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**Managing the implementation of the assessment policy in the
Senior Certificate Band**

By

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To my colleagues remember:

Not to follow where the path may lead. Instead go where there is no path and leave a trail.

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Abstract

Educators in the basic education system are facing extreme challenges in assessing learners in general and in implementing assessment policy in particular. These challenges influence the pass rate, particularly in grade 12. The validity of the evidence of the learners' performance depends on the quality and type of assessment tasks administered to those learners. Therefore, it was critical that those aspects, which pose challenges in the management of the assessment policy within the education system, be addressed by developing policies which would assist educators in managing assessment at school, since assessment forms an integral part of teaching and learning. Support programmes on policy implementation had to be developed for learners and for the training of educators, the implementation of which should improve the pass rate. These programmes had to include the conditions and roles of provincial and district education officers. A South African policy development model had to be developed to address the unique situation of developing such programmes.

The introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting (NPRR) were some of the measures aimed at improving learner performance and assisting educators in implementing and managing assessment which is in line with national policy.

An exploratory study, aimed at providing a broad framework on policy analysis, was used with the view to understand how the NCS and National Protocol for Recording and Reporting are managed. A proportional representative sample of 25% of the schools from the six clusters in the Mopani district formed part of this study. To ensure that the historically white, urban and rural schools were represented, an incidental biased sampling method was used.

Data obtained from the questionnaire indicates that educators have knowledge of the various policies, acts and guidelines which should be used in assessing learners. However, some data indicates that some educators know about the existence of such policies, acts and guidelines but do not have knowledge of the content thereof. Data obtained from the interviews indicates that educators either know the content of policies or are only aware of them. Therefore, the lack of knowledge of policy content which regulates the practice of a policy has an influence on the teaching and assessing of learners.

Summary

During monitoring and moderation of educators' portfolios, it was revealed that, in most instances, the minimum requirements, as indicated in the Subject Assessment Guidelines, were not met when Continuous Assessment (CASS) for learners were compiled. The non-compliance of implementing CASS requirements could be attributed to critical factors, including communication, resources, dispositions or attitudes, and bureaucratic structures. Implementation of policy is a dynamic process which involves interaction of many variables which is highlighted in this study.

The specific objectives of this study were:

- to determine whether the assessment practices are in line with national policy;
- to determine whether the implementation of the NCS is managed in a way which would ensure effective learning;
- to provide a broad framework of public policy analysis as a context within which to understand assessment in the NCS, as indicated in the NPRR; and
- to critically analyse the current assessment practices in schools;

The thesis employed an empirical approach designed in three stages: firm and aggregate level analysis using official data which included monitoring instruments; firm level analysis from the questionnaire; and, finally, interviews aimed at providing deeper insights into the underlying issues observed from the data collected in the questionnaire. Literature review on Public Administration and policy analysis provided a framework in understanding how the NCS was developed in the context of policy development models in South Africa.

Data collected from the questionnaire shows that educators are aware of the policies which govern their assessment practices. However, analysed data indicates that some educators do not know the content of the said policies.

The study reveals that it is not a foregone conclusion that, once a policy has been developed, it will automatically be implemented in the manner which the developers had hoped for. Successful

implementation depends on whether a policy is conceptually clear and simply-stated in terms which indicate the desired changes to be achieved, and its intended beneficiaries. If a policy is supported throughout the implementation stage and driven by effective, skilled, experienced and committed leadership, the chances of its success are enhanced.

The data analysis also reveals that programmes of assessment and schools' annual programme of assessment were not developed as required by the NPRR.

The conclusion reached, is that policy content will always reflect the interpretation process associated with it and that its implementation process affect individual stakeholders differently. It may be argued that there could be varied degrees of policy implementation due to policy interpretations and the reality of politically strong leadership. However, the approach to policy implementation used by some leaders is derived from a system of values and assessment of situational factors operating as a general framework for decision-making regarding a particular policy.



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List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
AOU	Afrikaanse Onderwys Unie
CASS	Continuous Assessment
DoE	Department of Education
EEA	Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998
FET	Further Education and Training
GCIS	Government Communication and Information Services,
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NPA	National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996
NEC	National Executive Council of the African National Council
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NPRR	National Protocol on Recording and Reporting
NQF	National Qualification Framework.
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PCAS	Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS)
PEU	Professional Education Union;
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAG	Subject Assessment Guidelines
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SASA	South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SAOU	Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwyse Unie

Key words

assessment policy

assessment practices

clearing houses

continuous assessment

implementation

management

national curriculum statement

public administration

public policy



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ADDENDA

- A. Questionnaire
- B. Letter of request
- C. Letter from the department