

**PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY EDUCATORS  
REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT IN THE SENIOR PHASE**

by

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*“Nothing Before God Goes Unnoticed”*

*May God Bless You*

## DEDICATION

- ❖ Firstly I dedicate this research study to my late father, Andries Makoba Mukwevho, whose mentorship lives on.
- ❖ Secondly, my husband Tshimangadzo Dzegere, for his perseverance, support and understanding, my son Daven and my granddaughter Pfarelo Dzegere.



## DECLARATION

I declare that:

**“Problems experienced by Educators regarding the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment in the Senior Phase”**

is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....  
**POPPY MARIA DZEGERE**



## EDITING DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have edited the language of this dissertation up to and including Chapter 5.



Dr Martha S van Wyk

29 May 2006



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to *“explore the problems experienced by educators with regard to the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment in the Senior Phase”*. According to the National Assessment Policy (RSA: No 27 of 1996), Outcomes-Based Assessment is a process of gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner, on an ongoing basis against clearly defined criteria, using a variety of methods, tools, techniques and contexts, recording the findings, reflecting and reporting by giving positive, supportive and motivational feedback to learners, other educators, parents and other stakeholders.

Govender (2003: 22) states that: *“Educators somehow fail to understand that Outcomes-Based Assessment is a process which must be followed and adhered to for assessment to be successful and easily understood.”*

In order to explore the problems regarding the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment, the data collection methods utilised included: focus group interviews, questionnaire, observation and literature review. The participants comprised of thirty-six educators involved in the Senior Phase and four District Officials responsible for the same phase in the curriculum delivery.

The major findings indicate that educators are experiencing problems regarding the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment in the classroom. The findings also point out that educators were inadequately trained for the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment processes in the teaching and learning environment.

The researcher concluded that something must be done and therefore the study concludes with recommendations that have been made with the aim of resolving the problems as stated above.

## ACRONYMS

AEAA	Association for Educational Assessment in Africa
CAT	Cluster Assessment Team
DAT	District Assessment Team
FET	Further Education and Training
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GICD	Gauteng Institute for Curriculum Development
HOD	Head of Department
IEB	Independent Education Board
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBA	Outcomes-Based Assessment
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
RNCE	Revised National Curriculum in Education
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SAT	School Assessment Team
SMT	School Management Team
PAT	Provincial Assessment Team



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

### 1.1 HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

In South Africa in recent years, the Department of Education (DoE) has been involved in developing a new post-apartheid curriculum called Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), in response to the popular reflection of a system established along racial lines and perpetuated as a mainstay of suppression and inequality. Maree and Fraser (2004) indicate that as far back as the 1980's, business leaders started to voice their opinions concerning South African education, insofar as skills required by the modern workplace were dissimilar to the direction in which the education system was preparing learners. Almost a quarter of a century later, Coetzee (2002: 3) indicates that survival in the global market place demands that South Africa has a national education and training system that provides quality learning that is responsive to the ever-changing influences of the external environment and that promotes the development of a nation committed to lifelong learning.

Education is important for development, with most countries structuring, planning and operating their education system to achieve goals and objectives that will address employment needs and facilitate local and national developments. These objectives constitute the national goals of education (Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA) 2004: 31), to which all educational activities, including co-curriculum ones, are geared towards achieving. Indeed, few societies today are interested in a system of education that supplies learners with knowledge for its own sake; rather, they increasingly recognise it as an instrument of individual and societal development and welfare (Ibid: 31).

Traditional education systems have tended to cater for learners as passive recipients of knowledge, who were regarded as empty vessels into which facts and figures could be poured. These old education systems were characterised by rote-learning, geared to assessment by written examination of the memorisation of largely content-based curricula. The stakeholders were not encouraged to comment or contribute to the process of curriculum development, and any learning that did take place was largely against a backdrop of inflexible timeframes.

When South Africa discarded apartheid, including its racially divisive 'Bantu education' system, it had the opportunity to move into line with the rest of the world, which itself was reforming its education policies to keep pace with a rapidly growing set of new demands, whether social, economical or technological. At government level, these requirements are being recognised, with the current Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor (2006), calling South Africa to recognise the importance of education as an instrument of economic policy and a key resource for social development (AEAA: 2003). Previously, the former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, asserted that: "the time has come for us to break completely all colonial shackles and democratise our education systems as a continent. We need to develop sustainable education systems that are responsive to prioritised national skills" (AAEA: 2003).

