why teachers choose particular forms of assessment practice rather than others and because I could compare the preferences of the teachers in their sample to those that were made by the Botswana teachers in my sample.

A study by Zhang, Judith and Stock (2003) investigated the frequency with which certain teachers’ assessment practices occurred across teaching levels and content areas, and it also set out to investigate how the perceptions of teachers with regard to their own assessment skills could be described as a function of their teaching experiences and expertise in measurement. This study reported that as the grade level of learners increased, the teachers in the sample began to rely more and more on objective tests for the purposes of classroom assessment and to demonstrate an increased concern for the quality of various kinds of assessment. With regard to content, the extent of the involvement of teachers in assessment activities reflected the nature and importance of the subjects that they were teaching. Irrespective of their teaching experience, those teachers who had mastered the skills that are necessary for manipulating assessment instruments successfully, reported a higher level of self-perceived skill in the management of assessment instruments to measure performance in standardized testing, test revision and instructional improvement, as in the communication and exclamation of assessment results to those without the necessary training in techniques of measurement and quantification. The study was useful because it enabled me to compare my findings with those of the researchers discussed above as well as to compare how the extent to which the teachers in their sample used objective tests and to note the influence of assessment training on the effectiveness that teachers are able to bring to the use of assessment techniques.

A study is similar to that of Zhang et al. (2003) was undertaken by McMillan and Workman (1999) who investigated the nature of the assessment and grading practices of a sample of teachers in both elementary and secondary schools. This study determined
that academic factors are regarded as the most important for determining grades among elementary school teachers but that factors such as improvement, effort, ability and class participation are also used to make a significant contribution to the overall result of the assessment. This study also noted how the teachers in the sample used a great variety of assessment and grading practices. But these teachers, the most important factors for determining grades were performance, effort, ability and degree of participation. They also observed how high school teachers more frequently resorted to methods of objective assessment, various forms of performance-based assessment, projects, essays and standardised methods for analysing the reasoning and higher-order thinking skills that learners used in their performances and products. The teachers in the study emphasised conventional indicators of academic performance more frequently and also made use of assessment measures that they themselves had designed. While mathematics teachers used fewer performance-based assessment techniques than other teachers, the English teachers in the sample attached more importance to reasoning and a variety of teacher-constructed tests and exercises.

The study undertaken by McMillian and Workman (1999) determined that an almost insignificant correlation exists between the use of particular assessment and grading practices and the actual grades that were awarded. They also pointed out that some elementary school teachers tended to use various modes of reasoning assessment more frequently than objective assessment methods. Another aspect of their findings was that while middle school teachers used performance assessment more frequently, high school teachers tended to use knowledge-recall exercises more often. McMillian and Workman (1999) noted that the factors that most frequently influenced the assessment and grading practices of teachers were their beliefs and their personal values and the external pressures and constraints that limited their choices and freedom of action. Such external pressures included the demands and expectations of parents and the pressure exerted on both teachers and learners by the importance accorded to high-stakes final examinations. The findings of this study were useful for my own study because it also enabled me to compare the extent to which English teachers in Botswana used similar objective higher-order thinking and reasoning assessments.
A study by Herrington, Herrington and Glaser (2002) investigated in assessment practices of newly qualified teachers. They determined that such teachers were strongly affected by a complex combination of influences and environmental factors that made a decisive impact upon their use of assessment strategies in the first years of their teaching careers. This study produced evidence that various kinds of testing were the most common form of assessment in the sample group, and that the format of such tests included multiple-choice exercises, conceptual tests, the use of graphic calculators, group projects, the production of posters, the delivery of oral reports, observations, portfolios, individual interviews and self-assessment. Although the teachers were accustomed to using journals, the learners consider them to be a most demanding form of assessment. This study was similar in many ways to my study because it investigated classroom-based assessment practices. This research confirmed that the assessments that teachers were likely to use in their classrooms were influenced by a large number of different factors (Zhang, Judith & Stock, 2003; McMillian & Workman, 1999). This particular study was also of great interest to me because it described the differences in the kind of classroom assessment practices that teachers from different countries were most likely to use.

All three of these studies, namely those by Huinker and Karp (1995), McMillian and Lawson (2001) and McMillian et al. (2000), reveal that teachers are using learner-centred assessments in their classrooms in many other parts of the world. They have also been valuable because they describe some of the more unusual techniques that can be effectively utilised to collect classroom assessment information. But all of these studies are different from my own with regard to their purpose and context because while they were primarily concerned with investigating classroom practice in general, my study was more specifically concerned with the description of the classroom practices of English teachers in Botswana as well as an investigation into their personal beliefs and opinions about various assessment practices.

The subject of Combrinck’s (2003) research was outcomes-based education (OBE) and outcomes-based assessment (OBA) practices in the context of the multicultural educational practices that proliferate in countries such as New Zealand, the United States
of America and Australia. Combrinck's study focused on OBA strategies such as performance-based assessment, portfolios, observation, self-assessment, peer-assessment, record keeping and reporting. Combrick (2003) reached the following conclusions:

- Parents and teachers generally accept the new assessment approach.
- The majority of teachers state that the adoption of performance assessment approaches increases their workload.
- A teachers agree that the number of learners or which they are responsible and the availability and quality of facilities and resources significantly influence the feasibility and long-term success of the assessment system.
- The kind of in-service training that would make teachers proficient in assessment is simply not available.
- Schools do not have any clear assessment policies because they are not required to do so.
- Although performance-based assessment can be successful, it is subject to various limitations such as poor reliability and validity.
- The use of portfolios, peer-assessment and self-assessment are generally unpopular methods of assessment among teachers.

All of these findings were helpful to the purposes of my study because they enabled me to frame the interview questions that I needed to probe the validity and utility of the assessment practices of English teachers in Botswana.

McMillian and Nash (2000) conducted research into teacher classroom assessment and the decision-making processes that underlie grading practices. The purpose of their study was to explore the reasons that teachers give for their assessment and grading practices and the factors that influence these practices. The following six factors that influence the assessment and grading practices of teachers were identified by McMillian and Nash (2000):

1. teachers' beliefs and values
2. classroom realities
3. external factors
4. teacher decision-making rationale
5. assessment practices
6. grading practices

This study came to the conclusion that a high level of conflict and dissonance existed between the beliefs and values of teachers and the realities of their classroom environments and other external factors over which they had no control. What was apparent was that teachers went ahead and selected assessment methods on the basis of their beliefs and values, the realities of the classroom environment and the external influences and pressures to which they were exposed. The teachers in this study believed that informal, observational and constructed-response assessment methods were best suited for assessing degrees of learner understanding even though external pressures influenced them to utilise more objective tests more frequently.

McMillian and Nash (2000) found that most teachers used a variety of basic assessment methods such as homework assignments, quizzes, tests, performance assessments, participation evaluation, formative assessment, informal assessments and pre-assessments. They also noted that while teachers resorted to publisher-made tests, most teachers tended to rely on teacher-made tests. It was demonstrated that their assessments were mostly based on extent to which learners had achieved predetermined learning objectives, their own decisions and their own experiences in the teaching profession. Like the studies of Combrick (2003), Huinker and Karp (1995), McMillian and Workman (1999), and Herrington, Herrington and Glazer (2002), this study investigated the nature and extent of the classroom assessment practices of teachers but not the influence of the beliefs of teachers on their assessment practices.

A study by Mertler (1999) investigated the current assessment practices of teachers in the state of Ohio. This study identified the fact that primary school teachers tended to utilise assessment techniques more frequently than secondary school teachers. This study also came to the conclusion that urban school teachers use more forms of alternate assessment than do teachers in rural areas. It also produced evidence that teachers with fewer years of experience tend to use alternate assessment methods more frequently than teachers who
have 30 or more years of experience. Another of the findings of the study by Mertler (1999) was that primary school teachers use informal observations, questions and the compilation of portfolios more frequently than do secondary school teachers. Mertler's study was useful for my own study because it has identified the assessment methods that are utilised by teachers whereas my study will investigate whether there are any similarities between this study and my own with regard to the use of assessment practices by teachers.

A study undertaken by Maccin and Gagnon (2006) investigated the specific instructional practices that special and general education teachers use for learners with disabilities during instruction. The study found that special education teachers used more assessment accommodation than did general educators. The study also found that special education teachers were more likely than general education teachers to reduce the number of problems in tests, to make use of cue cards for guiding learners to each successive step in a problem, and problems read to learners for mathematics. Such teachers were also more likely to use concrete objects to facilitate problem-solving. But similarities between the two types of teachers included a willingness to extend the time available for tests, permission to use calculators in all circumstances, and the careful reading of problems to learners. This study was, as far as I could ascertain, unique in the literature because it identified a number of assessment practices that are never usually utilised by regular teachers. I was therefore interested to know whether some of these same assessment methods (or similar ones) would be used by the teachers in my study and whether the Botswana English teachers also used cues and accommodations.

Zhang (2003) investigated the assessment practices of teachers across teaching levels and content areas. The results of his investigation revealed that teachers were not well prepared for classroom assessment because of their inadequate training. Zhang also identified most of the problems that relate to performance assessment, the interpretation of standardized test results and grading procedures. Zhang noted that when teachers used performance assessment, many of them failed to explain the rubrics that they were going to use before the task. He also observed that they did not carry out assessment tasks
during the course of instruction. Teachers in the study used standardized tests, they instructed their learners in the use of test items, increased the amount of time available for the test, supplied the learners with various hints and clues, and also changed the learners’ answers. These teachers also considered factors such as effort, attitude and motivation in the calculation of their learners’ grades. Zhang’s study also that teachers from different levels differ in the kind of assessment methods that they use. While secondary teachers mostly use paper-and-pencil tests, primary school teachers frequently use performance assessment as alternative. The importance of Zhang’s study to my research was that it established some of the challenges that teachers face when they have to utilise assessment practices. Zhang’s research made me eager to find out whether the teachers in my study had to face challenges that were similar to those that confronted the teachers in Zhang’s (2003) study.

A study by Pederson and Williams (2004) investigated whether some assessment methods were better than others for supporting learners during learner-centred activities and the effect (if any) that such assessment methods exerted on learner motivation. They reached the conclusion that they were no assessment methods that were superior to any others, and that grading on learner-centred activities had very little effect. The findings of this study were of particular interest for my study because I wanted to compare its findings with my own in order to find out whether I would reach the same conclusions. I also want to determine whether the teachers in my sample believe that there were particular assessment methods that were superior to other assessment methods and what their reasons would be for making such judgments.

A rather similar study by Shavelson, Baxter and Pine (1991) investigated the differences between traditional assessment modes (such as multiple-choice tests) and alternative assessment methods, and found that alternative assessment methods were able to assess features and elements that could not be assessed by traditional means of assessment. The study also came to the conclusion that there were a considerable number of limitations that were inherent in performance assessment and that these would have to be carefully explored, described and explained before alternative forms of assessment could be
regarded as sustainable and reliable. When one juxtaposes the findings of this study with the revised BCB (1998) and the ELS (1997), it becomes apparent that this study is relevant to my research because it emphasises the advantages of performance assessment over traditional modes assessment, and that is one of the main points that the revised BCB (1998) and ELS (1997) make.

A study by Vandeyar (2005:477) investigated teachers’ assessment practices in South African primary schools during the process of desegregation. Vandeyar came to the following conclusion: “First, teachers mediate the external pressures upon them through the filter of their own professional identities. Second, the process of assessment is not merely technical, but it is not merely social and personal either; it is both.” This study was also useful for my study because it established that when teachers are confronted with curriculum challenges, they use particular mechanisms to cope with the stress that is generated. I therefore became interested to see what challenges the teachers in my research would encounter, and what mechanisms they would use to cope with those challenges.

2.2 What teachers believe about classroom assessment

2.2.1 Introduction

A review of the literature suggested that teachers believe about classroom assessment can be classified into three distinct groups. What distinguishes each of these groups may be described by the following three statements:

(1) Teachers’ beliefs are influenced by multiple factors.
(2) There are no observable trends in the teachers’ beliefs.
(3) Teachers’ practices are at variance with their stated philosophical beliefs.

2.2.2 Teacher beliefs are influenced by multiple factors

A study undertaken by Culbertson and Yan (2003) investigated the relationship between the attitudes of primary grade literacy teachers towards instructional practices in alternative assessment and the factors that influence the attitudes of primary grade teachers towards alternative assessment. Culbertson and Yan’s research established that
teachers were in favour of alternative modes of assessment. They also demonstrated that the factors that most strongly influence elementary teachers' attitudes and practices are the number of years of experience that a teacher has the profession together with frequent opportunities for professional development. The findings of this study can be summed up by saying that the attitudes of teachers are influenced by a multiplicity of factors such as accumulated years of experience in the profession, the support that a teacher receives for further training, and the number and quality of the facilities at his or her disposal. The findings of this study confirm the conclusions reached by Czerniak et al. (1999), Katherine (2003) and Cimbricz (2002), who all stated that teachers' beliefs are influenced by a multiplicity of factors.

Czerniak et al. (19990, Katherine (2003), Cimbricz and College (2002) and Czerniak et al. (1999) investigated the effect that the beliefs of K-12 teachers had on how frequently they used educational technology in a classrooms. These studies were all based on the assumption that the teachers who were investigated shared the belief that educational technology has the power to enhance learning effectiveness of learners and that the integration of technology into teaching is therefore both desirable and necessary. Their results also revealed that teachers perceived that there was insufficient support to enable them to implement the level of educational technological assistance that they believed was necessary to provide optimal conditions for their learners. It is therefore worth noting that various forms of support such as in-service training, improved facilities and direct encouragement from their supervisors and superiors, can strengthen the belief that teachers have in the efficacy of their work. This conclusion is similar in substance to the findings reached by Katherine (2003).

Katherine (2003) of undertook a study similar to that of Czerniak et al. (1999) which investigated the impact that the distribution of laptops to teachers and learners in Maine (United States) had on the beliefs and instructional practices of those teachers who were involved in the programme. The findings of the study revealed that while teachers use laptops in many different ways, they use them mostly for conducting research during the preparation of their lessons, for developing instructional materials and for communicating
with their colleagues. The study also established that teachers who were encouraged and supported by administrators and other personnel presented with many more significant changes in their own beliefs and practices than teachers who did not obtain similar levels of support. The study therefore demonstrated that there was a strong correlation between the beliefs of teachers, the uses use to which they put their technology, and many other factors such as support from administrators, facilities and in-service training. I therefore became interested in determining whether the findings from my own research would either confirm or refute their conclusions.

A study by Yueiming et al. (2006) investigated the link between the perceptions of teachers and the factors that influence their use of classroom-based reading assessment methods. This study came to the conclusion that ESL teachers placed a very high value on classroom-based reading exercises. The teachers in this study regarded standardised state-mandated testing in a negative light and thought that it had very little value for ESL learners. In their opinion, student characteristics, state-wide mandated tests and district policies were the three major forces had influenced and controlled the kind of reading assessment methods that the teachers in the sample used.

McMillian and Nash (2000) investigated teacher classroom assessment and decision-making in grading practices and came to the conclusion that the most important factor in influenced teachers with regard to classroom assessment and grading practices their personal philosophy of teaching and learning. The study also found that the beliefs of teachers offered them a rationale for using assessment and grading practices that were consistent with what they believed in the most important factors in the teaching and learning process. This study also established that teachers’ beliefs about assessment motivated them to re-construct external assessments in order to align such assessments with their personal belief in helping learners to succeed. This study was important for my study because it explained how beliefs influenced teachers’ assessment practices. I was therefore interested to compare my own findings with the findings of the study so that I would be able to understand the extent to which the beliefs of teachers influenced their assessment practices.
Cimbricz and College (2002) investigated the relationship between state-mandated testing and teachers’ beliefs and practices in Arizona in the United States. The findings from this study suggested that some of the teachers perceived state tests to have a mostly negative impact on their beliefs and practices whereas other teachers were of the opinion that the state-mandated tests were of a variable quality. Almost all the studies that have investigated this problem have suggested that while state-mandated testing did in fact influence what teachers said and did, they were also other factors (such as the extent of the teachers knowledge of the subject matter involved, their personal approach to and philosophy of teaching, their views about learning, and their individual experience and status in the hierarchy of the school organisation) that also exerted a strong effect. These findings were very similar to those of Katherine (2003) and they attest to the fact that teachers’ beliefs are a result of a combination of many different factors.

A similar study by Lim and Chai (2007) investigated teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and their planning and conduct of computer-mediated classroom lessons and found that teachers in the sample displayed varying degrees of inconsistency between their stated beliefs and their teacher-centric teaching practices because of a number of contextual constraints. The main barrier that it is identified as preventing them from engaging in a more constructivist approach was the tight schedules that they had to observe in order to prepare their learners for forthcoming examinations. They concluded their study by stating:

Although it is necessary for teachers to hold pedagogical beliefs that are compatible with the constructivist notion of teaching and learning, this is an insufficient condition to shift traditional teaching practice. Changes in assessment systems and substantial development are conditions that have to be addressed (Lim & Chai, 2007).

2.2.3 There are no observable trends in the beliefs of teachers

A study by Cohen and Fass (2001) has shown that there are no observable trends or consistent patterns in the beliefs of teachers about their classroom practices. This study investigated teacher and learner beliefs and juxtaposed them to the realities of learning English as a first language in classes at the University of Colombia in the United States of
America. The findings of Cohen and Fass (2001) were that there was a general congruence between learner and teacher beliefs about the appropriate amount of learner and teacher talk that should take place in a classroom, and that teachers on the whole tended to believe in the importance of more robust learner participation. The study found that teachers entertain different opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of their textbooks and that they utilised a variety of methods for adapting the officially sanctioned textbooks for their own purposes. This study also found that teachers reported teachers tended to focus on technical points such as pronunciation and grammatical accuracy when they assessed the oral ability of learners rather than on the more communicative and interactional aspects of oral works such as fluency, discourse and the structural comprehensiveness of the presentation. The study also identified the fact that there was no single prevalent method that teachers used for giving feedback and that most teachers preferred to use the assessment tasks that were embedded in the textbook.

While Cohen and Fass (2001) came to the conclusion that "teachers believed in more robust learner participation", they were able to make no other consistent findings about observable trends in patterns of teachers' beliefs and the realities of teaching and learning English as a first language at university level.

2.2.4 Teacher’s beliefs are at variance with their practices
Judson (2006) and King et al. (2001) undertook studies that show that the stated philosophical beliefs of teachers are frequently at variance with their classroom practices. Judson (2006) investigated how well teachers integrated available technology and their beliefs about learning. The study came to the conclusion that the practice of teachers did not significantly correlate with their beliefs about the usefulness and desirability of technology. The findings from this study are similar to those of Ramanathan (2001) who investigated elementary teachers' beliefs and assessment practices in an English Medium primary school in Grades 1-5. The conclusions of the study were revealed in the following statements: (a) Teachers believe that learners should learn to communicate freely in English. (b) All teachers who teach at a particular grade level should use the same textbooks, plan the curriculum together and follow a similar schedule. (c) All
assessments focus on writing skills and exclude listening, reading and oral skills. (d) Teachers mostly use the information that they have obtained from their assessments to prepare their end-of-term or summative assessments. The overall conclusion of the study was that teachers' beliefs are at variance with their assessment practices. An example of this is that while teachers stated that they would like their learners to be proficient speakers of English, they failed to assess and report on the state of their oral proficiency.