### **1.1.1 Change in the education system**

In March 1995, the South African Government (formed by the majority party, the African National Congress (ANC)), announced their plans to implement an OBE approach to teaching. Almost two years later, in February 1997, former Minister of Education, Professor Bengu, announced the implementation of the Curriculum 2005 project – the National Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The history of the emergence of Curriculum 2005 has deeper meaning than the transition to democracy in 1994, but its specific form began to take shape in this context. According to Mthembu (2003:10) the intention of the government to transform education was to promote the model aligned to the National Qualification Framework, by linking theory and practice, through scrutiny of assessment, qualifications and competency on a skills-based level.

Curriculum 2005 was defined as a policy document to implement OBE and the NQF in formal teaching, as a way of organising learning that would replace the old syllabus. It was a statement of classroom and assessment practices for OBE, with phasing in of specific outcomes for each learning area. The first curriculum statement that was developed was the Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework document (DoE, 1996), which was informed by principles of the following documents:

- The White Paper on Education and Training (1996);
- The South African Qualifications Act (SAQA) (Act No 58 of 1995); and
- The National Policy Act (Act No 27 of 1996).

Curriculum 2005 is the vehicle for curriculum transformation in South Africa, informed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA): "... the highest law in the country and all other laws and conduct must be in accordance with the Constitution. The Constitution provides the basis on which the National and Provincial Government can act in the field of education" (Maree & Fraser, 2004: 2).

The provisions for education are set out in Section 29 of the Constitution (Act No 108 of 1996), (RSA 1996). Amongst other provisions, Section 29 recognises that all citizens have the basic right to education which, at present, is education to the level of Grade 9. In addition, all have the right to further education, which means that the state has a constitutional duty to develop education so that further education (and not just basic education) becomes increasingly available and accessible. Education has to be transformed and democratised; that is, transformed in accordance with the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. The Constitution is aimed at healing the divisions of the past and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. As well as improving the quality of life of all citizens and freeing their potential, it is aimed at laying the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law. Building such a united and democratic South Africa would allow the country to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

According to Govender (2003: 1): "No longer would curriculum shape and be shaped by narrow visions, concerns and identities. No longer would it reproduce the limited interests of any one particular grouping at the expense of another. It would bridge all, encompass all. Education and training, content and skills, values and knowledge, all would find a place in Curriculum 2005".

Curriculum 2005 revolves around the concept of Transformational OBE, and to be certified by the new NQF, described by Coetzee (2002: 3), as a set of principles and

guidelines by which records of learner achievement are registered to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring an integrated system that encourages lifelong learning. This approach to teaching is challenging to all stakeholders, as OBE represents a serious paradigm shift for all role-players. It also demands discipline, accountability and responsibility towards an individual's education.

### **1.1.2 The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education**

Pretorius (1998:ix) argue that: "Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) is nothing new. It has always been with us. We are outcomes-based when we teach a child to cross the road safely. We know exactly what the child must do and see it in our mind's eye. We go to great lengths to teach the skill correctly to the child and insist that he or she practices until we are convinced that he or she can do it safely", by spelling out the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the process. Most importantly, the learning outcomes and assessment standards were designed down from the critical and developmental outcomes.

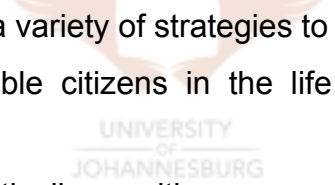
The learning areas offered in the National Curriculum Statement (Grades 7-9), are Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Technology, Life Orientation and Arts and Culture. These eight learning areas are compulsory in Grades 7-9. There is also learner support materials related to the stipulated learning areas. A school that deviates from this policy can be reprimanded by the Department of Education (DoE) for not complying with the requirements; so full compliance is therefore envisaged to be met by all schools for Grades 7-9.