King et al. (2001) undertook a study which was similar in terms of focus and findings to that of Judson (2006). This study investigated whether the self-reported behaviours of science teachers were consistent with their observable science teaching practices in an urban elementary school as well as the extent to which the observed classroom practice were able to promote high-order thinking skills, modelling, the elaboration of scientific concepts and learner participation. The results of this study show that there was some correlation between what teachers said and what they actually did in their classrooms.

A study by Lim and Chai (2007) investigated the pedagogical beliefs of teachers and their planning and conduct of computer-mediated classroom lessons in the selection of Singapore primary schools. This study found that although teachers believed in a constructivist approach to teaching, they used teacher-centred techniques in their teaching because there was a strong pressure on them to adhere to stipulated schedules so that their learners would be adequately prepared for their forthcoming examinations.

All of these studies were relevant to my own research because they all reflected some of the data collection techniques that I considered for use in my own study and also because they provided me with an enormous amount of rich and multi-layered data that I took into consideration when I drew up the questions for the interview schedule that I intended to use with the participants in my study. But none of these studies are radically similar to my own research because all of them were conducted outside Botswana and none of them actually investigated the connection between teachers' classroom assessment practices, their beliefs and their attitudes to ESL in the way that my own study did.
A study by Rueda and Garcia (1994) investigated teachers' beliefs about reading assessment with Latino Language Minority Students and found that there was a great deal of variance in teachers' assessment beliefs and their practices, both within and among the three groups of respondents. This study also identified a discrepancy between the beliefs of the teachers in the study and the classroom practices that underlie many of the new educational initiatives in assessment and instruction. It also emphasised the fact that special education teachers are noticeably different in their beliefs from teachers in the other two groups and that they are even further removed in some respects from these more recent educational developments.

The study by Rueda and Garcia (1994) also established that the dissonance between teacher beliefs and practices seemed to occur at two different levels—within the group and within individuals themselves. There was certain heterogeneity in the group with regard to beliefs about assessment, reading and literacy. They also identified a few cases in which the beliefs and practices of individual teachers were entirely consistent. They pointed out that there was also a marked tendency among special education teachers to embrace beliefs and practices that were highly divergent from the beliefs and practices implied by recent educational reforms and initiatives.

### 2.3 Local Perspectives

While the amount of literature about classroom assessment in Botswana is almost nonexistent, there are certain studies that have investigated classroom teaching and assessment practices. These studies are those by Ntshambwiwa (2000), Prophet and Rowell (1990), Fuller and Synder, Jr. (1990), and Taiwo and Hulela (date unknown).

Ntshambwiwa (2000) investigated the implementation of continuous assessment (CA) in Botswana primary schools. The findings of the study revealed that while teachers have a sound understanding of the purpose and use of CA, teacher assessment is the most common type of assessment that is used in CA. We also found that teachers utilise both formal and informal daily scores for CA, that schools design their own protocols for CA, and that the CA assessment techniques in the sample at the investigated included
multiple-choice questions, completion exercises, matching problems, essays. He also reported that the recording of CA is poor and that teachers do not use the information that is available about CA to an optimal extent.

Ntshambialwa’s (2000) study investigated classroom assessment in Botswana and came to conclusions that were very similar to my own in the context of investigating classroom assessment practices in Botswana. But these two studies differ because Ntshambialwa (2000) confined himself to an investigation of continuous assessment while my study embraced a broader examination of classroom assessment practices in English and the simultaneous investigation of teacher beliefs.

A study by Prophet and Rowell (1990:9) investigated what was actually happening in the Science Curriculum-in-Action programme by conducting numerous classroom observations. After observing a typical classroom, they made the following statement:

From this example two main features of the lesson can be discerned. First is the large amount of teacher talk, which involves mainly the teacher lecturing at the pupils, interspersed with questions, generally asked to the whole class, with predetermined expectations of answers. A minimal amount of time is spent with the teacher talking to pupils on an individual basis and throughout all of this the pupils play a passive role. Second is the amount of time spent by the pupils silently working on teacher assigned tasks. These tasks are generally "whole class" assignments [in which] pupils are expected to work independently at the same rate. In the above example the assignments were “labelling diagrams” or “filling in worksheets answers.

Prophet and Rowell (1990:9) added to this the following observations:

Moving from this individual lesson to the wider school day, one is immediately and forcefully struck by the sameness of the lessons. Allowing for individual teacher differences in style, it seems that irrespective of the subject under consideration or whether the pupils are Form One or Two, all lessons are characterised by this same routine: teacher lecturing to pupils or asking class-directed questions and pupils working silently at teacher tasks. In both of these routines the pupils play an almost passive role in terms of verbal involvement.
The study by Fuller and Synder (1990) entitled “Colourful Variations in Teaching Practices?” confirmed the findings of Prophet and Rowell (1990:8). These findings are indicated in the following words:

Teachers tend to stand before the class talking to pupils, encouraging few questions, little manipulation of ideas, and even infrequent application of textbooks and basic instructional materials. The teacher in most classrooms was vocal and dominant. Yet pupils are not always silent. A good deal of time at both primary and secondary levels was spent reciting material chorally and with individual pupils responding to questions more frequently than the common wisdom assumes. What is striking, however, is that the vast majority of teacher questions are closed-ended, demanding simple recall. The complexity of information expressed between teacher and pupil is very limited.

The studies of Prophet and Rowell (1990) and Fuller and Synder (1990) mainly investigated how Botswana teachers conduct classroom practices. These two studies focused more on the delivery of the curriculum, and they demonstrated that the prevalent teaching method in Botswana classrooms is strongly teacher-centred. Both of these studies are relevant to my study because they reveal the teaching and learning methods that are most widely used in Botswana schools. These studies also revealed that forms of assessment are similar to teaching methods in the sense that they are both still completely teacher-centred because teachers mostly assess learners by making use of question-and-answer techniques and written tests.

A study by Taiwo and Hulela (undated) investigated the perceptions of Botswana Physics teachers about the incorporation of continuous assessment marks into the final Physics summative scores. The study found that all Physics teachers preferred the inclusion of CA in the summative scores. The Taiwo and Hulela (undated) study is similar to my own study because it investigated the perceptions that teachers entertained about continuous assessment. But these two studies are different because Taiwo and Hulela (undated) focused on Physics teachers and continuous assessment while my study focused on English teachers and on classroom assessment in general rather than only on continuous assessment.
No studies that had been undertaken in Botswana have so far investigated the impact of teachers’ beliefs on their assessment practices, and those that have been conducted have investigated only teachers’ classroom practices and continuous assessment in both primary and secondary schools. It is clear that there is a great dearth of information about classroom assessment in Botswana and in particular about how teacher’s beliefs influence their classroom assessment. It was my intention in carrying out the study to provide the information that would be able to fill this gap.

2.4 Conclusion

A review of the literature about assessment practices indicated that the assessment techniques that are employed by teachers include completion exercises, multiple-choice questions, matching problems, true-false options, essays, personal and group presentations, interviews, questionnaires, assignments, case studies, demonstrations, projects, role-play, portfolios, journals, quizzes, peer-assessments, group assessments, self-assessment, short-answer exercises and the use of computation problems. (Taylor, 2003; Nitiko, 2004; Huinker & Karp, 1995; Sieborger & Macintosh, 2004; McMillian & Lawson, 2001; McMillian & Nash, 2000; Frisbie, Miranda & Baker 1993; McMorris & Booth 1993). It was noticeable that teachers preferred the forms of assessment that they themselves had designed and that they used objective assessment formats more frequently than other types of assessment (McMillian & Lawson 2001).

The factors that influence assessment practices include beliefs and values, classroom realities, the rationale that teachers employ to justify decision making, assessment and grading practices, high-stakes final examinations, training, in-service training, experience, individual teacher decision-making, grade level, stakeholders, and the number of learners who have to be taught (Mason & Dobbs, 2008; Zhang, Zudith & Stock, 2003; McMillian & Workman, 1999; Herrington, Herrington & Glaser 2002; Combrick, 2003). It is also apparent that teachers are using learner-centred assessment practices in their classrooms in many other parts of the world (Huinker & Karp, 1995; McMillian & Lawson, 2001; McMillian et al., 2000).

It was my intention to use the findings from all these studies to shed light on my own study with regard to the assessment practices utilized by teachers, the factors that influence teacher assessment practices, and the ways in which teachers manage to cope with assessment demands. All of the studies that I have described indicate that classroom assessment has been investigated in the context of the following factors: assessment methods, the factors that influence a teacher’s classroom assessment methods, comparisons between the different assessment methods in different teacher settings, the school levels of the learners concerned, and the teaching specialty of teachers.

2.5 What the literature says about teachers’ beliefs regarding classroom assessment

a) There are three different groups into which teachers’ beliefs about classroom assessment may be categorized, and these teachers’ beliefs are influenced by multiple factors. These factors include resources and facilities, training, the availability of support from supervisors, the teachers’ knowledge of their subject matter, the length of professional experience of teachers and their views and personal philosophies about learning (Katherine, 2003; Cimbrick & College, 2002, Czeniak et al., 2002).

b) There are no observable trends in the patterns of teachers’ beliefs (Cohen & Fass, 2001). This study also established that a number of teacher classroom practices are consistent with those that have already been established by other studies.
c) Teachers’ practices are frequently at variance with their stated philosophical beliefs (Judson, 2006; King et al., 2001). The findings from these studies reveal that although teachers may believe strongly in a particular practice, their actions are frequently contrary to their beliefs.

2.6 What the local literature says about classroom assessment

The literature from Botswana about classroom assessment is almost non-existent apart from the studies that I have already indicated and described. Prominent among studies in the Botswana literature are those of Fuller and Synder (1990) and Prophet and Rowell (1990). These researchers state that Botswana teachers tend to use teacher-centred approaches that are characterized by an excessive amount of teacher talk, questions with predetermined answers that are directed towards the whole class and individual work by learners’ tasks that teachers assign.

2.7 Theoretical framework

2.7.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework for this study is predicated on Proudford’s (1998) emancipatory theory. This theory will be used to analyse the study findings. Systems theory has been used to supplement the main study theory and will also be used for the interpretation of the study data.

2.7.2 Emancipatory theory

In this section I will explain my use of emancipatory theory as the second part of my theoretical framework. According to Rosaleys-Viray (2006), the purpose of emancipatory theory is to liberate people from social ills. He further states that social ills pre-suppose entrapment because individuals are trapped and imprisoned within the fabrics of reality constraints, collective beliefs, social attitudes, habits of thought and actions. He lists the three conditions of entrapment as follows: a) a closed system, b) the fact that the constituents of the system are non-viable, and c) the fact that certain constituents of a system prevent any examination of the system’s non-viability.
A further illumination of the emancipatory theory is provided by Goosen (2004) who states that the theory entails a number of statements that call for the dismantling of a system of relationships within an existing society. He states that the emancipatory theory requires that all who are part of a system to cooperate in its dismantling, and he notes that this cooperation will bring an end to a mutually destructive power struggle and will create a "realm of freedom" in which new social and cultural potentials can be realized. Goosen (2006) states that the process required to bring about this involve a multi-stranded approach to a number of problems. He then proceeds to identify the following three needs that form a part of this process: a) the need to moderate and differentiate the dimensions of difference, b) the need to undo the prevailing structure of dominance, dependence and inequality, and c) the need to weaken the forces that produce communal polarization.

Although Goosen (2004) applied his theory to the indigenous people of Australian and other Australian problems, he stated that the theory could just as well be applied to other situations that require reconciliation because the elements of the theory are generic and can be applied to all situations in which the same basic elements exist. Emancipatory theory has been applied in studies by Vandeyar (2006), Proudford (1998) and Helsby (1995). Both Vandeyar (2005) and Proudford (1998) quoted Helsby's (1995) usage and explanation of emancipatory theory. These three studies all agreed that the reactions of teachers to policy changes are based on their professional interpretation of policy and their professional confidence.

According to Helsby (1995), professional interpretation occurs when teachers deconstruct or critically analyse the details of a policy and interpret the text of that policy to the advantage of the interests of the teacher's professionalism and transformative educational change. The professional interpretation of educational policy text is bound up with the idea of "readerly" and "writerly" texts. The state of being "readerly" or "writerly" is not inherent within the policy text itself, but is dependent upon the interactions between the text and the user. In some cases, teachers may effectively collude in the diminution of their professional autonomy by unquestioningly accepting government directives as "readerly" texts while other teachers will resist and attempt to subvert or reinterpret them.
In explaining the concept of "writerly" texts, Helsby (1995) referred to the meaning attributed by Codd (1988) who used a technical-empiricist approach in terms of which policy documents are interpreted as statements of political intention by those who discuss or implement the policy since the purpose of policy analysis is to establish "the correct interpretation of the text". Codd (1988) believed that "the text is being taken as evidence of what the author intended to express and a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings". To Codd (1988), texts may be both political instruments and objects of power. He argues that these forms of power can restrain and penetrate consciousness and that they are normally exercised within structures of distorted communication and false and inauthentic structures of social reality. It is in the light of these arguments that Codd (1988) advocates an approach to policy that is based on a thorough deconstruction of the text. In terms of such an approach, a policy is regarded as an ideologically constructed product of political forces and not as a transmission of a plan of action.

According to Helsby (1995), professional confidence implies a belief in one's authority and in one's capacity to conduct important discussions about the progress of one's work. To some extent these beliefs are shaped by custom, by training and by experience although they may also be undermined by challenges to, or disturbances in, the existing system and practices. Another component of professional confidence is the feeling of being able to cope successfully with the work in hand and of being "in control". This implies that an individual is not confronted with excessive and overwhelming work demands that necessitate constant "consumer-cutting" and ill-considered activity, but rather that individual concerned has some latitude in which to reflect upon and decide between alternative approaches or courses of action.

Levels of professional confidence may also be associated with the ability of teachers to maintain a proactive role in terms of managing the changing demands that are made upon them. Where confidence levels are high, teachers will thus be more likely to seek to impose their own professional interpretations onto government policy so that they will be able to balance its demands against their other professional priorities and to exploit to the
maximum what remains of their "licensed autonomy". But where confidence levels are low, teachers will be more likely to adopt a more passive role and make themselves amenable to manipulation and to being told what to do (Helsby, 1995). In conclusion, Helsby (1995) states that professional consciousness entails a capacity to problematize (ask questions about) the array of taken-for-granted assumptions and values that underpin policy responses and professional practice.

2.7.3 Systems theory

Bryant (1987:15) defines systems theory in the following way:

A collection of concepts useful for conceptualising or describing the general features of the behaviour of objects within an environment, where "objects" may refer to entities of any sort, whether animate, inanimate or conceptual; and where "environment" is taken to refer to conditions affecting the objects.

A similar definition is found in the work of Gavalas (2000:1) when he says systems theory "is the trans-disciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena. It investigates both the principles common to all complex entities, and the usually mathematical models which can be used to describe them". According to Gavalas (2000), the characteristics of systems include interactions with their environments and a tendency towards continual evolution. Gavalas concludes by noting that the same concepts and principles therefore underlie disciplines as various as Physics, Biology, Sociology and others. His description points out that systems theory concepts include the environment of a system, its boundaries, input, output, process, state, hierarchy, goal directedness and information.

Another explanation of systems theory is provided by Gregory (undated) who defines it as "elements which are in exchange, and which are bounded". To Gregory (undated), many systems have the characteristics of being open and closed, and this raises questions like how open or closed a particular system is. He also says that there are levels in a system such as sub-systems and supra-systems. Systems interact with their environment and have a distinguishable purpose. He further notes that inputs occur in the form of energy or matter that enters the system, and that outputs are the energy or matter that
emerge from the system. Systems are also notable for their differentiation and specialisation. This means that the parts of a system may evolve in a specialised way in order to accomplish particular functions.

A further explanation of systems theory is provided by Heylighen (1998:1) who describes it in the following way:

Organisms are open systems; they cannot survive without continuously exchanging matter and energy with their environment. The peculiarity of open systems is that they interact with other systems outside themselves. This interaction has two components: input, that what enters the system from the outside, and output, that what leaves the system for the environment. The output of a system is in general a direct or indirect result from the input. What comes out needs to have gotten in first. However, the output is in general quite different from the input; the system is not just a passive tube, but an active processor. For example, the food, drink and oxygen we take in, leave our body as urine, excrements and carbon-dioxide. When we look more closely at the environment of a system, we see that it too consists of systems interacting with their environments. For example, the environment of a person is full of other person like a group of interacting people may form a family, a firm, or a city.

Systems theory is therefore an attempt to explain the dynamics inherent in the process of how animate and inanimate objects operate in their environment. Such systems can be found in many other disciplines apart from education. The theory states that a system is made up of objects that interact with other objects in the environment. These objects could either be animate or inanimate while the environment consists of the conditions that affect the objects. The objects in a system survive by interacting with other objects, either within the system itself or from outside the system. All systems give the impression of being purposive. In order to achieve their purposes, they take in matter and energy as inputs and they specialise in performing particular tasks.

By utilising this particular theoretical framework, my intention was to determine how the BGCSE English curriculum operated as a system because of the interactions and relationships that exist between the organs of the curriculum such as the aims, developers, implementers and the inputs such as the syllabus, the methodology and the
teaching and learning materials. My intention was also to determine how the elements of the system (such as the teachers) were able to cope and manage within the situation itself. This study can help to explain the mechanisms that teachers use to cope with educational policy changes. Since Proudford (1998) offered a most useful description of the three coping mechanisms, the framework of the study will reveal the extent to which any of these mechanisms one or any combination of them could be adopted by teachers. The framework will also help to reveal the relationships that exist between Botswana teachers’ assumptions, their values and their frames of reference on the one hand, and their professional confidence and their professional interpretations of educational policy on the other hand.

2.7.4 Conclusion

This study has utilised the definition of emancipatory theory that is provided by Rosaleys-Viray (2006), Goosen (2004) and Helsby (1995). According to Rosaleys-Viray (2006), the purpose of the emancipatory theory is to free or liberate people from social ills. These ills normally arise and emerge from a system in which people live and work. According to Goosen (2004), emancipatory theory consists of a list of statements that call for the dismantling of oppressive systems and that therefore assumes a Marxist colouration because it issues a call to all concerned to cooperate in the destruction of the oppressive powers. A third explanation of emancipatory theory is provided by Helsby (1995) who categorises emancipatory theory into the following three distinct subsets. He points out that professional interpretation occurs when teachers deconstruct, analyse and criticise various policies in their own interests and on the behalf of those for whom they are concerned. He notes that professional confidence occurs when teachers believe that they have the authority and capacity to make autonomous decisions about their work and when they feel that they are able to cope with the demands of their work. Professional consciousness, the final subset, relates to the capacity of teachers to ask questions about taken-for-granted policy issues and practices. One may indeed say that emancipatory theory is a Marxist approach to addressing policy texts and practices by teachers in cases where teachers must unite in order to criticise and change the status quo in their favour.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH STRATEGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter, which explains the method and techniques that I used to identify and capture the data for my study, begins with an explanation of my epistemological orientation. The chapter then moves on to explain the social constructivism theory and techniques that have been utilized in the study. The method that I used to source data was based on a case study. This case study provided me with opportunities to collect rich, layered and varied data from a variety of respondents in prearranged face-to-face interviews, to record my personal observations and to undertake an analysis of various documents. I have also described the methods and the techniques that I have used and have provided explanations of my understanding of the concept involved. I have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of this study, my reasons for selecting some methods and techniques rather than others, and explained how I have attempted to mitigate the limitations inherent in the methods and technique that were used. I have defined the particular sampling strategy that was used and examined its relative strengths and limitations. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how the data analysis and interpretations were conducted.

3.2 My epistemological point of view
Marriam (2000) states that people observe and interpret the world differently. As a qualitative researcher I believe that there are multiple realities to our perceptions. This conviction is supported by Merriam (2000) when she states that qualitative research cherishes a relativistic, constructivist ontology that believes there is no objective reality but instead there are multiple realities that enter the human perception when they undergo an experience. Merriam (2000) further states that qualitative researchers assume that participants are human beings who can speak and think for themselves and are not objects that have no speaking or thinking abilities. In light of this argument I used the social constructivist research paradigm as my epistemological standpoint.
According to Kim (undated) social constructivism was first postulated by Vygotsky in the early 1900s that departed from the dominant cognitive theory of Piaget which attributed thinking to mental processes. Vygotsky’s argument was that human knowledge and thinking were largely influenced by the interactions that individuals had between themselves and their environments which includes other human beings. This clarification is corroborated by (Teaching Guide for Graduate Student Instructors) when it states that “social construction is a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasize the collaborative nature of learning.”

Basically therefore, social constructivism is how our environment whether human, social or physical influences our individual capabilities in creating our own knowledge and understanding. This understanding is shared by Dougiamas (1998) when he states that social constructivism takes into account the social nature of both the local process and the wider social collaboration.

I principally choose social constructivism because I wanted to establish the Botswana English Language teachers’ world, the protagonists, antagonists, the roles these have in relation to the teachers under study and the resultant perceptions in the behaviour and the culture of these teachers. My firm belief in social constructivism lead me to the conclusion that teachers are bestowed with individual capabilities which are interesting to investigate in a contextually challenging environment. As a believer in social constructivism I assumed teachers will individual or similarly react and adapt to their environment.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Introduction

The methodology that I selected for this research was framed by an interpretive qualitative case study. I chose a case study so that I would have opportunities to assess what was happening in the classrooms in their real and natural settings. Cohen et al.
(2002) observe that case studies provide unique examples of real people behaving naturally in real situations. I chose an interpretivist paradigm to guide my analysis of the data because I needed to examine how the conduct of teachers affects their classroom assessment and how their personal attitudes and beliefs impacted on their assessment practices. The raw data that was obtained from these situations was then interpreted in terms of each teacher's personal background, characteristics and personal idiosyncrasies. Such information included years of experience, qualifications, attendance at in-service training, the physical context in which the teacher work and even the manner in which individual teachers negotiated classroom assessment. My proceeding in this manner, I was confident that my understanding and application of interpretivism would be similar to and consistent with that described by Cohen et al. (2002).

I opted for a case study method because "case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and form 5 English teachers from four senior secondary schools in and around Gaborone. I chose these four English teachers so that I would have enough time to make an in-depth study of the way in which they conducted their classroom assessment activities.

I also selected four senior secondary schools from in and around Gaborone from which to identify suitable teachers for the sample. Gaborone and its surrounding towns were selected because it has many more senior secondary schools than any other town in other parts of Botswana. The four participants were purposively selected because of their positions and responsibilities in their respective English departments. This was in accordance with what is recommended by McMillian and Schumacher (2001), who state that purposive sampling is used when one wants to identify information-rich participants. The design of the study therefore required me to select participants who were senior teachers in their English departments or who both experienced and established in their capacity as English teachers in schools and in the profession. It was necessary for the purposes of this study to engage participants who were senior teachers in their respective departments because they would be the ones who were most likely to be up-to-date with new developments in their departments and who were normally responsible for
distributing information and guidelines from the Department of Education to their colleagues on the staff.

3.3.2 Case study

In this study the case is Botswana English Language teachers. I was interested in observing and interviewing the teachers and not the students. In order to define a case study, I scrutinised the definitions in the research of Cohen et al. (2002:181) and others. Cohen et al. (2002:181) state that a case study "is the study of an instance in action. The single instance is of a bounded system, for example a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community." Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:36) exhibit the same understanding of a case study as do Cohen et al. (2002) when they state:

A case study examines a bounded system or a case over time in detail. The case may be a program, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bounded in time and space. The researcher defines the case and its boundary.

Berg (2001:225) further clarifies the requirements of a case study when he writes: "Case methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions."

It is clear that Cohen et al. (2002) and Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001) agree that the major characteristic of a case study is the "boundedness" that the setting of a case study provides, while Berg (2001:225) adds that a thorough and analytical understanding of a particular case study is crucially important and that this is achieved by means of systematic data collection.

There is a certain amount of disagreement as to whether case studies can be generalized or not. Berg (2001:232) believes that a case can be generalized because he notes states that "when case studies are properly undertaken, they should not only fit the specific individual, group or event but generally provide understanding about similar individuals, groups and events". Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:36) disagree about the possibility of generalisation because, in their words, "cases are not chosen for representativeness, a
case can be selected because of its uniqueness or the case may be used to illustrate an issue”.

I personally concur with the position taken by Mcmillian and Shumaker (2001) in the debate about whether studies can be generalized or not. My own position is that a case study cannot be generalized because the methods and techniques that are used to gather case study data are usually unable to amass a sufficient quantity and quality of data for the purposes of valid generalisation – especially in those cases where the number of respondents is too small to make generalisation to larger populations plausible. Since I accept the argument of Mcmillian and Schumaker (2001) in this debate, I intend to make no generalisations because the overall design of my research and the methods and techniques that I have used are of a kind that would not make any kind of generalisations feasible. This case study was therefore set up in such a way that it provided a great deal of detailed and “thick” information about how a select sample of Botswana teachers’ beliefs influenced the assessment practices that they applied in their classrooms.

When I decided to use a case study approach, it seemed to be the most suitable and appropriate method for my study because a case study has the ability to “get as close to the subject of interest as [it] possibly can, partly by means of direct observations in natural settings, partly by [its] access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings and desires)” (Merriam, 1988:29). In the light of my topic (namely “How Botswana teachers’ beliefs influence their assessment practices”), the case study design seemed to be the most suitable because for investigating the phenomena that I expected to emerge. A properly designed study would also give me the necessary opportunities to examine the protocols that teachers used as well as their practices and opinions about assessment in their natural classroom settings. I also selected a case study design because of its ability to “spread the net for evidence widely” (Merriam, 1988:29). In my search for the necessary amount of rich, thick and layered data, I utilised a number of different techniques such as interviews, personal observations and document analysis.
I was confident that the particular case study design that I decided on in consultation with my supervisor would provide me with sufficient data and means to describe, analyse and interpret what I would find in the process of the investigation. This resonates with what Cohen et al. (2002:184) say when they observe that “case studies may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation”.

In his discussion of the limitations of case studies, Merriam (1988:33-34) lists the following limitations. Firstly, case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation or a context in such a way that even an impartial outside observer might have grounds for drawing erroneous conclusions from the events and phenomena that are reflected in the data. Secondly, case studies are limited by the sensitivity, integrity and observational efficiency of the investigator. Thirdly, case studies are constructed in such a way that they might tempt an unscrupulous researcher to depart from the strict ethical norms that guide research by consciously selecting only that kind of data that will prove some predetermined idea or hypothesis. By doing this, or by distorting or falsifying data in a fraudulent way, an unscrupulous researcher would be able to “prove” a particular point of view as an appearance of legitimacy. Fourthly, case studies require attention be paid to issues of reliability, validity and generalisability. This point of view is shared by Cohen et al. (2002:181-182) who state: “This may be difficult (demonstrating reliability and validity) for given the uniqueness of the situations they may be by definition, inconsistent with other case studies or unable to demonstrate this positivist view of reliability.” I have already noted how I paid attention to issues of credibility and trustworthiness issues by having my questionnaire reviewed by my colleagues and supervisors, and by conducting a preliminary pilot study. As far as trustworthiness is concerned, I managed to establish the necessary rapport with my participants whom I probed during the course of the interviews. I also triangulated my observations and document analyses and asked the participants whether they would care to check the accuracy of what I had recorded in transcript so that the credibility and trustworthiness of the conclusions could be maximised. I also discussed my preliminary findings with the participants so that I would be in a position to accommodate their views and interpretations of the events and information that I gathered in my study.
3.3.3 Types of case studies

According to Merriam (1988:27-28), the three types of case studies, namely descriptive case studies, interpretive case studies, and evaluative studies. My study falls into the category of interpretive case studies because I interpreted the day so that I collected within the theoretical framework provided by systems theory (Bryant, 1987; Gavalas, 2000; Gregory (undated); Heylighen, 1998) and emancipatory theory (Rosaleys-Viray, 2006; Goosen, 2004; Helsby, 1995; Proudford 1998). These authorities state that teachers adopt mechanisms that enable them to cope with the challenges that they encounter in their curriculum environment. This approach is consonant with that of Merriam (1988:28-29) who states that interpretive case studies are reliant upon an adequate accumulation of “rich thick data” because data of that kind enables the researcher to illustrate, support or challenge the theoretical assumptions that he or she set out prior to the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

3.4 Interviews

My primary data collection instrument was the semi-structured interview. An interview that is undertaken for the purposes of research “is a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by the research objectives of systemic description, prediction or explanation” (Cohen et al. 2002:269).

I chose the interview technique because it gave me opportunities to probe the interviewees about points that were not absolutely clear to me and to ask the teachers to clarify and explain the documents that I had examined and the classroom observations that I had made. The interview format also gave me scope to observe the non-verbal body and facial language that accompanied actions and statements in the classroom, to probe, to follow up on obscure points, and to request clarifications during the course of the interviews. This is consistent with Mcmillian and Schumacher’s (2001:267) observation that an interview permits responses to be probed, followed up, clarified and elaborated to achieve specific accurate responses. The interview also allowed me to collect the necessary thick and rich data that was needed for my study. Wilkinson and Birmingham
(2003:63) note that one of the advantages of the interview is that “it provides vast amounts of rich and useful data for further analysis”.

Notwithstanding its strengths and advantages, the interview format is characterised by various limitations and disadvantages. These are explained by Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:286) in the following passage:

The primary disadvantage of the interview is its potential for subjectivity and bias, its higher cost and time consuming nature, and lack of anonymity. Depending on the training and expertise of the interviewer, the respondent may be uncomfortable in the interview and unwilling to report true feelings; the interviewer may ask leading questions to support a particular point of view, or the interviewer’s perceptions of what was said may be inaccurate. Because interviewing is labour-intensive it is costly and time consuming which translates into sampling fewer subjects than could be obtained with a questionnaire. Since interviews involve one person talking with another, anonymity is impossible. Confidentiality can be stressed, but there is always the potential for faking, or for being less than forthright and candid, because the subjects may not be in their best interest (Mcmillian & Schumacher, 2001:286).

Some of the concerns expressed by Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:286) are echoed by Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:63-64), who note that the “interpretations of interview data may differ between researchers and that unless [they are] strictly controlled, interviews can easily meander from the main subject”.

Since I was aware of the limitations and disadvantages of the interview format, I devised a strategy to mitigate the effects disadvantageous limitations of the interview. With regard to the potentially distorting effects of subjectivity, bias and interpretation, I took care to conduct a careful and thorough literature review and that made me aware of the necessity of taking various steps to avoid the proliferation of subjectivity, bias and erroneous interpretations in the research. I also had a research question, sub-research questions and the interview protocol derived from the research question and sub-research questions. I also consulted my supervisor and asked my colleagues to critique my work.
so that their inputs could reduce the extent of my bias and subjectivity and throw light on any erroneous interpretations.

I then conducted a pilot study with the questionnaire that I had devised and made adjustments (where necessary) to avoid collecting data that might increase bias, subjectivity and erroneous interpretations. The other strategies that I utilized to reduce bias, subjectivity and erroneous interpretation included (1) showing my transcripts to the participants and asking them to check them for accuracy and comprehensiveness, (2) discussing with them my preliminary findings so that I could observe their reactions and accommodate their suggestions and comments in my study. I also triangulated the data that emerged during the course of the research by resorting to separate and diverse methods of data collection (which, in the case of this study, were interviews, classroom observations and document analysis).

With regard to the labour-intensive and time-consuming aspect of the data format that is mentioned by Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:286), I can only state that I had no option but to expend as much labour and time on the interviews as was necessary to amass a critical amount of thick, rich and textured data. With regard to the problems of anonymity and confidentiality that arise in the context of research interviews, I took great care to assign aliases and pseudonyms to both the teachers and the schools that were involved in the research and to remove any extraneous information that might enable any outsider observer to identify them.

3.4.1 Types of interviews

Punch (2005:169) states that there is a divergence of opinions among the authorities as to the number and types of interviews at any particular researcher might conduct for the purposes of a single research project. Punch states that the opinion that one holds about this matter will depend on the sources that a researcher has consulted and the point of view that seems most feasible to him or her. The view of Punch is supported by Cohen et al. (2002:270) who illuminate their argument by listing the different types of interviews that are recognized by different authorities. The types of interviews that Cohen at al. list
are standardized interviews, in-depth interviews, ethnographic interviews, elite interviews, life history interviews, focus groups, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, explanatory interviews, informal conversational interviews, explanatory interviews, standardized open-ended interviews and closed quantitative interviews. As a way of resolving this conundrum for oneself, Punch (2005:169) suggests that when the researcher identifies the kinds of interviews that will be most appropriate for the research, the researchers should consider the structure of the questions because it is the structure of the questions that reflects the purpose of the interview in question.

Punch’s (2005:169) suggestion that the structure should be used to identify the kind of interview that is needed for a particular research project, is supported by Merriam (1988:73) who states that “the most common way of deciding which type of interview to use is by determining the amount of structure desired”. I concurred with both Punch and Merriam that the way in which the question is structured provides the key to the kind of interview that should be used because the purpose for which the interview is being conducted is implicit in the structure and formation of the questions that guide the interview (Cohen et al., 2002:270). I based my understanding of the range of interview types that were possible on the opinions of the following authorities: Punch (2005), Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003), Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001), Cohen et al. (2002) and Merriam (1988). All of these scholars agree that the most common types of interviews include structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

This study utilized the semi-structured interview which is a type of interviewer in which the researcher is guided by a list of the questions and issues that need to be explored although the actual wording of the questions is not predetermined beforehand (Merriam, 1988:74). I eventually chose the semi-structured interview format because I wanted to ask all the participants more or less the same questions so that I could categorise and compare their perceptions of the phenomena that I was investigating. My questions were structured in terms of the information that I hoped to receive, and the relaxed format of the semi-structured interview helped me to probes for additional information,
clarifications and explanations in a completely natural manner during the course of the interviews. The possible answers to which the questions pointed helped me to evaluate in advance whether my instrument (the interview format) would be adequate for collecting the amount and quality of the data that I needed. The pointers in the questions also helped me to keep the interview focused on the research phenomena rather than any extraneous information or situations. I realised that the techniques that I proposed to use were consonant with what Cohen et al. (2002:271) regard as the main strength and advantage of the semi-structured interview when they state that a semi-structured interview format “increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic. At Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed.”

I also became aware of the limitations of the semi-structured interview as a research instrument as a result of the remarks of Cohen et al. (2002:271) when they state that, in utilizing semi-structured interviews, “important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses, thus reducing the comparability of responses.” I also responded to the possibility of omitting essential topics or information by remaining aware of this possibility while I was drafting my interview protocols. I therefore left sufficiently large spaces between the questions so that I could record some of the responses during the course of the interviews. This format enabled me to attend to all the necessary questions and issues during the interviews. In order to avoid a disabling degree of flexibility and distraction during the course of the questioning, I intentionally designed my protocol in such a way that the questioning would flow from the biographical information supplied by the teacher-respondents and from my prior understanding of the variety of assessment practices in use throughout the world and how these should ideally be implemented in the classroom.

3.5 Observations

Observation is “research characterized by a prolonged period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter, during which time, data, in the form of field notes, are unobtrusively and systematically collected”
(Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003:116). Cohen et al. (2002:305) discuss three types of observation, namely, highly structured observation, semi-structured observation and unstructured observation. Robson (1994:196-198) states that “there are degrees of participation in observation”. He lists the possible types of participants who undertake observations as complete participants, observer participants, marginal participants, and the observer-as-participant.

Since this study is a dissertation of limited scope, I will not discuss all the possible types and degrees of observation, but rather confine myself to discussing the ones that were used in this study. In this research, I became an observer-as-participant because the teachers and learners already knew that I was the researcher (Robson 1994:198). I selected the observer-as-participant format because I wanted to avoid disrupting the flow of the lessons because uninterrupted observation enabled me to become aware of and record the details of the pedagogies that were being used in the lessons that I observed. I also utilised the method of semi-structured observation because I was simultaneously observing the classroom setting, learner-learner interactions, teacher-learner interactions, the quality and availability of learning resources and the teaching and learning methods that were implicit in the interactions between the participant teachers and learners. All these activities were in line with Cohen et al. (2002:305) recommend when they state that when one makes use of semi-structured observations, data is gathered that will illuminate these issues in a systematic manner even though the research is being guided by an implicit agenda.

Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:276) list some of the weaknesses that are inherent in utilising the observation technique. They list them as the effect of the observer on the subjects, the presence of observer bias, the difficulty of establishing reliability when comes to the analysis of complex behaviour, the inability to probe and clarify during direct classroom observation, and the absence of anonymity from the proceedings.

To make the teachers comfortable during the interviews, I established an easy and relaxed rapport with the participants so that they would be unintimidated by my presence. I also
assured them that my study was not motivated by any harmful or ulterior motives, and that their anonymity and confidentiality would be carefully respected. The influence of bias and trustworthiness were taken care of by the precautionary measures that were instituted during the course of this study, measures such as consultations with colleagues and my supervisor, a pilot study, the careful design of the research questions and the interview schedule, and the utilisation of structured observation. Because of possible concerns about the bias that might be inherent in probing and requests for clarification, I made use of the interview technique after the documents had already been analysed. I also made use of observations that enabled me to probe and ask for clarification about issues that arose out of either the document analysis, the observation, or from both.

3.6 Document analysis

According to Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:42):

Document analysis is records of past events that are written or printed. These may be anecdotal notes, letters, diaries and documents. Official documents include internal papers, communications to various publics, student and personnel files, program descriptions and institutional statistical data.

Punch (2005:186) states that the range of documents that might be useful to social scientists includes diaries, letters, essays, personal notes, biographies, autobiographies, institutional memoranda and reports, and a variety of reported government pronouncements and proceedings. Macmillian and Schumacher (2001:252) add that such documents are useful for deducing the functions and values of participants, the way in which various people define the organization in which they work, and official policies and attitudes towards various topics, issues and processes. It was this understanding of the potential value of documentation that guided the selection of the documents that I analysed for my study. Punch (2005:186) documents in case studies can be collected in conjunction with interviews and observations and that can often provide information that may be very useful for the purposes of triangulation.