### **1.1.3 The principles of Outcomes-Based Education**

OBE is expected to achieve clarity of focus, give expanded opportunities, meet high expectations and design down. The critical and developmental outcomes are a list of outcomes that are derived from the Constitution. They describe the kind of citizen the education and training system should aim to create, and the critical outcomes envisaged a learner who is able to:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;
- Organise and manage activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively, using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- Use Science and Technology effectively and critically show responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes envisage learners who are also able to:

- 
- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
  - Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
  - Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
  - Explore education and career opportunities; and
  - Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

South Africa decided to choose transformational OBE because it satisfies the requirements of its citizens. The Constitution stipulates that with regard to the type of learners, educators and communities it envisaged, the type of education to be delivered should be able to meet the economical and sociological needs of the country. The introduction of the OBE approach to the education system brought about a new way of assessing learners, known as the Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) approach. The researcher's perception is that educators and other stakeholders should understand OBE before implementing the OBA approach. The Independent Education Board (IEB 1998: 27) echoed these sentiments by stating



that teaching methods in OBE is a new approach and educators should understand these changes in order to manage assessment in the classroom effectively”.

The researcher found it fit to explore problems experienced by educators regarding the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase. The next chapter will focus more on the inquiry of the research study.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Against the background as discussed in the previous paragraph, the problem this research is addressing is that educators experience problems regarding the implementation of OBA. It is envisaged that this study will undertake to explore these problems, identifying and describing them, and eventually making recommendations for their resolution.

## **1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the educators understand, implement and apply the new assessment policy of the National Department of Education, and if not, how they can be assisted in doing so. It is also important to get the parents involved so that they can at least see how their children are progressing, for this would be proof that the assessment structures applied by the educators are functional and effective.

In order to obtain the relevant information, the following critical questions will guide the research problem, and these are the objectives that will also guide the whole research process:

- Do educators understand the implementation of the National Policy on Assessment?
- Are educators adequately trained in the implementation of OBA?
- Are educators able to select the appropriate methods, tools and techniques?
- Are educators able to administer, score and interpret results of the learners?
- Can educators record and report on learners' progress?

- Is there parental involvement?
- Are the assessment structures functional and effective?

#### **1.4 RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC**

OBA is quite a new way of assessing learners in the OBE approach to teaching and learning, and the researcher argues that assessment is an integral part of the educators daily professional competence, though most of the educators are not yet fully conversant with it. The researcher has decided to explore the problems experienced by educators with regard to the implementation of OBA in the classroom, since she is currently involved in facilitating assessment in the Intermediate and Senior Phase in Gauteng West District. The researcher has been involved in the facilitation of assessment in the Senior Phase in particular for the past five years and therefore has hands-on experience and exposure to assessment-related issues.

It may be that the National Assessment Policy is not clearly understood, interpreted or complied with across the district, because the interpretation varies from one school to another. Educators are also experiencing problems around limited assessment-related resource materials, for referrals and classroom usage.

The issue of the attitude towards change in the education system also plays a vital role, since most educators are resistant to, and some confused about, the many programmes being introduced within a short space of time. If principles, processes and procedures are not adhered to, or if schools do not comply, this will have a serious impact on the results of the learners and the failure rate may be too high.

The DoE (2000(b)), clearly states that assessment in OBE focuses on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes, making it possible to credit learners' achievements at every level, whatever pathway they may have followed and at whatever rate they may have acquired the necessary competence. The Assessment Policy (DoE,1996: 9) further indicates that OBE is a learner-centred and results-oriented approach to education and training, building on the notion that all learners

need to and can achieve their full potential, albeit not in the same way or within the same period.

In the past, assessment often had a negative effect upon a learner because an authority figure used to threaten learners with failure to achieve discipline. The educators' assessment was subjectively administered and it was based on their feelings and opinions. Learners were ranked and that led to stereotyping.

OBA has removed the aspect of 'punishment' that often characterised assessment as a 'gate-keeping' exercise. An OBA system is based on the national principles that make assessment reliable and fair to all (IEB 2004: 118). As Govender (2003: 7) states, "effective and formative assessment involves learners and parents, enables educators to pace learners, is bias free and sensitive to gender, race and cultural background and abilities of the learner". Learners in Curriculum 2005 are assessed in a way that allows them to reach their full potential, and those with barriers to learning should be included even if this entails the educator applying alternative methods of assessment in order to assess them.

In Curriculum 2005, as in all forms of OBE, learners are assessed to search and to unlock the hidden skills and talents, the intention behind the assessment being to encourage their development and growth. Progress is assessed in terms of their advancement towards the Critical and Specific Outcomes of the curriculum. This is an important change from the traditional system of assessment in schools, which often compared the learners to one another in order to see who was at the 'top of the class' and who was at the bottom. In OBE, a learner's place in the rank order of the class is much less important than the level of performance in all the skills required by a particular outcome.