During the course of this study, I made use of the following documents: the Botswana Senior Secondary Syllabus, the Botswana Senior Secondary English Language Syllabus,
the Botswana Senior Secondary English Language Examination Syllabus, the teachers’ schemes of work, student workbooks, and student and teachers’ textbooks. I carefully scrutinised the syllabus so that I would be familiar with the official version of what the teachers were expected to do, and I examined both learner and teacher resource books in order to obtain information about the relevance of those sources. I also examined the learners’ workbooks to obtain information about the kind of activities that learners perform and the nature of their performances.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

According to Yin (1994:102), “data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study.” Yin (1994:102) also states that there are four dominant analytical techniques, and that these are pattern-matching, explanation-building, time-series analysis and program logic. My study utilized an explanation-building analysis. The “goal is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case” (Yin, 1994:110).

The data in this study was compiled from the following three sources: interviews, documents and observations. During the course of analysing the data, I worked on each source separately because this enabled me to adhere to stages recommended by Cohen et al. (2000:282) (the stages they mention are generating natural units of meaning; the classifying, categorizing and ordering of units; the structuring of narratives to describe the content of interviews, and the interpretation of interview data.

During the process of data collection, I abided the protocols that the instruments recommended for collecting data. These protocols were utilised in conjunction with the research questions and sub-research questions. Thus, for example, I was constantly on the lookout during the interviews for evidence that related to all of the following points and activities:

- what the teachers personally understood by assessment practice
- the manner in which teachers conducted assessment in their own classrooms
- the beliefs that teachers entertained with regard to assessment
• the opinions of teachers about how assessment practices could be improved in the teaching of English

In the context of classroom observations, I searched for data about the formats of the various classroom settings, the quantity and quality of teacher-learner interactions, and the teaching-learning methods that were apparent in the classrooms. I was also guided during the process of document analysis by predetermined headings that encapsulated the philosophy inherent in the curriculum, the teaching methods that were recommended, and the quality and quantity of teaching-learning resource materials that were available in the classrooms that I observed.

3.7.1 Data analysis

It is one thing to define data analysis but quite another thing to actually implement sustained data analysis because there are no commonly agreed methods of conducting data analysis. This has been observed by Yin (1993:103) in the following passage:

Unlike statistical analysis, there are few fixed formulas as cookbook recipes to guide the novice. Instead, much depends on an investigator's own style of rigorous thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations.

Yin's (1993) observation is supported by Babbie and Mouton (2001:490) when they state: "There is no one neat and tidy approach to qualitative data analysis, nor even one approach to each specific type of qualitative data analysis." In my above-mentioned observations about the analysis of qualitative data, my remarks were adapted to the guidelines provided by Babbie and Mouton (2001), Cohen et al. (2000), Punch (2005) and Yin (1994). I began by considering the arguments in favour of using either content analysis or discourse analysis, which, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:491), are the two main types of qualitative data analysis. Babbie and Mouton (2001:491) define content analysis as follows:

Examining words or phrases with a wide range of texts, including books, book chapters, essays, interviews and speeches as well as informal conversation and headlines. By examining the presence or repetition of certain words and phrases in these texts, a researcher is able to make inferences about the philosophical
assumptions of a writer, a written piece, the audience for which a piece is written, and even the culture and time in which the text is embedded.

Content analysis can be very useful in the analysis of data because it uncovers pertinent data about observations, documents and interviews. And therefore put a researcher in a position to provide answers to the research questions.

There is, of course, "no neat and tidy approach to qualitative data analysis" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:490). Babbie and Mouton (2001), for example, discuss qualitative data analysis under the heading of content and in terms of two approaches. Yin (1993), on the other hand, discusses qualitative data analysis and at the headings of pattern-matching, explanation-building, time series and program logic models. While Cohen et al. (2000) do not discuss the various types of qualitative data analysis; they do provide general guidelines about how to conduct a qualitative data analysis. I therefore decided to manufacture my own guidelines for how I would conduct my data analysis and, for this purpose, I turned to Yin’s explanation-building approach.

My interest in Yin’s explanation-building approach stemmed from his assertion that the goal of data analysis “is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case” (Yin, 1993:110). Yin (1993:111) warns that the explanation-building process has not been widely or well documented in operational terms. When I became aware of that, I decided rather to follow the data analysis procedure that is recommended by Cohen et al. (2000:147-152) because the guidelines that they provide are both elaborate and relatively easy to implement. These steps that are recommended by Cohen et al. (2000:147-152) will now be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

My data emerged primarily from the following three sources: interviews, personal observations and document analysis. I used my research questions as a benchmark whenever I approached any sub-collection of data that I had collected in order to judge whether or not it could be useful for my purposes. The steps that I followed to analyze the data are set out by Cohen et al. (2000) in pages 147 to 152 of their work. I started my data
collection by conducting an analysis of all relevant documents. The first step that I took was to ask all my participants to provide me with all documents that they had used and were using in their teaching and preparation. These documents included teaching and examination papers, the lesson and assessment frameworks and schemata that the teachers had used, and the learner exercise books that the learners had used. I began my analysis by first reading through the documents in order to acquire a first impression and general understanding of the available documentation. I then read all the documents again so that I could obtain a deeper understanding of the overall importance and meaning of the documentation. I then read all the documentation for a third time with a view to mining the data that would be useful in providing answers to my research questions.

Both the teaching and examinations syllabuses helped me to obtain a clear understanding of what was expected of the learning situations. The teacher and learner textbooks provided me with an idea of how well they were complying with the demands of both the teaching and the examination syllabuses. The learner textbooks offered evidence on how the teaching and learning processes were conducted in practice.

From the government documents such as the text of the curriculum, the teaching syllabus and the examination syllabus and other documents, I was able to determine the pedagogical approach that was recommended for the teaching and learning methods, the implicit methodology, and the recommended assessment approaches. My purpose in making a close study of the teacher and learner documents was to place myself in a position in which I would be able to understand the relationship between those documents and the teaching, learning and assessment procedures that were recommended by the government documents. As I read those documents, I made a great number of notes are summarised important points in the documents that were relevant to the research questions. By following this process, I managed to identify and isolate a large amount of data that would prove invaluable for providing answers to my research question. These documents were therefore useful in helping me to understand the pedagogical philosophy that supported the teaching and learning processes, the teaching
and learning methodology, and the quantity and quality of the resources that were being made available to both teachers and learners.

All the observations that were made were conducted during school hours within the walls of a functional classroom. I always position myself at the right-front corner of the classroom next to the door which stood opposite a window. This enabled me to have a clear that unobtrusive view of the teacher in front of the classroom and all the learners without making anyone feel intimidated. This seating position also gave me an excellent frontal view of almost everyone in the class and enabled me to move my eyes around the classroom without making either the teacher or the learners aware of my presence.

In this situation I compiled detailed notes about both the setting and the teaching and learning processes that I observed. Such details included the number of learners in the class, the seating arrangements, the kind of information that was positioned on the classroom walls, the resources that were available to teachers and learners, the minutiae of the teaching and learning methods that were used, the lesson content, and the extent of those teacher and learner participation. By writing a detailed description of the teaching and learning environment, I was able to provide a sufficient amount of data that could be categorised and analysed in terms of the elements contained in the research questions. This method provided an explanation on the teaching and learning environment in terms of setting, resources, methodology and content. I then utilized Punch’s (2005:200) descriptive codes to summarize the document. It was with the help of these codes that I developed the final analysis and summary of all the data.

The harvesting of the data proved to be the most absorbing experience of my study. I began the face-to-face interviews with each participant in a secluded area such as an office or an empty staffroom. I tape-recorded all the proceedings with the permission of the interviewees, and used the interview protocol in order to guide the discussion. The interview protocol was derived from the elements of the research questions, and they were necessary to guide and negotiate the interviews by means of questioning, probing and asking for clarifications. At the end of each interview, I checked that I had already
received the data that would provide answers about the teachers' biographies, how the various teachers understood the concept of assessment, how the participant teachers actually conducted assessment in practice, and the various beliefs that teachers held about assessment.

I personally transcribed all the data and noted all recurrent words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, pauses and explanations. This kind of close analysis enabled me to acquire a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the data. I then analyzed the data by following the recommendations made by Cohen et al. (2000:147-152). I perused the scripts several times so that I would be able to understand the implications of each interview and begin to visualise the number and nature of my codes and categories. I started by developing codes from small phrases or single words that encapsulated the evidence for a particular question.

I then organised the interview data according to the terms of my sub-research questions. As I read and re-read the data, I developed codes in the margins of the sheets on which the data was recorded. These codes served to indicate the content contained by each set of data (Punch 2005:199). At the end of this process, I developed a method of summarising the interview data on the basis of the codes. Once I had accumulated the findings of my study, I began to interrogate my findings in terms of what I had discovered in the literature and use the available evidence to reach conclusions about the research questions. This process was consonant with what Punch (2005:203) calls "abstracting", which I understood to mean the extraction of conclusions from the data. I then compared the findings of my own study to the various findings outlined in the literature, and then compared the data that I had obtained from the different sources and respondents. This was in line with Punch's (2005:204) recommendation that "comparison is fundamental to all systematic inquiry, whether the data are qualitative or quantitative".

3.8 Sampling

Cohen et al. (2002:92) write:
Factors such as expense, time and accessibility frequently prevent researchers from gaining information from the whole population. Therefore they often need to be able to obtain data from a small group or subset of the total population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study, this smaller group or subset is the sample (Cohen et al. 2002:92).

Because what Cohen et al. say here was also true of the conditions of my study, I had to decide on a particular strategy for selecting the participants in the study.

In the first part of the sampling procedure, I had to define a site from which the participants could be selected. According to Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:402), the selection of an appropriate site is merely the process of selecting a site where specific events can be expected to materialise. For this study, these sites were three senior secondary schools that were selected on the basis of their convenience because they were all in proximity to one another. The second part of the sampling procedure involved the purposive sampling of teacher participants. These I selected on the basis of the information that I knew they would possess because they had been departmental heads in their respective schools and had each accumulated a good number of years of experience as English Language teachers. Because of their position in the hierarchy and their extensive experience, I could be sure that they would be familiar with the requirements of the teaching pedagogy that is recommended for English Language teaching in Botswana schools. But I also resorted to selecting some of the teachers in the English departments rather than only heads of department because the heads of departments were all committed to extremely tight schedules and were able instead to recommend certain teachers on the basis of their experience and their ongoing contribution to the work of the English department. The study therefore utilized purposive sampling as it is defined by Mcmillian and Schumacher (2001:400) to mean “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth.”

3.8.1 Document analysis

According to Yin (1993), the evidence from case studies may come from the following six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, and participant-observation and
physical artefacts. For my study I utilised only document analysis, direct observation and interviews. I began by looking at written materials such as syllabuses, books and learners' work. I asked each of the participants to allow me to look at all of the materials that they used in their assessment procedures. The purpose of this was to obtain a global impression of what was happening during assessment. The information that was obtained in this way was also used to prepare the guiding notes for the interviews. I searched the documents in order to identify the prescribed approaches and methods that were being used, the frequency of assessment occasions, the identity of the people who perform the assessments, and the manner in which the assessments were conducted.

3.8.2 Observations
I observed the teachers during five to six forty-minutes lessons so that I would end up with a sufficient amount of information for the study. I also made notes during the lessons about the assessment methods, the arrangement of the classrooms, the teacher-learner interactions, and whether there was any information on the classroom walls and in only textbooks about assessment.

3.8.3 Interviews
I used the interview method because it enabled me to probe for additional information and clarification of obscure points (Cohen et al., 2002). For this purpose, I utilised both semi-structured and unstructured questions. The semi-structured questions were used to establish each teacher's background. The structured and semi-structured questions were used to collect information about on the biography of each teacher, the amount and quality of training that they had received in assessment procedures, their understanding of assessment practice, as well as their beliefs, attitudes and practices. I used the unstructured questions to give teachers opportunities to expand upon and explain their opinions and beliefs.

Information obtained from observation and document analysis was written down and then organised, coded and categorised into themes. The information from the interviews was tape-recorded, transcribed, checked, and then coded in terms of the categories and themes.
that had been developed. All other data was similarly analysed by means of interpretations and synthesis.

3.9 Methodological norms

3.9.1 Validity

Validity is generally understood to refer to the extent to which the information that has been obtained is truthful (McMillian & Schumacher, 2001; Popham, 2002; Killen, 2003). To ensure the validity of my collected data, I began by ensuring that my questionnaire flowed easily from the biographical questions to the main research questions and then to the questions about opinions and beliefs. I also made certain that all of the sub-questions had been accommodated in the questionnaire and that I had a sufficient number of questions from them to assist me in the probing. I also conducted an extensive literature review to obtain more insight into how similar questions had been asked by other scholars. I also gave the questionnaire to my colleagues and to my supervisor and asked them to assist me with their expertise and experience. I then conducted a pilot study with the questionnaire in a particular senior secondary school with only one English Language teacher, and afterwards made certain amendments to the questionnaire on the basis of my observations, their input and the documents analysis so as to ensure the trustworthiness of the collated data.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to a high degree of consistency in the later that is obtained from different participants in different sources by using the same instruments (McMillian & Schumacher, 2001; Popham, 2002). I therefore made certain that the same questions and the same format in asking the questions were used in respect of all three participants.

At the great trouble to establish a good degree of rapport with each of the participants before I began to collect information. I first visited all the participants so that I could explain to them the purpose of the study and obtain the necessary letters of consent. I then began to collect information by reading and rereading the documents, by making observations, and by conducting the oral interviews. During the interviews, I tape-
recorded and later transcribed the interviews while at the same time noting the main points made by the participants.

3.10 Ethical considerations

I undertook a number of actions to ensure that my study would adhere to the ethical guidelines are governed any research conducted under the aegis of the university. My approach to the question of ethics was guided by the discussions that I found in Cohen et al. (2002), Vaus (2004), Yin (1993) and McMillian (2001). The actions that were taken to ensure compliance with the ethical standards that govern research are explained in the sections that follow below.

3.10.1 Requesting permission

Before writing formal requests for permission, I visited each of the schools that I hoped would participate in the research to request the principal to allow me to conduct out my research in his school. I also took the opportunity of asking each of the teachers whom I had identified, to participate in the study. Once the principals and the teachers had agreed, I wrote letters to the regional education office and the schools requesting formal written permission to conduct my study in the chosen schools and with the designated staff. These letters:

- stated that certain designated teachers had been asked to participate
- described the purpose of the study
- emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary and that each of the participants were free to withdraw at any time from the research process
- that confidentiality would be scrupulously maintained
- explained how the participants would ultimately benefit from the study

3.10.2 My role in the setting

I spent days at the schools examining the documents that were pertinent to the study. These documents included departmental minutes, outlines of the school’s policy on assessment, and examples of learners’ work. At the same time I was engaged in simultaneously collecting data by means of interviews and personal observation. In order
to facilitate the data collection, I disclosed that I was a researcher and disclosed the purpose of my study.

3.10.3 Informed consent

Before interviews and observations could take place, the participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw at any time from the study if they so wished. The participants were also given an overview of the purpose of the study and how it might ultimately benefit them, the school and even the national education system. The participants were then requested to be as free as possible in their responses, to elaborate as much as they wished on any particular point, and to ask for clarifications of anything that they did not understand.

3.10.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was maintained with regard to the names of the participants and the identity of the schools that participated in the study. Pseudonyms were signed to each of the participants and to each school. The teachers and schools were all informed that the purpose of the pseudonyms was to uphold and maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. The actual (real) names of the teachers and schools were coded into the researcher’s notebook and were not given to any other person or interested party.

3.10.5 Deception

Deception was avoided by conducting interviews with participants who had been fully informed. As has already been stated above, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, what was expected of them, and how they might benefit from participation in the study. Participants were supplied with copies of the transcripts so that they could point out any descriptions that were not representative of what they had actually said. Needless to say, I tried my best to report the findings as accurately and as truthfully as possible.

3.10.6 Reciprocity

I was entirely willing to share with all other teachers the understanding and knowledge that I had gained about the degree of learner-centred education, a kind of communicative
approaches that were being used, and how classroom assessment was being conducted in Botswana. I assisted part-time teachers to work on their research projects by helping them to plan and organise their research. But I hastened to explain to these teachers that I was not an authority and I could only describe what I understood and what the best sources (i.e. those that were approved by qualified authorities such as the Ministry of Education and certain universities). Since my research identified a fit between policy and practice, I entertain the hope that because I intended to present my study to the MoE, the authorities would study my findings and make the necessary adjustments for the better in the education system.

The act of giving transcripts to teachers for the purpose of modification and so that they could make draft copies of findings before the final draft was made, was observed to be empowering for them. It also helped them to feel that they were active participants in the research. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) puts it “voicing experience expands one’s power”. My hope was that the interview process would provide inspiration for various opportunities for my study participants. One of the participants had registered as masters’ students and was on the verge of beginning his masters’ thesis. I gained the impression that he was able to benefit from our discussion about my experiences in conducting qualitative research.

3.10.7 Non-disruption to schools

I made certain that my study would in no way disrupt the activities of the schools, and tried by all means possible to fit my schedule with that of the schools rather than to expect that the schools should be able to fit their schedule to mine.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter described the approach to the study, the sampling process, and the techniques that were suited to my research. I decided to pursue a naturalistic form of inquiry after examining the particular needs of my study and my own research interests. I decided therefore to pursue a qualitative case study then involved four participants. The data was collected from documents, observations and semi-structured interviews. During the analysis of the documents, I categorized, coded and interpreted the data. I also
observed the ethical guidelines of the university during my study. These included the
upholding of confidentiality, the use of pseudonyms, formal requests for permission to
conduct the research in MoE, schools, and avoiding any disruption of the usual activities
on the schools and their participants.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings from the field work that I undertook. These findings have been reported in the following order: teachers' background, the teachers' understanding of learner-centred classroom assessment, the way in which teachers conducted their classroom assessment activities, the teachers' beliefs about classroom assessment, and the opinions of the teachers about what they thought could be done to improve classroom assessment practices in Botswana.

4.1 Mavis: Twisting assessment

Mavis (a pseudonym) was between 30 and 40 years old, and had graduated from university with a B.A. (Humanities) and Post-Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education (PGDE) with teaching majors in English, Theology and French. She taught English, Moral Education and Religious Education at her first posting at the Oxtail Junior Secondary School. For the past six years, Mavis had been teaching at the Desert Wounds Senior Secondary School. Mavis reported that she had been trained in assessment at the university during her PGDE, and that she had also attended an in-service workshop on assessment and item-writing while she was still teaching at Oxtail Junior Secondary School. She remembered that the workshop taught her “to test students or assess them on what you have already taught them”.

Mavis said that she had received further training in assessment from the national marking session when she was instructed on how to mark the summative Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) examinations. Mavis did not have any specific material on assessment and used past examination papers to guide her in her assessment. She said that ever since she had joined Desert Wounds Senior Secondary School, she had received no training in how to teach or how to assess learners on the content of the syllabus. When I asked her the reasons why this was so, she responded by saying:
I don’t remember. Mh! I don’t remember it happening. It is like when I was coming from a Community Junior Secondary School it was not like a really good orientation. I was given my classes but this was my first time I was teaching it for the first time and nobody ever sat besides me and told me about it all those things. I had to run around for myself as most of the teachers are not serviced. I do not know. Maybe it is only in this school where teachers are oriented.

Mavis also reported that she had never read the English syllabus but had only studied its stated objectives. She said she had heard about the difference between teacher-centred and learner-centred instruction at the Junior Secondary School but not at the Senior Secondary School. It was her considered opinion that English Language teaching was normally not learner-centred. However, when I asked her whether the syllabus was teacher-centred or learner-centred, she said: “I would say it is teacher-centred, unless you, the teacher, twist it around.”

When Mavis was asked how she would define assessment, she could only say, “I think assessment is just to check if what you were teaching really got into the children and if they grasped what you were teaching them.” When she was asked to define the term “learner-centred”, Mavis replied: “It is when most of the things are done by the students.” She then defined teacher-centred by saying: “It is to say that it is the teacher who comes with the information.”

Mavis said that she assessed her learners by means of the following methods: discussions, working in pairs, group work, presentations, question and answer exercises, observations and also recommended BGCSE techniques. She explained that learners who made presentations had to fulfil the following conditions:

- They had to be well informed on the topic.
- They had to possess good speaking skills.
- They had to be eloquent and confident.

She said she preferred pair work to group work because the groups were so large that this encouraged some learners to be passive and avoid participation. When it was time for
group work, Mavis divided her class into three groups with an average of 10-12 learners in each group. Mavis did not assess group work because if there were 10 learners in a group, only two of them would contribute. This would make it impossible for her to assess group work. She elaborated on this by saying, “so it is not easy to assess every student in group work.”

While Mavis was taught how to use assessment rubrics at university, she never used them in her assessments because she thought she was able to assess quiet well without them. Mavis also drew her learners in assessment activities and quite often allowed them to assess one another’s work so that they could observe the mistakes of others and avoid them in future. She therefore usually allowed her learners to assess compositions from their colleagues by using either blue or black pens (but never a red pen because red pens were traditionally reserved for the teacher). She allowed her learners to write down scores and to make remarks when assessing, but she reserved to herself the right to assign a final score. Sometimes Mavis made copies of one composition and distributed those copies to all the other learners. She then facilitated a discussion about the correct way to mark that composition. She hoped that by doing this, she would improve the writing skills of her learners. She also allowed her learners to assess anything in the curriculum and afforded her learners opportunities to also assess debates and discussions by presenting oral comments at the conclusion of these activities.

Mavis never explained the meaning of the assessment criteria because learners were already aware that they would be assessed and they were familiar with the assessment criteria. She said, “Everything we teach we are going to assess, like on monthly test.” According to Mavis, assessment exerted a motivational effect on learner performance. She also pointed out the following:

They will be proud to learn that they have most of what the teacher taught. They also know that for them to continue with schooling, they have to pass examinations, which means they must understand what the teacher taught.
Mavis regularly assessed her learners’ work as a way of preparing them for the summative examinations. Although she usually assessed her learners’ work by herself, she would sometimes ask a colleague to help her to assess if she doubted the accuracy of her own assessments. Although she gave learners opportunities to assess their colleagues, she remained uncertain about whether learners could be really objective in assessing, and so she normally re-assessed all the work after the learners had already performed their assessments. In those cases where she did not re-assess the work, she deliberately omitted to record the scores that had been obtained from learner assessments.

Mavis preferred written work because it could be show-cased. She noted: “The written one is followed and if somebody comes from outside and says how do you assess, what can you say about it? It’s our work.”

Mavis believed assessment was an integral part of a teacher’s job. While she conducted her routine observational assessments, she asked her learners to face the front so that she could assess and interpret their body language so that she could become aware of whether they had understood or not. Mavis had never read the syllabus apart from noting its objectives. She did however believe that the syllabus was essentially teacher-centred. She believed that she understood what a “learner-centred syllabus” meant. As she pointed out, “When it is learner-centred, most of the things are done by the students.”

In that sense, then, Mavis utilized her learner-centred approach during the literature lessons during which the learners did most of the reading by themselves and shared what they had read with other learners. She also believed that the English Language grammar syllabus was teacher-centred. She understood “teacher-centred” to mean the following: “It is the teacher who comes with information to class.” Mavis was so convinced that the English Language syllabus was teacher-centred that she stated, “I would say it is teacher-centred unless you, the teacher, twist it the other way round.”

I conducted seven (7) forty (40) minute classroom observations with Mavis. She taught two form four and two form five classes. The most notable discussions that I observed
during my observation were a talk-show entitled “Teenagers are to blame for today’s problems”, a class exercise on the topic “Verbs often confused,” a class exercise on “Colourful Language”, a discussion of a reading passage about an “Ant Bear”, and discussion about a passage entitled “Climbing Boys”.

There was consistent uniformity in the classroom arrangement of Mavis’s classes. While Mavis mostly stood at the front of the class, she would sometimes sit on the edge of the teacher’s table towards the right corner of the classroom. All learners’ tables and chairs faced forwards so that they could obtain a full view of Mavis. The learners were ordered in six rows that stretched from the front to the back of the class. These rows were paired so that one pair was on the extreme left of the classroom and the other pair was on the extreme right while a third pair occupied the middle of the class. While almost all of the girls occupied the front seats, the boys predominantly occupied the back seats. There was hardly any movement during the lessons because all the learners remained in their seats while Mavis moved short distances in front of the learners. There were no charts or drawings in the classroom.

Mavis was also consistent in the manner in which she delivered her instruction. She was clearly the leader and centre of the learning activities. She always began her lessons and caught her learners’ attention by providing a summary of her previous lesson. Once she had managed to bring the class to order, she offered an introduction to the lesson’s activities.

In the lesson I observed, Mavis would ask volunteers to read alternate paragraphs aloud from “The Climbing Boys” and the “Ant Bear”. Although the learners would remain silent during the reading, Mavis occasionally checked the learners’ understanding by asking them to explain or define occasional words or phrases. Once the reading had ended, she helped learners to understand the passage better through a question and answer approach. As the learners answered, she wrote the best and most relevant responses on the board. At the end of the discussion, she requested learners to silently write their individual summaries, and she went around marking learners’ work.
For the exercise on “Verbs often confused”, Mavis led a class discussion by means of a question and answer technique. The planned talk-show “Teenagers are to blame for today’s problems” did not materialize because the learners were not prepared, and Mavis had to rescue the situation by taking over. Mavis then used the question and answer technique to lead a simulated Talk-show. Mavis asked questions, and the learners raised their hands to answer the questions. Mavis provided feedback by relating how the questions had been answered. Mavis did not explain in any of her lessons how scores would be allocated or what learners would need to do to achieve a particular score. It was only during the summary that she said that the total score was 25 (10 marks for grammar and 15 marks for content). She did not state what learners needed to do to achieve those scores.

The documents that I investigated included the teaching and examination syllabi, the scheme books, the teacher and learner textbooks, past examination papers and the learners’ exercise books. I have already alluded to both the teaching and examination syllabi. The teaching syllabus was learner-centred and recommended a communicative approach. It listed the teaching methods that were most suitable for a communicative approach to language teaching. The examination syllabus on the other hand stipulated what the examination of (i.e. the length, the number of papers, the content and the allocation of marks for each of the examination items). The examination was therefore a purely paper-and-pencil examination.

Mavis recorded her term plan in scheme books. These actually consisted of a transcription of the teaching syllabus. She also recorded the work that she had covered and how learners had performed in the learning exercises. At the end of the scheme book she recorded the monthly scores that the learners had obtained from her assessment.

The textbooks that were used by Mavis and her learners included Bevan (1998), Pringle (1984), Russel (1982), Forrest (1993) and Ethern (1994). Some of these books were very old and could easily sway a teacher towards the exclusive use of a teacher-centred
approach. All of these books were silent about how assessment could be conducted. For example, although compositions, summaries, letters and reports were proposed in these books, there were no rubrics that suggested how learning activities could be assessed.

Although all the learner exercise books contained summaries, compositions and most of the work was expected to be answered by means of short answer questions. Almost all the marking was undertaken by Mavis, Mavis appeared to be required to conduct marking on a twice weekly basis. Mavis used a red pen for marking and her assessment was modelled on the BGCSE. While the assessment syllabus did not mention learner-centred assessment, it consisted in fact of a summary of the BGCSE. Mavis had created a file of past tests and final examination papers, some of which dated back as far as 1995.

Mavis had received no training in learner-centred assessment. She had not been exposed in any way to learner-centred assessment either during her university training or in inservice training. She also lacked the necessary materials to guide her in the protocols of learner-centred assessment. This explains why Mavis continues to utilize teacher-centred assessment – despite the fact the syllabus officially recommends learner-centred teaching in English.

4.2. Morin: Assessment equates marking

Morin (a pseudonym) was between 30 and 40 years of age. She had obtained a B.A. in Humanities and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from the university. She had taught English at Foxhill Senior Secondary School for the past eight years and this was her first teaching post. Her other teaching subjects were History and French. She had been trained in classroom assessment during her PGDE where she was taught assessment methods such as question and answer exercises, fill in the blanks, multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, essays, role play, group work, performances and simulations. She was, however, not taught how to use rubrics and portfolio assessment. She had received no in-service training on assessment except at national marking sessions because she used to mark summative examinations for every marking session.
Morin had read the English Language syllabus but she had never considered whether it was teacher-centred or learner-centred. Instead she had assumed that they were both teacher-centred and learner-centred at the same time. Her response to whether she considered the syllabus to be learner-centred or teacher-centred was as follows:

Actually, I have never considered it. I have read it but I have never considered it. I consider in many respects it’s both. Yes! It’s both, it can be both depending on the topic but I have never really considered if it’s teacher-centred or learner-centred.

During her training at the university, Morin was taught the difference between a teacher-centred and learner-centred curriculum and her lecturer had recommended a learner-centred pedagogy. Morin defined the two pedagogies in the following words:

Teacher-centred is basically if I can associate it to the lecture method where the teacher comes to the class and they just talk and talk with little participation of the student. But learner-centred is the opposite of that. This is where the students are given ample opportunity, ample time to exert themselves in the activities, the majority of the lesson, of that particular lesson.

Morin did not possess any assessment syllabus or any material that could guide her on how to assess, although she had managed to pick up some ideas about how assessment could be carried out at departmental meetings. She said the purpose of assessment was to let learners know what was expected of them and what they were expected to do.

With regard to instructional design, Morin said she utilized both teacher-centred and learner-centred strategies. She stated that her approaches depended on the topics. For instance, she said that she used learner-centred strategies in debates, role play and compositions while she used summary writing as a teacher-centred strategy. She said that she sometimes used a learner-centred approach because it kept the learners well informed and helps them not to fall asleep. She added that it motivated them to participate.

Morin predicated her lessons on the question and answer technique. She did this by throwing questions at learners who, in turn, provided the answers. After that, Morin would provide the learners with the necessary feedback. Morin also utilized the
observation technique as she moved among the learners, particularly during group
discussions. It was nevertheless clear that she did not assess learners as part of any
learning activity because she never mentioned how assessment would be conducted nor
offer any reflections on how her strategies were developing. She also involves the
learners to a limited extent in the assessment of other learners. But this only happened on
a limited basis because their assessments were restricted to indicating whether any
particular response was right or wrong without any probing from Morin. The learners
were also working groups of between four and seven learners. The steps that the group
activities normally followed involved the following steps: examining the task, attempts
on the part of individual learners to understand the task, brainstorming, writing up the
task, and the presentation of the task.

Morin also allowed learners to assess group presentations by making oral comments
during the presentations. If she assessed the group work, she did it as though she was
assessing an individual learner and she would allocate a single mark to the whole group.
All the members of the group would therefore share the same score. Morin used a red pen
for assessing learners’ work and expected her learners to use pencil to assess one
another’s work. While learners were permitted to exchange their work with other learners,
she did not record the scores arrived from learner assessments because she believed that
she alone was responsible for the assessment. Morin assessed her learners’ written work
twice a week. She did this in addition to the short exercises that she personally assessed.

Morin believed that because her personal assessment was far superior to that of her
learners because of her training and experience, she did not record the scores that were
derived from learner assessments. She did not record scores from learner assessment
because, as she said: “I have to mark. I have to record work I have mark not what
somebody else has marked.”

She did however believe that it would be possible to record scores from learner
assessments if the learners were trained how to assess properly. She also believed that
once trained learners could assess properly, she would give them opportunities to assess one another's work (depending on their attitude and calibre).

Learners were not usually told how they would be assessed because Morin assumed that the learners were aware that they would be assessed. She usually personally assessed all her learners' work, and only assigned this task to a colleague when she was on sick leave. She used a red pen to assess her learners and her learners used pencil to assess the work of others. She did this simply to abide by an established tradition in the school. She cited her reasons for always assessing her learners' work in the following words:

It is always fair you should mark what you have taught. You cannot teach and then ask somebody who is just there to come and mark especially when it comes to classes. I feel I have to mark what I taught my class.

Morin believed that learner-centred education should be introduced in Botswana in order to improve the quality of education. She thought that learner-centred education should be made an official policy of the Ministry of Education so that the ministry could assume the responsibility of introducing it into the schools. She herself taught two form 4 and two form 5 classes. The most notable activities during my observation of her lessons were devoted to action verbs, a debate and a vocabulary lesson.

During the lesson on action words, Morin referred learners to their textbook where (on page 77) there was a definition of what "action words" meant, mainly in the context of composition titles. Morin led the discussion by first calling out words from the book and then asking particular learners to provide definitions. She asked the learners to close their books while this was happening because the definitions were contained in their textbook. Some of these action words that their discussed were indicate, outline, state, contrast, describe and evaluate. While learners were compiling their definitions orally, Morin provided them with feedback that indicated whether they were on the right or wrong track, and she also sometimes offered definitions herself. The learners were generally passive and almost torpid during these lessons except for when they were answering questions from Morin.
Morin followed a similar approach during her lesson entitled “Informative Compositions”. In this lesson she asked learners to describe how they would make tea because “How to make tea” was one of the essay titles. When the first learner she called upon had tried but was not very successful, she asked a second learner who made a more or less satisfactory attempt. Morin then asked the class, “Do you think that is the right way to make tea? Yes or no?” When the class answered “yes” in unison, she gave a clap and said, “Let us move to ‘How to go to Game City’.” As a learner was describing how to get to Game City, the remainder of the learners bowed their heads onto their tables. At the conclusion of this deliberation, Morin said, “Do you think that that was a good description?” The learners answered “no” in unison, and Morin said, “Let us give her a clap!”

While still on the topic of informative compositions, Morin divided the class into groups of four learners per group. These groups then discussed topics such as How to clean a house, How to make plain scones, How to get good grades, How to treat a broken leg and How to plant spinach. The learners began to list their various points, but Morin asked them to write out all these points in continuous prose.

When supervising a lesson that took the form of a debate, Morin divided the class into two groups. The motion before the class was, “Traditional medicine is better than Western medicine.” One group supported the motion while the other group opposed the motion. Each group was then asked to elect a secretary who would list each of their points. Prior to the actual debate, the learners discussed the motion vigorously among themselves and asked one another to raise the points that they thought the other group would raise so that they could manufacture arguments to oppose them. There were two time keepers, one from each group. Morin assigned a position of judge to herself. Each of the groups contained four speakers, and their duties were as follows: the first speaker introduced the topic; the second speaker presented half the number of points from the group, and the third speaker presented the remaining number of points. It was then up to the fourth speaker to summarise the group’s argument.
The final lesson of Morin’s that I observed was based on a passage entitled “My Favourite Room”. This passage was read by one of the learners while the rest of the class listened quietly to the reading. After the reading had been completed, Morin selected the following words from the passage for discussion: tumbledown, fortress, impregnable, slats, facade, balustrade, benevolent, sinister and projections. Morin then called out the words one by one and asked individual learners to explain the meaning of the words that were presented. As the learners offered their explanations, Morin provided feedback to the learners on their performance, and offered elaborations on the meanings of words where necessary.

Morin’s documents were her scheme books, the syllabi and the learner exercise books. The textbooks that she used were those of Pringle (1996) Certificate in English; Paizee and Peires (2002) New Successful English; Grant (1998) Active English Form 4; IGCSE (1998) English as a Second Language Learners’ Book 1, and IGCSE (1998) English as a Second Language Learners’ Book 2. None of these books contained any suggestions or guidelines for teachers about how they should present the lessons and conduct any kind of assessment. There was a great variety of different tasks contained in different parts of these books.

The test papers and examination papers that I scrutinised were actually copies of past BGCSE papers. Morin did a great deal of marking because she was confronted by an enormous variety of learners’ tasks that she had to assess. She mostly marked short answers, compositions, comprehension tests and summaries. Morin explained to me her marking criteria for short answer questions but did not indicate the criteria she used for assessing continuous writing tasks.

Morin’s experience was similar to that of Mavis in that she had received no formal training in learner-centred assessment, either at the university or as part of any in-service training. Because she had never been given any adequate materials or training about learner-centred assessment, she remained uncertain as to whether the syllabus was intended to be teacher-centred or learner-centred. While Morin therefore made use of
both the assessment paradigms, her practice was not based on any kind of training or resources, and she still remain deeply rooted in the teacher-centred assessment paradigm.

4.3. Thandi: Assessment is an end product

Thandi (a pseudonym) had between 25 and 30 years of teaching experience in Botswana secondary schools. Her previous experience had been in four other senior secondary schools and she was currently the head of the English department in the Middleton Senior Secondary School. She had graduated from university with a PGDE and a B.A. Humanities. Although she had offered Social Studies and History is teaching subjects in the past, she had changed her tack and had begun to specialise in English Language teaching a number of years prior to our meeting. She had been trained in assessment during the course of her PGDE training in the modules about measurement and evaluation. Apart from this training, she was also trained to mark the latest from the BGCSE. She had also attended some workshops in which participants produced test item banks on the then newly introduced BGCSE syllabus.

Thandi’s understanding of classroom assessment was essentially teacher-centred. This was illustrated by the definition that she produced:

It means assessing the standard of understanding of the class you are teaching. Like you can come up with a topic and you teach them, and [then] at the end you assess them.

Thandi was aware that the syllabus was intended to be communicative and that it advocated learner-centred practices. She understood “learner-centred” to mean that the learners should be involved with the teacher in her role as a facilitator of learning. In Thandi’s view, the purpose of assessment was to measure learners’ performance and to show-case that performance. She added that the other purpose of assessment was so that the teacher could confirm whether or not she was teaching in terms of the objectives outlined in the syllabus. She encapsulated this point of view in the words:
If you do not assess at the end of the day, what will you say, what will you present and say the student has done in your lesson? And it is to check if you are on the right track as a teacher.

In conducting her assessment, Thandi utilized both oral and written assessments. In her view, oral assessment meant assigning scores performances and offering feedback to learners on the presentation of their oral performances. She usually assessed oral performances during debates, discussions, reports or presentations, talk shows, speeches, and question-and-answer exercises. She assessed oral reports by means of observation and only usually recorded the scores that she assigned for written work. Thandi tended to use oral assessment as a method for improving the learners’ speaking skills. Her format for a debate was to divide the class into two, assign a topic and then instruct to two sides to prepare themselves before the actual debate began. She then assessed their performances by means assigning ratings to individuals while they performed. When the lesson took the form of a talk show, the class appointed a host to manage the discussions, and Thandi carried out the assessment in the same way that she did for a debate.

Thandi defined written assessment in terms of assigning tasks; they would then complete these tasks in writing and hand them to her, after which she would assess their performance. For written assessments, Thandi reproduced assessment questions from past BGCSE summative examination papers. She explained this in the words: “We normally use past papers. We cut and paste them. Even if you want to use your own, you can’t because we are looking at the time factor.” Thandi was frequently engaged in assessing her learners’ tasks. In class she utilized the question and answer technique and also made use of quick quizzes. For the end-of-month tests, she assessed learners on their essays and either on a composition, a comprehension or a summary. She did not compose the group in her class in any particular way and did not keep the same learners in the same groups all the time (as some other teachers did). She only assigned marks to the group product once the group had completed its work. Sometimes she assigned different tasks to different groups.
When she arranged debates for her learners, Thandi provided them with topics. Her learners then elected a time keeper and a facilitator and Thandi divided the class into two large groups. Her learners earned marks by raising points and supporting them with arguments while Thandi listened and assigned scores. They were other occasions on which she allowed the learners themselves to assess the debates.

When Thandi arranged a talk show format for her learners, she began by producing a topic and getting the learners to engage in brainstorming sessions which could last for up to 80 minutes. When the learners finally got going on the talk show proper, the learners identified as suitable host from among themselves. Her main purpose in assigning the talk show as an exercise was to give the learners opportunities to hone their speaking in questioning skills; she did not assign any marks during the talk show, but described it as “a kind of observation.”

When arranging presentations, Thandi divided the whole class into groups of between five and seven learners. The learners were also allowed to present any kind of class work such as comprehensions, summaries or essays. Thandi believed that assessment was very useful for her because it provided her with opportunities to record marks for the learners and simultaneously to gauge the effectiveness of her teaching. Thandi also clearly preferred written assessment over oral work because written assessments could be showcased. She believed that only one person should assess learners because, as she said: “I deliver the goods. I see how they go, and I foresee how they receive them.”

While Thandi approved of learners assessing other learners, it was on condition that their assessment scores were not recorded because she said that she could not present scores that had been assessed by learners to the authorities. She preferred to record the scores at learners assigned separately so that she could compare the grades that they had assigned to the grades that she assigned. Thandi nevertheless believed that learners could assess other learners fairly and intelligently, and she illustrated this by saying:

Like I would give them a composition and I would say they should mark it and they would always come up with the issues that I always come up with like tenses, heading and paragraphing.
It helps them to be alert when writing their own work and they should be able to spot these mistakes on their own.

Thandi believed that CA scores should be part of the summative assessment because she argued that the learner might well be ill during summative and that in such cases her CA scores could be instead. And because she also believed that "practice makes perfect", she gave learners written assessment tasks three times a week in addition to oral assessments and learner assessments in an effort to increase their English Language skills. I observed Thandi between the months of March and April of 2008. The most notable activities that I observed in Thandi’s lesson included readings undertaken by learners during the course of lessons, paired work, individual presentations, and class discussions.

I also observed one of Thandi’s lesson entitled “Composition and Report Writing”. This lesson, presented to 38 learners, began with a discussion on how to write a composition. Learners discussed this topic in pairs. Their discussion lasted for five minutes before individual learners were asked to read and report on what they had been discussing. Learners were asked to express their opinions about the report. Some learners even contributed their personal assessments and substantiated why they thought it was either good or bad. After the learners had presented their comments, Thandi presented her own feedback on the report. Then there was a long period in which learners were asked to perform and report and to listen to feedback from other Learners. Thandi was the last person to provide feedback.

The discussion on how to write reports was similar to those on how to write compositions. Learners discussed the task in pairs while Thandi moved around to check if the progress of learners. She then called individual learners to present their discussion, after which she presented her own feedback. I also observed Thandi’s form five lessons which she gave to the 40 learners in the class. Thandi required them to perform two tasks which were entitled “Challenges faced by the youth nowadays” and “How Christmas is celebrated”. After the learners had discussed these topics in pairs, Thandi randomly hand-picked learners to report on what they discussed before she gave the class opportunities to make their own comments. After all this had been completed, she presented her own
feedback. On another occasion, I observed how the learners took turns to read from a passage in one of their textbooks entitled “Local History”. These readings were followed by a discussion on the topic, “Points suitable for a summary”. Thandi asked the learners to read out the points while she wrote the correct answers on the board. She guided learners about which points would be most suitable, and also helped learners to phrase the points they were making correctly.

Thandi used both the teaching and examination syllabus that was prescribed by the DCDE. Although Thandi said she utilised a variety of books in her teaching, she only had Bevan (1998) and Ethern (1994) on hand for me to examine.

With regard to the learners’ work, it was evident that Thandi was performing regular assessments. She was in fact assessing each class and least once a week. Assessment was conducted by Thandi for all written work. The tasks that she assessed were short answer questions, summaries, composition and reports. Only the marks were shown, and no rubrics were used.

As was the case with her colleagues in their respective schools, Thandi had not received any kind of formal training on learner-centred assessment, either as part of her university training or as part of any in-service training. While Thandi did use some learner-centred instructional methods, she did not use any kind of fuse learner-centred assessment practices during her lessons. By and large, all her assessment practices were teacher-centred because she personally assessed both all the written and oral tasks undertaken by the learners.

4.4 David: Assessment is a guide

David (a pseudonym) graduated from university with a B.A. and a PGDE, where he had majored in English Language and History. His first posting was to Bushview Senior Secondary School, he was transferred to the school in which she now teaches (Battleground Senior Secondary School) this year. David began to teach in 1996 and had
always only taught English Language and Literature in English. When I saw him, he was only teaching English Language.

David had attended a number of in-service training workshops during his career. These workshops went under the following titles: Communicative Approach to Teaching English Language (this workshop also covered teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches); Paper 1 and 2 English Language Final Examination Marking; Literature in English Final Examination Marking; Stress Management, and Management. He was currently the Senior Examiner for Literature in English in the BGCSE. David was part of a team who presented the skills that he had acquired from various workshops to his colleagues in the school. In spite of the workshops mentioned above, David reported that he had never attended any in-service training for the purpose of acquiring proficiency in a classroom assessment.

David received his only formal training in classroom assessment techniques during his studies for the PGDE. He said that they had been trained in assessment questions and assessment techniques. David was therefore able to conduct assessments in terms of what he learnt at the PGDE and what he managed to pick up from various in-service training workshops.

David was familiar with the contents of the English Language syllabus, and in fact been part of a panel that conducted consultative workshops that led to the drafting of the BGCSE syllabus. He said that there was a thin dividing line between communicative language teaching and learner-centred teaching. He made the following observation in this regard:

Communicative Language Teaching emphasize on the importance of communicating as a tool to teach language whereas learner-centred centres around the learners are. Much of the input should be done by learners.

David defined teacher-centred learning as what happens when “the teacher is lecturing, that is, most of the time he is the one that is speaking”, and learner-centred learning as
“where the teacher is a facilitator and most of the work is done by students”. David said that the English Language syllabus followed the learner-centred approach “because most of the time activities emphasized the participation of the learners and teacher was there as a facilitator“. David defined assessment as “a cue that we use to find out whether students have grasped what they have learned”.

He said that the purpose of assessment was to find out if the learners were following what was being done and that this enabled teachers to detect whether learning had taken place or not. David defined a marking key as “a guide to the examiner on how they should grade the students or what they should expect from the candidates”. He clarified his explanation by saying that “for you to achieve an A, your script or essay should look like that. [It is] a guideline to the examiner to say you should expect this and that [from] the candidates for them to score that.” David said that the other purpose of a marking key was to ensure consistency in marking so that examiners did not have different understandings of the same concept. The marking keys were only given to learners during the period in which a test or examination paper was being revised. David explained a rubric David in the following words:

Rubrics are just instructions. They are instructions that are given to students in an examination to follow. They are instructions [to] say, answer [...] five questions, and if they have answered six, then they have flouted the rule. If it says they [must] answer three, they would have flouted the rule.

David found it difficult to utilize the learner-centred approach. He explained this by saying because he said that sometimes teachers are compelled to teach in a teacher-centred because many of the learners are simply not eager to participate because of their limitations. David added that “they (the learners) cannot communicate very well in English and so the teacher ends up by taking over”. He explained that a learner-centred approach was unlikely to be successful because of these limitations. But David himself utilized both learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches to learning.

Depending on the response I get from the students because sometimes I come prepared for a learner-centred approach and you realize that the students are not following then you cannot keep on emphasizing it when the students are not following. And
sometimes you have to divert to another method that you think they can understand and you end up taking the [central] role and that becomes teacher-centred.

David said that learner-centred method was “sometimes very difficult to teach”. He also said he had problems with the learner-centred approach because:

From J.C [Junior Certificate], the method [that] teachers use is teacher-centred. So [when] students come here they expect the teacher to do everything, and when you try to do the learner-centred [approach], they think you are not doing the right thing.

David used a teacher-centred in one part of his lessons, and a learner-centred approach in another part of his lessons. David cited as an example of how he used the learner-centred approach the fact that he sometimes gave learners research to undertake that they were later required to present to the class. For instance, when he taught the skills necessary for argumentation, he presented learners with a topic that they were required to research, appointed three proposers and three opposers, a time keeper, a judge, and then allowed them to debate. All the members of the class were usually allowed to contribute.

The instructional methods that David normally used were presentations, debates, research and panel discussions. He did not use simulations and role-play because, as he stated, “I am not good at acting and to try and prepare students for acting gives me a problem.” David’s assessment approaches included tests, debates and written quizzes. Monthly tests were set for all classes. While the debates were only informally assessed, the while quizzes and class exercises were assessed but not recorded because, as David put it: “We only record monthly tests on the scheme books we are given.” David did not conduct oral assessment because the assessment syllabus did not include instructions for oral assessment. It only included instructions for the assessment of written work.

David only allowed learners to assess activities such as debates, fill-in-the-blanks and shorts answers. While David allowed the learners to pencil during assessment, he only used a red pen because, as he put it: “Exercise books are expected to be marked and you cannot give students marks in pencil [because] with time it will fade, and that is why I
prefer to mark in ink.” After the learners had completed their marking in pencil, David reviewed their assessments in red ink in order to confirm whether or not they had assessed the work correctly. David never taught learners how to assess compositions because he thought the assessment of compositions was too complicated the task for learners. But when the form fives approached the summative assessment period, he explained to them very carefully how their scripts would be assessed. David explained the reasons why he did not teach form fours assessment in the following words: “I will be preparing the form fives for the examination. But with the form fours I will teach content throughout until that time when they know what to do and how to approach things and the like.” When I observed David’s lessons, I observed that his main teaching activities were comprised of comprehensions, summaries and group discussions. I observed a total of three different classes over eight forty-minute lessons. In three of David’s the, classes the arrangement of a classroom closely resembled that of his colleagues.

On 26 March I observed David’s form four lesson. In this class 36 learners were engaged in grappling with comprehension questions. At the beginning of the lesson, David returned their assessed comprehension answers to learners. He then gave learners a short lecture on the techniques that one should use when reading and answering a comprehension. After the lecture, David asked the learners to read from a particular passage in turn. At the end of this communal reading, David described how he had witnessed the extinguishing of a similar Veldfire. David then read aloud the questions and the learners read out the answers that they had written. He then clarified the learners’ responses where necessary, and explained to them how they could use the passage to learn how to answer comprehension questions.

I also observed David’s form five lesson with 37 learners. This lesson was based on an examination paper in which there was a comprehension and a summary. David read out the questions from the paper and the learners read out their answers from their examination papers. David then clarified the learners’ responses and offered them guidance where necessary. David then explained the meaning of all the words in the vocabulary that he thought would be difficult for learners.
As a class exercise on summarization, David asked learners in turn to read a passage entitled “The Climbing Boys”. David occasionally interrupted the reading of the learners with corrections to their punctuation and pronunciation. When the reading had been completed, David asked learners to summarize the passage. When the learners complained that the passage was too difficult, David made the task easier by telling the learners that they should rather just list the important sentences from the passage. As the learners went on with their individual tasks, David went around the classroom and assessed what the learners were doing. When he realized that the learners were still struggling, he gave them various hints about how they could proceed.

I also observed another of David’s form four lesson with 34 learners. At the beginning of this lesson, David returned the English Language assessment. As he called out the individual names, it became evident that some of the learners were absent. Even so, David did not enquire about their whereabouts. After he had returned the assessment exercise, the asked volunteer learners to read a comprehension passage entitled “The Fire”. When they had finished doing this, David read out the passage questions and the learners took turns at reading their answers from their papers. As in all his other lessons, David elaborated on and clarified the learners’ responses.

David had access to the same documents that his colleagues had. These included textbooks and the teaching and examination syllabuses. It was evident that the English Language department staff lounge was being used as an English department storeroom because I saw heaps and heaps of books lying around. I asked David where they used them, and he said that they did not. The textbooks that he gave me were those of Pringle (1984), Grant (1999), Ethern (1994) and Bevan (1988).

When I examined the learners’ textbooks, I noticed that the assessments were completed by both David and the learners. The learners assessed their short answer questions by using pencil while David used a red pen to assess activities like summaries and compositions. The summary assessment revealed only the overall score and did not show how the rubric was used. For example, the assessment grade a one summary was
encapsulated in the word “good,” although no scores were attached nor any description given on how the assessment was arrived at.

For another summary of the passage entitled “Describing a Place”, an assessment score of 7 out of 10 was given. But no rubrics were included to show how the scores were obtained. In the assessment of a composition entitled “My first day at school”, a score of 24 out of 40 was given without any indication of how the score was calculated. In yet another summary, a learner was awarded 15 out of 25 possible marks, of which 9 was awarded for content and 6 for language. But they will also no rubrics to indicate why this learner had been awarded this total.

It was therefore widely apparent that none of the teachers had been properly trained in learner-centred assessment at the university, and David was no exception. He too had received no learner-centred assessment training at university although he was exposed to it on various occasions during his in-service training. But this training was totally inadequate because although it covered some methods of learner-centred instruction, it excluded training in assessment. The end result was that David was like pilot without a compass: he could conduct learner-centred instruction but he did not know how to conduct learner-centred assessment.

4.5. Summary of findings

4.5.1 Background of participants

All participants when possession of at least a university degree and a PGDE. All of the participants had acquired experience in the teaching of English Language for at least eight years and more. All of the participants were also trained in classroom assessment at the university while they completed their PGDE. But the kind of training that they were taught was almost entirely teacher-centred. Some participants were introduced to learner-centred pedagogy during their PGDE and some of them learned about learner-centred pedagogy as part of their in-service training. But the in-service training that was offered to some of the participants was limited to a communicative approach to the teaching of English Language, and some teachers have never been taught anything about learner-
centred pedagogy during in-service training. Generally, therefore, the participants had never received any instruction about learner-centred classroom assessment. And because this was the case, none of the participants had any materials or resources on the topic of learner-centred instruction and assessment. The only in-service training on assessment that they received was that which was given to all participants when they were engaged in assessing BGCSE.

4.5.2 Understanding of classroom assessment

Most of the teachers could define some of the concepts that were used in classroom assessment. These concepts included teacher-centred, learner-centred and marking key. Not all of the teachers could explain what a “communicative approach” was. Most of the teachers could describe instructional methods such as group work, presentations, debate, talk show, research and discussions. Teachers had difficulty in describing what rubric and portfolio assessments were.

4.5.3 Implementation of classroom assessment

Teachers basically used only two types of assessment: written and oral assessment. The written assessment followed the summative BGCSE assessment tasks which comprised composition, comprehension and summary. The written assessment tasks were embedded in class quizzes and end-of-month tests. Learners rarely assessed their own work, but in those few cases where they did happen to assess, they assessed only short answer questions and using either pencil or black ink pens. The scores that were awarded in learner assessments were not recorded, mainly because the scheme books made no provision for recording them. None of the learners ever used rubrics during the course of their assessments.

The teachers from the sample assessed written work about three times a week for each class by making use of a red ink pen. All the end-of-month tests were assessed by teachers who then recorded the learner scores in their scheme books. The teachers used rubrics that they called “marking schemes” to assess their learners’ work. Each teacher normally assessed his or her own class work.
4.5.4 Classroom observations

The average class was comprised of between 36 to 40 learners and there was a rough balance between the number of boys and girls in each class. It was customary for the learners to always face the teacher who stood in front of learners. Most of the girls occupied the front seats while the boys occupied all the back seats. Each learner’s seating accommodation comprised an individual table and a chair. All the learners were divided into pairs with one pair on the extreme left, one pair on the extreme right and the third pair in the middle of the class.

The most common lesson activity was in the form of out a question and answer exercise and subsequent teacher exposition. The other activities consisted of reading passages, discussion, talk shows, debates and group work. The teachers conducted their assessments by assessing individual learners’ work as they moved around the classroom. They made particular use of the observation technique in discussions, debates and talk shows. The teachers often involved learners in assessment as when they asked learners to exchange their exercise books for the purpose of assessment and when the learners were asked to present debates and talk shows. None of the teachers could explain how assessment was conducted. Nor could any of them explain the criteria for assessment to the learners.

The teachers used oral assessment to assess the learners’ speaking skills. These speaking skills were usually assessed in the context of debates, paired work, group discussions, presentations, research, panel discussions, speeches and talk shows. There were no stated or written criteria to guide the oral assessments, and no explicit scores were awarded for oral assessment which may account for the fact that they were never recorded.

4.6 Document analysis

The ELS is a learner-centred syllabus that recommends a communicative approach to the teaching and learning methods that it lists. The examination syllabus stipulates the format, tasks and the lengths of the examination papers. Both the textbooks of the learner and teacher are noticeably out of date and they are therefore strongly orientated towards
teacher-centred instruction. All of these textbooks are silent on the topic of how assessment should be conducted. The learner exercise books all contain tasks such as composition, summaries, comprehension and short-answer questions. Most of the assessment is undertaken by teachers who use red ink pens while learner assessment on objective questions is undertaken with the use of pencils or blue ink pens. All of the teachers have files from past BGCSE assessments that date as far back as 1995.

4.7 Teachers’ beliefs about classroom assessment

All the teachers in the sample were of the opinion that ELS is teacher-centred. They also believed that they had a reasonable understanding of both learner-centred pedagogy and teacher centred pedagogy. These teachers believe that assessment was useful because it motivated learners and helped the teacher to evaluate whether or not any learning had taken place. The teachers also believed that it is essential for the teacher alone to assess work is only teachers who have the training and experience of teaching that are necessary to perform assessment tasks. They also believe that only teachers should be allowed to conduct assessments by using red ink pens because that is what tradition dictated, and that all teachers should be prepared to assess tasks that most learners experienced as too difficult – tasks such as comprehension, compositions and summaries. The teachers believe that they should conduct assessment at least three times per week and that only their assessment scores should be recorded for later purposes. They also believe that teachers should be meticulous about assessing written tasks because these can be showcased.

The teachers in general believed that the learners lacked the necessary training and experience to assess complicated tasks, and that they could therefore only be asked to assess objective tasks by making use of pencils – even though the scores they awarded would not be recorded. The teachers believed that all assessment tasks should resemble those in the BGCSE. These included comprehension, compositions and summaries and because they were used as end-of-month tests, they were the only ones to be recorded in the scheme books.
4.8 Conclusion

This study has found that although most of the teachers in the sample had received some university training in classroom assessment, this training had never been concerned with learner-centred assessment. In a similar fashion, the in-service training the teachers received about how to conduct classroom assessments had not provided them with the necessary training to make use of learner-centred assessment techniques in their classrooms. It was also established that the teacher assessment techniques that were being used were similar to those teachers in other countries (Adams & Young 1998; Huinker & Karp 1995; McMorries & Booth 1993; Frazer & Marec 2004). The teachers' assessment techniques were heavily influenced by summative assessments which are basically paper-and-pencil assessments because summative assessment involves comprehension, compositions and summaries. This kind of assessment technique was the dominant assessment technique that was used by teachers. They supplemented the exercises they gave their learners with oral questions and quizzes. According to Killen (2000), these techniques are all decidedly teacher-centred assessment methods reference and they therefore do not complement BELS (1997) and BCB (1998).
CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study in light of the literature and the research questions. I have done this by comparing my findings in the light of the research questions to what I found in the literature.

5.1 Discussion of the findings
While all qualified teachers have the necessary academic training and experience to enable them to deliver the curriculum to learners, such training and experience do not always extend into the classroom to enable to learners realise the full potential of the curriculum. Some of the teachers had received some learner-centred pedagogy during short spells of in-service training while others had never received any formal in-service training. While all of the teachers had been properly trained at university, it seemed as though all the knowledge, skills, wisdom and creativity that they acquired there quickly withered away in a predominantly rigid and teacher-centred environment.

Although all the teachers in the sample were able to define learner-centred teaching and list the instructional methods that would be used in any learner-centred kind of education, they all experienced difficulty in describing how these instructional methods could be used in a teaching and learning situation. Teachers in the sample were also unable to organise learner-centred assessment. Most of these teachers were only duplicating their BGCSE assessment methods in their classrooms with very little input or participation from learners. It is clear that these teachers do not know which assessment techniques are relevant and how such techniques could be used to advantage. This was illustrated by David’s comment that when one is actually facing a class, one is quickly compelled to resort to a teacher-centred approach because learners in Botswana are simply not accustomed to the methods and atmosphere of learner-centred education.
David also noted that “learner-centred is sometimes very difficult to teach”. David’s
difficulty was shared by Mavis when she stated that “it is not easy to assess every student
in group work”.

The instructional methods that were being used by these teachers were not in line with
what Killen (2000) describes as “learner-centred pedagogy”. When conducting group
work, for instance, Morin usually divided her class into two groups. The end result of this
was that the groups were simply too large for any meaningful or productive discussions
to emerge. It was apparent that all of the teachers in the sample were not using any kind
of learner-centred pedagogy. On those occasions when they happened to stumble onto a
learner-centred technique, they would not use it with their learners. For example,
Thandi’s talk show with her form 5 class had to be aborted because she was not entirely
clear about how she should develop a talk show lesson. Mavis’s talk show also had to be
aborted because “the learners were not prepared for it”. I therefore reached the conclusion
that some of these methods were simply taken out of mothballs for the purpose of my
visit and were never actually used at any other time.

The fact of the matter is that these teachers were so conditioned by their teacher-centred
attitudes that even when they tried to use some kind of learner-centred technique such as
discussion, they quickly (and probably unconsciously) took over completely from their
learners and reverted to a strongly teacher-centred approach. All the teachers in the
sample dominated all of the classroom activities, whether they were discussions, debates,
reading exercises or question and answer exercises. David, for example, dominated the
discussion entitled “Veldt Fire”, Thandi dominated the discussions on the topic of “The
challenges faced by the youth nowadays” and “Local history.” Mavis dominated her talk
show exercise and Morin dominated the discussions and debates that she set up for her
classes. This is totally consistent with Fuller and Synder (1990) and Prophet and Rowell’s
(1990) finding that “teachers in Botswana use teacher-centred approaches which are
characterized by excessive teacher-talk, questions and anticipated answers being asked to
the whole class and individual work by learners on teachers’ assigned tasks”.

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All of these teachers used teacher-centred assessment approaches and failed to use any truly learner-centred or performance-based types of assessment such as those described by Maree and Fraser (2004). These teachers conducted only written assessments and oral assessments. The written assessments that they use are actually merely carbon copies of the summative BGCSE assessment which employs techniques such as composition, summary and comprehension. The teachers in the sample dominated all types of assessment. In those cases where learners were allowed to assess work, the scores that they were awarded were not recorded in this obviously means that they would not be used in any future context because no value was attached to them. None of the teachers gave their learners any kind of instruction about how to undertake assessment, nor did any of them ever reveal the assessment criteria to their learners. Key assessment tasks such as end-of-month tests were exclusively determined by the teachers. Even during performance-based activities such as debates, presentations and talk shows, the teachers still remained the sole assessment agents. They also based their oral assessments mainly on the kind of question and answer techniques that they habitually used in their lessons. This confirms the findings of Fuller and Synder (1990) and Prophet and Rowell (1990) when they stated that Botswana teachers’ lessons are characterized by a lot of questioning.

This study therefore established that this of Botswana teachers were practising assessment techniques that were not consistent with the recommendations of Adams and Young (1998), Huinker and Karp (1995) and Frisbie et al. 1993. All of these authorities recommend assessment techniques that go beyond the conventional pen-and-paper methods of summaries, compositions, short answer exercises and comprehension. Instead they recommend a variety of methods and techniques such as peer work, self-assessment, interviews, interpretation of video recordings, anecdotal records, matching, multiple-choice questions, and the use of e-mail and letter writing.

This study also found that these teachers were able to describe concepts that are used in assessment such as assessment, teacher-centred assessment, learner-centred assessment and marking key. The sample of teachers was also able to list and describe assessment
techniques such as group assessment, presentations, debates, talk shows, research and discussions. Morin’s definition of both teacher-centred and learner-centred assessment shows, for example, that she quite familiar with these concepts. She said:

“Teacher-centred” is basically if I can associate it to the lecture method where the teacher comes to the class and they just talk and talk with little participation of the students, but the learner-centred is the opposite of that. This is where the students are given ample opportunity and ample time to assert themselves in the activities, the majority of the lesson, of that particular lesson.

David’s explanation of communicative language teaching revealed that he was also familiar with the concept because he said: “Communicative language teaching emphasizes the importance of communication as a tool to teach language whereas learner-centred teaching revolves around the learners, much of the input should be done by learners.”

These findings are consistent with those of Adams and Young (1998) who demonstrated that teachers’ conceptions of assessment encompass a variety of assessment techniques, strategies and tasks. This study also established that these teachers were conversant with the following techniques and that some of them were used in their assessments: composition or essays, tests, quizzes, peer work, homework, short answer and summaries. These teachers’ assessment techniques were therefore consistent with the findings of Adam and Young (1998), Huinker and Karp (1995), McMorris and Booth (1993) and Frisbie et al. (1993) who produced evidence that teachers’ assessment techniques includes homework, teacher-made tests, standardized tests, essay, quizzes, pre-assessment, informal assessment and formative assessment.

It is notable, however, that the teachers in this study did never used any assessment techniques such as standardized tests, journals, portfolios, self-assessment, e-mail, interviews, anecdotal records, interpretation of video recordings, matching, completion, computational exercises and alternative forms of assessment. The assessment of the sample of teachers who are described in this research were strongly influenced by
summative assessment and particularly by the kind of written assessments and include summaries, short-answers, compositions and comprehension.

This study set out to establish whether teachers in the sample used assessment to enrich their instruction, to assess learner progress and to prepare learners for important final examinations. Thandi’s view of the purpose of assessment is the same as that held by her colleagues when she states: “If you do not assess at the end of the day, what will you say? What will you present and say the student has done in your lesson? And it is [also used] to check if you are on the right track as a teacher.”

These findings are consistent with those of Mason and Dobbs (2008) who found that teachers and other specialists regularly use assessment results to inform their instruction, to prepare learners for high-stakes examinations and to monitor learning progress. This study found that the assessment instruments of these teachers were based on a knowledge level if they were to be measured in terms of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Maree & Fraser 2004). Teachers’ assessment instruments were short answer, comprehension questions and compositions. The oral assessments involved learners in a production of feedback and making judgments about participating learners. Mavis listed the methods that are usually utilized by teachers when she noted that they use discussion, peer-work, group work, presentation, question and answer, observation, composition and summary.

This study found that written assessment grades were determined by academic factors because the participant teachers in this study only used past examination papers, assessment methods and the marking keys that are normally used in assessing summative examinations. The marking keys included assessment factors such as language, ideas and format. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Zhang et al. (2002) and Herrington et al. (2002) who found that although teachers considered academic factors such as improvement, ability level and class participation to be important, they also considered non-academic factors in non-written assessment. The teachers in this study only considered academic factors in written assessment but did consider other factors in non-written assessment.
Although the teachers in this study used performance assessment, their main objective was not to assess the activity but to develop the learners’ skills. This was demonstrated by Thandi when she said that the main purpose of conducting a talk show was to develop the learners’ speaking skills. She therefore did not assign any marks because she treated talk shows as ‘a kind of observation’. Mavis also stated that she preferred written work because it could be show-cased.

The most frequently used technique is the question and answer exercise. This is caused by the fact that teachers predominantly use a teacher-centred approach in their teaching, and they therefore need the question and answer method to develop and assess their lessons. All of the teachers in the sample believed that the EL curriculum is teacher-centred curriculum. This view was well represented by Mavis when she stated: “I would say it is (EL curriculum) teacher-centred, unless you the teacher twist it the other way round.” With regard to written assessments, these teachers used short answers, summaries and compositions because they can be used in summative assessments. These findings are similar to those of Pederson and Williams (2004) when they found that there was no single assessment method that was superior to any other.

The teachers in this study were introduced to classroom assessment when they were studying at university. The assessment techniques that they learned there were basically teacher-centred approaches and pen-and-paper assessments. The teachers in this study would find it difficult if not impossible to implement learner-centred assessment because they have not received any kind of training in how to do so. This was confirmed by Mavis when she said:

I don’t remember. Mh! I don’t remember happening. It is like when I was coming from a Community Junior Secondary School it was not like a really good orientation I was given. This was my first time I was teaching and nobody ever sat beside me and told me about it all those things I had to run around for myself most the teachers are not in-serviced. I do not know may be it is only in this school. I have never been oriented.
Morin’s confession that she had never read or considered whether the syllabus was teacher centred or learner-centred also confirmed that she had never received any training in learner-centred assessment.

Actually, I have never considered it, I have read it but I have never considered it. I consider in many respects it’s both. Yes! It’s both, it can be both depending on the topic but I have never really considered if it’s teacher-centred or learner-centred.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Zhang (2003) when he noted that teachers were not well prepared for classroom assessment because of inadequate training. This study established that teachers’ beliefs are influenced by a number of factors, the most prominent of which are the training that is given to teachers, the assessment strategy that is used in summative assessment and the assessment tradition in which teachers find themselves. The teachers’ beliefs in this study were influenced by their training in classroom assessment. They were never trained to conduct learner-centred assessment at university or as a part of in-service training, but were only trained in teacher-centred assessment by being exposed to the differences between teacher-centred and learner-centred instruction and assessment. This is confirmed by the belief of the teachers that the ELS is either teacher-centred or both teacher-centred and learner-centred. According to Mavis, the ELS are teacher-centred because, as she says: “I would say it is teacher-centred unless you the teacher twist it the other way round.”

The assessment tasks that are assessed and recorded by teachers comprise composition, comprehension and essays, which is exactly the same selection that is used in summative assessment. The other factor that influences teachers’ assessment beliefs is summative assessment. The ELS summative assessment comprises pen-and-paper assessment and as teachers want to take their learners beyond BGCSE, they assess their learners in terms of summative assessment. This was demonstrated by Thandi when she recalled that “we normally use past papers. We cut and paste.”

The assessment tradition has exerted an enormous influence on teachers’ beliefs. The assessment tradition has since time immemorial been essentially teacher-centred because
teachers have traditionally assessed every kind of exercise, whether written or non-written. The prevalent belief amongst teachers is that teachers must assess only what they teach. Thus, for example, Morin stated: “I am a t is always fair you should mark what you have taught.” It was the belief of the teachers in the sample that they should always personally and regularly assess so that they could showcase their work whenever necessary. This was indicated by Morin when she said: “It is always fair you should mark what you have taught. You can not teach and then ask somebody who is just there to come and mark, especially when it comes to classes.” This idea was shared by Mavis who stated: “If somebody comes from outside and says ‘How do you assess?’ what can you say about it? It is our work.” It is a venerable tradition that teachers only use reading pains when they assess learners’ work. David confirmed this when he said: “Exercise books are expected to be marked and you cannot give students to mark in pencil. With time it will fade. That is why I prefer to mark in ink.”

According to tradition, written assessments are administered to learners on a monthly basis, and all the teachers in this study recorded written assessments from their learners on a monthly basis. This was explained by David when he said: “[In] the scheme books that we are given, we only have to record monthly tests.” The findings from this study that teachers beliefs are influenced by a multiplicity of factors are in consonant in the results from that had been conducted from all other parts of the world, and particularly with the studies of Culbertson and Yan (2003), Czerniak et al. (1999), Katherine (2003), Cimbricz (2002), Yueiming, Zohreh and Bublaw (2006), Macmillian and Nash (2000) and Cimbricz and College (2002).

A study by Cohen and Fass (2001) found that there were no observable trends in teachers’ beliefs and in their classroom practices. But this study did detect some observable trends such as the teachers’ belief that they should all assess learners’ work regularly by using only red ink pens and that they should only record learner’s scores that had been obtained from their assessment. All the teachers in this study emphasized that teachers had to assess their learners, as when Morin stated: “I have to mark. I have to record work I have marked [and] not what somebody else has marked.”
Studies such as those of Johnson (2006), King et al. (2001), Judson (2006) and Lim and Chai (2007) established that teachers’ practices were at variance with their stated philosophical beliefs. But the findings of this study were that these teachers’ practices were indeed consonant with their stated philosophical beliefs. Morin’s belief that the syllabus is teacher-centred is a point in case. She said: “I would say it (the syllabus) is teacher-centred unless you the teacher twist it around.” This statement was corroborated by Mavis’s instructional and assessment strategies because she always developed her lessons through the question and answer technique.

A similar fit was observed between David’s philosophical beliefs and his classroom practices. David believed that it is difficult to utilize a learner-centred approach because “sometimes when you get to class you are compelled to drift to a sort of a teacher-centred [approach]”. Although David had been exposed to learner-centred instruction at university and during in-service training, he found that it was difficult to utilize learner-centred assessment in his lessons and therefore resorted to teacher-centred instruction.

As has already been mentioned, the amount of literature on classroom assessment from Botswana is very limited. The two studies that investigated teachers’ classroom practices were those of Prophet and Rowell (1990) and Fuller and Synder (1990), and they established that teachers in Botswana basically used a teacher-centred method of instruction that is characterised by an excessive amount of teacher-talk and passive and silent learners. This study established that because teachers mainly use the question and answer technique to develop their lessons, they invariably end up dominating their lessons. An example of this was Morin’s lesson on action words that was intended to be a discussion that would be led by Morin. She began by asking learners to define words, and as learners gave definitions, Morin responded with feedback that stated whether they were right or wrong. But in the end, Morin ended up by giving the explanations herself. All her learners were generally passive and silent during the lesson except for the ones who were answering the questions. In the same way, Thandi presented a lesson on local history that used a similar style of pedagogy to the one used by Morin. She first asked learners to list summary points and then wrote them all up on the board. She prescribed to
the learners about which points were suitable and helped them with their articulation of the points that were being made.

5.1.2 Conclusion
The findings in this study are consistent with studies that have been conducted both in Botswana and throughout the world, mainly by teachers who understand classroom assessment theory and practice but who find it extremely difficult to move from teacher-centred to learner-centred assessment. Such teachers are able to define assessment approaches and describe how they can be used in classroom situations. This study also established that teachers’ beliefs were influenced by a number of factors, and this is also consistent with the findings from other studies. This study established that the most important factors that influenced teachers’ beliefs were continuous and summative assessments, traditional assessment practices, and the expectations of supervisors.

Although the BCB (1998) and the BELS (1997) advocate learner-centred pedagogy, there is general lack of supporting documents that could assist teachers to implement the curriculum. Because the BGCSE and the assessment syllabus take the form of paper-and-pencil examination, they are essentially inimical to learner-centred assessment. All the textbooks are available do not help teachers to utilize learner-centred pedagogy because they contain nothing about on the correct methods of instruction. There is also a sad lack of documents that could guide teachers on how to conduct and assess learner-centred classrooms.

The beliefs of the teachers are influenced by a number of factors. These factors include the teachers’ knowledge base, the support that teachers receive and the materials and resources that are available to teachers. This is consistent with the findings of in the studies of Czerniak et al.(1999), Katherine (2003), and Cimbrick and College (2002). The beliefs that teachers entertain about teacher-centred instruction and assessment are illustrated by the following assertions:

- The teacher must always deliver the instruction.
- The teacher must always assess.
• The assessment must always be conducted by means of paper-and-pencil exercises.
• Learners can only assess trivial tasks.
• Only end-of-month scores can be recorded.

All these practices can provide evidence that the beliefs of teachers (as stated in the above assertions) exert a decisive influence on their assessment practices.

5.2. The relationship between theoretical framework and findings

5.2.1 Introduction

My study was guided by two theoretical frameworks, namely systems theory and emancipatory theory. I will begin by explaining the relationship between each theory and the study, and later explain the relationship between the two theories and the study. I will explain systems theory first. In explaining the relationship between this study and systems theory, I will frame the findings of this study in the context of systems theory. This comparison is better explained by answering the following questions:

• What is the system?
• What are the objects?
• What is the environment?
• Are the objects arranged hierarchically?
• What is the goal of the system?
• What role do objects play?
• What inputs and outputs are present?

5.2.2 Comparison between systems theory and the study

The system that was investigated in this study was the BGCSE or the Botswana education system. The purpose of this system is to provide education and, in particular, English Language skills and proficiency. The objects in this system are Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (DCDE), Examinations Research and Testing Division (ERTD), the Botswana Curriculum Blueprint, and all the
education officers and teachers who are employed in the system. The environment in which these objects interact is the school. Each of these objects has a function that it performs in the system. The MoE provides funding and leadership in education. The DCDE draws the curriculum and ensures its implementation, and the ERTD evaluates the curriculum. Teachers are the agents for the delivery of the curriculum while the schools are the venue in which the education service is delivered. The inputs in this system are the curriculum, the learners and the teachers. The latter are expected to be able to induce life-long competence in English Language skills and life-long education skills in the learners.

The environment in this study is made up of important objects like the MoE, ERTD, BELS, schools, teachers and learners. The MoE is responsible for leadership and for funding schools and educational activities in Botswana. There are mainly two departments that perform the functions of the MoE. These are the DCDE and ERTD (Robb et al. 1990). The MoE is charged with the responsibility of employing qualified teachers and providing school infrastructure such as classroom buildings and furniture. The number of learners per lesson averages out at between 36 and 40 per class in different parts of the system. All of the classes are furnished with tables, chairs, a chalkboard and duster but no other amenities or facilities. The poor infrastructure in classrooms and the high teacher/learner ratio is one of the main reasons why teachers find it difficult (if not impossible) to utilize a learner-centred approach in their teaching.

BEL (1997) recommends a learner-centred approach that is based on a communicative methodology. In addition to this, the curriculum compiled by BELS mandates the teaching of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to all learners. On the other hand, BELSSAS (1999), which was produced by ERTD, does not carry out any assessment of listening and speaking skills but only assesses reading and writing skills. This exerts an enormous influence on the way in which teachers conduct their assessment. This study has demonstrated that all the teachers in the research sample only assessed the written work and tasks such as (mainly) comprehension, summaries and composition – as is the case in the summative assessment. It is therefore obvious that the
failure of BELSSAS to assess skills such as speaking and listening has influenced the assessment practices of Botswana teachers.

The function of a school in Botswana is to provide teaching materials and in-service training for teachers. This research uncovered the fact that teachers are not provided with a suppression quality and quantity of teaching materials and resources. All the teacher and learner textbooks that I examined as one of the main aspects of the study proved to be outdated and irrelevant because all these textbooks recommend (either implicitly or explicitly) teacher-centred and not learner-centred classroom exercises. A selection of such textbooks includes Pringle (1984), Bevan (1988), Russel (1982), Forest (1993) and Ethern (1994). The schools have also failed to provide any in-service training for teachers so that they will become familiar with and skilled in the methods of learner-centred pedagogy – which are very different from those of teacher-centred pedagogy. The DCDE has also failed to provide the necessary in-service training that would enable teachers to relinquish their habitual teacher-centred methods in favour of learner-centred pedagogy. Mavis made it clear that she had never received any orientation on how to teach or how to assess.

I don’t remember. Mh! I don’t remember happening. It is like when I was coming from a Community Junior Secondary School it was like a poor orientation I was given. This was my first time I was teaching and nobody ever sat beside me and told me about it all those things I had to run around for myself as most of the teachers are not in-serviced. I do not know may be it is only in this school where orientations are never conducted.

All of the English teachers whom I investigated were still firmly fixed in the paradigms of teacher-centred pedagogy simply because they had never received any training in learner-centred pedagogy, and because they had never been given the necessary textbooks and resources, and because they had been denied any opportunity for in-service training. It is therefore completely understandable that teachers should default to teacher-centred pedagogy which is the method they encountered in school and in which they were largely trained. Notwithstanding these facts, the MoE has given teachers BELS (1997) which recommends a learner-centred syllabus and learner-centred classroom activities.
But the teachers who are at the receiving end have not – for the reasons mentioned above and elsewhere in this study – made any effort to align their teaching and learning methods with those outlined in the syllabus. Even in those cases where this some teachers (such as David) had been exposed to some basic in-service training in how to manage learner-centred pedagogy, they also neglect to build on such training and also resort to teacher-centred approaches to learning in their classrooms.

5.2.3 Conclusion

Systems theory describes how objects interact in an environment so that the system attains its goal. This study has explained how the different branches of the education system interact to perform their duties so that the envisaged education service can be offered to the learners of Botswana. What the study found is that the different branches of the education system such as the MoE, DECD, ERTD, the teachers and the schools are all performing their duties inadequately and ineffectually in terms of their own stated desire for learner-centred education. The end result is that the kind of learner-centred pedagogy that is envisaged by MoE is not being delivered in schools.

5.2.4 Comparison between the emancipatory theory and the study

I will now explain the relationship that exists between the emancipatory theory and this study. I will do this by drawing questions from the theory as a way of comparing the two, and will then draw conclusions about the relationship. The relevant are: What is the purpose of emancipatory theory? Are the teachers’ challenges valid? Are teachers aware that they are facing challenges? Has the situation affected the teachers’ professionalism? Are teachers doing anything to make the authorities aware of their situation? Is there any willingness on the part of teachers to free themselves from the situation?

The primary goal of the emancipatory theory is to free people from the forces that operate in their environment to oppress them. We have seen how the teachers described in this study face the challenges of implementing a learner-centred curriculum that they are mandated to implement by the MoE – with little or no support from the authorities. These
challenges to teachers are further compounded and undermined by their own beliefs and conditioning which prevent them from relinquishing the conventional teacher-centred methods of teaching and adopting a learner-centred curriculum and method of delivery. The main challenge for these teachers is that the BGCSE demands that all teachers should utilize a learner-centred pedagogy while they are prevented from doing so by a lack of training and support from the department and by the pressures of having to meet the demands of the final examinations that all learners must write.

The major hindrance that prevents teachers from implementing a learner-centred curriculum and method of teaching is that the teachers have received no formal training about what a learner-centred curriculum means and certainly none in methods of learner-centred assessment. In addition to this, as was mentioned above, teachers have received no in-service training in the methods of learner-centred pedagogy. All of the training the teachers in the sample received at university was teacher-centred and none of the teachers were exposed to any kind of learner-centred training as part of their in-service training. Mavis made this clear when she said:

I don’t remember. Mh! I don’t remember happening. It is like When I was coming from a Community Junior Secondary School it was not like a really good orientation I was given my classes this was my first time I was teaching it for the first time and nobody ever sat beside me and told me about it all those things I had to run around for myself most of the teachers are not in-serviced. I do not know maybe it is only in this school I have never like I was oriented.

The resources at the disposal of the teachers are all orientated towards teacher-centred pedagogies. In the first place, the very high numbers of learners in each lesson make it difficult (if not impossible) for teachers to utilize a learner-centred pedagogy. The number of learners per lesson ranges from between 36 and 40 per lesson. David was also required to take an extra lesson for a teacher who had not yet taken up his post as a teacher. This over burdened David because the number of learners he had to accommodate was already very high. Thandi’s situation was similar to that of David. In addition to her role as the head of the English Department in her school, she had to teach four other classes, of all which was a form five class that contained 40 learners.
All of the teacher texts and learner textbooks such as Bevan (1998), Pringle (1984), Russel (1982), Forest (1993) and Ethern (1994), are very old and are were never designed to support a learner-centred curriculum because they were specifically written to facilitate a teacher-centred curriculum. Thus, although these books contain exercises such as comprehensions, summaries, compositions and reports, they are silent about how these activities should be assessed. This obviously compels teachers to utilize a teacher-centred pedagogy rather than a learner-centred pedagogy.

There is a fit between what the teaching syllabus and the assessment syllabus wants. Since BELS (1997) is a learner-centred syllabus, it recommends a communicative approach to teaching language. BELSSAS (1999), by contrast, is a pen-and-paper assessment syllabus that recommends essays, compositions comprehension and summary. Since this directly influences the teaching and assessment styles of teachers, they naturally tend to teach and assess what the summative examination assesses. This is in fact exactly what teachers were doing in this study. Thandi illustrates this point when she says: “We normally use past papers. We cut and paste. Even if you want to use your own you can’t because we are looking at the time factor.”

This study also demonstrated how extremely deeply the teachers believe in a teacher-centred pedagogy. This is evident from the way they make assumptions about the syllabus, the way in which they arrange is seating in their classrooms, and the way they conduct classroom assessment. Teachers do not read the syllabus to confirm whether or not they are teaching in a teacher-centred or learner-centred way. When I asked Morin, for instance, whether the syllabus was teacher-centred or learner-centred, she said: “I would say it is teacher-centred unless you the teacher twist it the other way round.” When I asked Morin the same question, she made a similar response:

Actually, I have never considered it. I have read it but I have never considered it. I consider in many respects it’s both. Yes! It’s both. It can be both depending on the topic but I have never really considered if it’s teacher-centred or learner-centred.
The seating arrangement in all the lessons was uniform and conventional. All the learners faced the teacher who understood or sat in a commanding position in front of the class. All girls mainly occupied the front rows while the boys occupied the back rows. This is a classic seating arrangement for supporting teacher-centred pedagogy. Apart from the fact that summative assessments are written, all the teachers normally make use of pen-and-paper assessment methods because they believe that they can only show-case their assessments when they have the evidence in the form of pen-and-paper assessments. Mavis, for example, said: “The written one is followed, and if somebody comes from outside and says how do you assess, what can you say?”

Teachers believe that they are the ones who can only assess their learners. They also firmly believe that they should not ask the learners or other teachers to mark their learners’ work. The teachers all believed that only they should assess what they have taught their learners. These teachers believe that they are better positioned to assess learners because of their training and experience. When I asked Morin who she believed should assess learners’ work, she replied:

    It is always fair you should mark what you have taught. You cannot teach and then ask somebody who is just there to come and mark, especially when it comes to classes. I feel I have to mark what I taught my class.

Teachers also believe that when learners do carry out assessments, they should only record the results in pencil so that the teacher can later reassess the work by using a red ink pen. It therefore seems obvious that it is the beliefs of teachers that influence them to utilize a teacher-centred pedagogy.

According to Goosen (2004), emancipatory theory calls for active cooperation among all the victims of an oppressive system. What this study established is that teachers are oblivious of the situation in which they find themselves in. As a result of this, teachers are reactionary and they never interrogate their policy documents with a view to identifying and establishing the purpose and intentions of policy documents. According to Helsby (1995), the teachers in this study are “readerly” rather than “writerly” (terms
that were explained above) because they are passive and somewhat indifferent to their situation and condition.

If one judges by Helsby’s (1995) criteria, the professional confidence of teachers in this study should be described as low because these teachers passively react to policy statements because they are manipulated and intimidated by the education by authorities. The professional consciousness of teachers is also extremely low because they never interrogate policy statements and practices. For instance, although teachers have never been trained to implement a learner-centred curriculum, they are still expected to do so even though they do not complain about their lack of training. They are also silent about the excessive numbers of learners in their classrooms and the outdated textbooks that they are compelled to use. No teacher ever complains officially about the situation because it looks as though every teacher is coping with the situation in his or her own way. For example, teachers find their own documents and information and then teach their own way. This is evidenced by the words of Mavis when she said: “It was not like a really good orientation I was given my classes. This was my first time, and nobody ever sat beside me and told me about it all those things. I had to run around for myself.”

Although David was aware that the syllabus is learner-centred, he always finds that his attempts to utilize a learner-centred pedagogy fail because of his lack of training and resources. We therefore immediately resort to his default position of utilising a teacher-centred approach. He captured this in these words:

> Depending on the response I get from the students because sometimes I come prepared for a learner-centred approach and you realize that the students are not following then you cannot keep on emphasizing on it when the students are not following and sometimes you have to divert to another method that you think they can understand and you end up taking the role and that becomes teacher-centred.

The findings of this study also confirm that the emancipatory theory is applicable to the teaching and learning methods that prevail in classrooms. This study has established that although these teachers face enormous challenges, they have no means or methods to
interrogate the status quo. Instead, they simply devise their own ways of coping with the status quo. Teachers’ challenges include inappropriate tertiary training, inadequate in-service training, inappropriate resource materials and support documents, high learner numbers and inappropriate belief systems.

5.2.5 Conclusion
This study utilized two theories: systems theory and emancipatory theory. In terms of my study these two theories complement one another. Emancipatory theory states that when teachers are faced with curriculum challenges, they simply devise methods to cope with their situation. In this study, the challenges that face teachers include inappropriate training, completely inadequate and dated materials, too many learners in each class, and incorrect teacher belief systems. These Botswana teachers – through no fault of their own because it is the MoE that should take the initiative – lack the professional interpretation skills, the professional confidence and the professional awareness that are needed to emancipate them from the impossible double bind in which they find themselves. The result of this is that teachers do not have the requisite skills and knowledge to deliver a learner-centred curriculum and that means that the education system is failing to achieve its stated objectives. When these teachers were faced with the challenge of implementing a new assessment method, they simply resorted to a kind of assessment methods with which they were already familiar in order to cope with challenges that were riddled with contradictions and absurdities.

Teachers in this study utilise Proudford’s professional confidence and do not utilise professional interpretation and professional consciousness. Professional consciousness relates to the capacity of teachers to ask questions about taken for granted policy issues and practices (Proudford 1998). In this study teachers do not exhibit any professional consciousness. For example, the issue of whether the English Language Syllabus is teacher centred or learner centred is not being interrogated by teachers but instead teachers make their own conclusions without discussing it with their colleagues. Similarly, the issue of what accompanies a teacher or learner centred pedagogy in terms
of delivery methods, assessment methods and textbooks are also not being debated by teachers.

Professional interpretation occurs when teachers deconstruct, analyse and criticise various policies in their own interests and on the behalf of those for whom they are concerned. Teachers in this study are not using Proudford's (1998) professional interpretation because teachers in this study do not interpret, analyse or criticise but accept policy as it is. This approach is also evidenced in the way teachers define concepts like assessment and teaching methods. For instance Mavis defines assessment as

I think it is just to check if what you were teaching really got to children and if they grasped what you were teaching them.

This definition is by no means basic and it does not involve the critical and the analytical aspects that Proudford writes about. Generally teachers' instructional methods involved pair work, group work, presentation and question and answer. On the surface, these are learner centred approaches by the way teachers in this study utilised them relegated these approaches to teacher centred pedagogy because of the teachers' dominance in all activities and the monopoly the teachers enjoyed in assessing activities under these methods. Teachers did not use documents which encouraged critical, analytical synthesising activities and responses but rather used the old documents and texts which encouraged recall and memorisation. These were documents and textbooks prescribed by the Curriculum Department.

Teachers in this study utilise Proudford's (1998) professional confidence which occurs when teachers believe that they have the authority and capacity to make autonomous decision about their work and when they feel that they are able to cope with the demands of their work. A common practice by teachers in this study is that they do not read the syllabus; they have not ascertained whether the syllabus is learner centred or teacher centred but they rely on their professional confidence to deliver the curriculum to the learners. For example Morin referring to whether the syllabus is teacher or learner centred said
Actually, I have never considered it, I have read it but I have never considered it. I consider in many respects it’s both. Yes! It’s both, it can be both depending on the topic but I have never really considered if its teacher centred or learner centred.

Similarly Mavis was convinced that the syllabus was teacher centred that she said “I would say it is teacher centred, unless you the teacher twists it around”.

Systems theory explains that the elements of a system survive because of the way they interact with their environment. This interaction needs to be energized by means of inputs for the system will produce outputs. According to Heylighen (1998:1), “What comes out needs to be gotten in first.” This study demonstrated how teachers lack the requisite training, how poor their resources are, and how inappropriate their belief systems are. All these teachers are thus completely unprepared to implement a learner-centred curriculum because little interaction ever takes place between the policy makers and the policy implementers. If one therefore examines the conclusions of this study from a systems theory point of view, one notices how the kinds of inputs that are being fed into the system are actually producing expected outputs. In addition to this, they are basic contradictions within the system itself that make all of its aspirations (such as learner centred curriculum and assessment) self-defeating and absurd.
CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Learner-centred curriculums are already being implemented successfully in other countries like South Africa (Maree & Fraser: 2004). Botswana must also do its best to ensure that the learner-centred curriculum becomes a success. I have made various recommendations below which, if implemented, will ensure that the MoE will attain its goals with regard to a learner-centred curriculum and learner-centred assessment.

6.1 Recommendations to all stakeholders

There must be a concerted effort among all stakeholders such as the DCDE, the ERTD and teacher training institutions and schools to make sure that the learner-centred curriculum will become a success.

6.1.1 Recommendations to the DCDE

The DCDE must ensure that all stakeholders are made equal partners in the process of developing and implementing the curriculum. These stakeholders are teacher training institutions, the ERTD and the schools.

The MoE should supply all teachers and schools with the necessary resources to enable them to be in a position to implement the curriculum effectively. In particular, the DCDE needs to purchase a variety of modern teacher and learner textbooks and resources that embody the learner-centred methodology and assessment strategies.

The DCDE must make sure that all teachers are adequately trained to undertake learner-centred assessment successfully. The successful training of teachers in learner-centred approaches will require a carefully planned programme of action that will enable all teachers to be adequately furnished with the skills and expertise they require. The DCDE
must develop and implement monitoring activities to ensure that remedial activities are always instituted in good time.

6.1.2 Recommendations for the ERTD

Because it is the department that is responsible for the crucial exit examinations, the ERTD should design assessment strategies that complement a learner-centred curriculum. Their assessment strategies should incorporate continuous assessment so that those teachers and learners will be able to use the assessment techniques that cannot be assessed in the restricted and contradictory BGCSE environment.

The ERTD should also manage the selection of national assessors in a credible and professional manner so that the quality of the assessors who are selected will confirm the credibility of the examination.

6.1.3 Recommendations for teacher training institutions

Teacher training institutions have a responsibility to produce teachers who thoroughly conversant with the proper uses of a learner-centred methodology and learner-centred assessment. These institutions must also have materials and resources (such as textbooks and teaching aids) that answer to the needs of a learner-centred pedagogy. In order to achieve this end, teacher training colleges need to introduce the following changes: the rewriting of the teaching and assessment syllabuses so that they become closely aligned to a model of learner-centred pedagogy. They should also introduce a variety of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure these new methods will operate successfully in practice.

6.1.4 Recommendations for schools

Schools should devise internal workshops and sessions through which teachers will be able to share whatever knowledge and understanding they have of learner-centred pedagogy and assessment. Such information could be shared by means of inter-school and inter- and intra-departmental in-service activities and workshops. The kind of information that is shared should include methods of interpreting and understanding the syllabuses, ways of sharing expertise and knowledge about available materials and resources, methods of utilising various learner-centred teaching and learning methods,
and practical techniques for conducting learner-centred assessment, recording and the reporting of learner-centred assessment activities.

6.2 Recommendations for further research
Because learner-centred education in Botswana remains largely unexplored territory, it would be useful if researchers could make a more details study of the following topics;

6.2.1 The extent of teacher knowledge of methods of learner-centred education
6.2.1 Teacher attitudes to learner-centred education
6.2.3 Evaluations of learner-centred pedagogy in Botswana

6.3 Limitations of the study
Since my study used a qualitative research design with a very small sample of qualified English teachers from secondary schools in Botswana, its findings cannot be generalised to all teachers throughout the country.

6.4 Conclusions
There is a dire need for the Botswana Education authorities to revisit their launch of the learner-centred approach in education. There is also an urgent need for a much greater amount of commitment and involvement by all the stakeholders concerned because radical policy changes cannot be left to individual disempowered teachers. Such changes need to be effected by all interested stakeholders acting in unison towards a common goal.
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