This new focus on development has important implications for the way learners are assessed in practice. For example, in this Outcomes-Based approach to assessment:

- Emphasis is placed on developing the learner;
- Assessments focus on competence, i.e. ability to perform a task;

- Learners' performances are measured against appropriate outcomes;
- Assessment activities are planned to guide learners through a programme of learning;
- Learners are assessed continuously, on an ongoing basis, as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, since assessment is not something that happens only at the end of a learning program;
- Assessment is based on a broad range of practical activities, including projects, assignments, demonstrations, presentations, research reports, observation sessions and some written tests;
- The application of knowledge is encouraged;
- Knowledge from different learning areas is integrated; and
- Assessment is conducted not only by educators, but also by learners themselves, by peers, groups, parents and, occasionally, even by outside experts in a particular field.

Assessment in OBE is different from the approach that was used in the past, which was too often characterised by emphasis on ranking the learner on their accumulation of knowledge. Measurements were taken of one learner against another, on a periodic basis, usually at the end of a school term. Heavy reliance was placed on tests and formal exams, in which memorisation of knowledge, separated from other subjects, dominated (GDE/GICD 2001(a): 9).

The debates over criterion-referencing and norm-referencing are a source of difficulty for many educators, who feel torn between conflicting theories (GDE/GICD 2001(a): 68). There is still a tendency from some educators to label learners as 'stupid', 'dull', 'lazy', or 'slow', and to regard the material as not good for a certain way of learning. On the other hand, misunderstanding of the practical aspects on behalf of the educators is a key factor. This study will research the various issues being debated, and will attempt to suggest ways of resolving some of them.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE**

Gay and Airasian (2003: 163) define the research design as a general strategy or plan for concluding any research. According to Ismail (2002:79) research design is defined as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem. He further reiterates that it includes the aim of the research, the selection and design of a particular method, a random selection of participants and considerations of validity and reliability. The approach to be taken and detailed information on the design of the study will be unfolded.

The researcher applied the qualitative strategy for this research. Qualitative research meets a variety of objectives different from quantitative research and provides a distinctive kind of information. In addition, qualitative research is also useful for exploring complex research areas about which little is known (Gay & Airasian, 2003: 3).

Mooney (2003: 48) indicates that there exists a danger in looking at only one form of data collection during research, as bias and/or over-generalisation can compromise the results of the process. For this reason, the researcher chose a variety of data collection methods to avoid possible bias. The following methods will be used in order to assist in collecting data:



### **1.5.1 Interview**

The researcher will use the focus group interview, because it aims at eliciting different processes within a group context. According to Gay and Airasian (2003: 224), qualitative interviews are generally free-flowing and open-ended, with the interviewer probing to clarify the participants' comments.

### **1.5.2 Questionnaires**

The researcher will hand out a questionnaire to the participants in order to gather information on their views and opinions regarding the study in question. There is a perception that some people feel more comfortable to express themselves to the fullest with pen and paper, rather than in a group interview.

## 1.6 LETTER OF CONSENT

Letters will be sent to sampled schools to request permission to gain access to the schools and conduct the investigation. The researcher will visit each of the sampled school's principals. A detailed explanation will be given on the purpose of the research inquiry. Written letters will be provided by the researcher, assuring the principals that data obtained from the participants would remain strictly confidential, that assumed names would be used for the selected schools in the research and participants would remain anonymous. The researcher will also seek formal consent from participants, who will be assured of observation of ethical principles, namely anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.

## 1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Anderson and Kanuka (2003: 56) state that, irrespective of the size, complexity or methodology employed in research, one must always adhere to ethical and moral principles. Anderson and Kanuka (2003) mention the following principles included in the ethical considerations:

- Voluntary informed consent;
- Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity; and
- Recognising the elements of research risk.

In practice, these principles can conflict with each other, and the researcher then needs to balance carefully the importance of advancement of understandings and knowledge with the need to guard against potential harm to the research participants, e.g. loss of dignity, self-esteem and privacy (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003: 57). Research studies are built on trust between the researcher and the participants, so researchers have a responsibility to maintain that trust, just as they expect participants to maintain it in the data they provide (Gay & Airasian, 2003: 79).

Ismail (2003: 90) argues that as far as honesty is concerned, any researcher will have wasted time by fabricating the findings, because that would not be of any help

to people who were looking forward to utilise the outcomes of the study field. This alone should testify to the authenticity of the research.

Andraos (2003:39) indicates that the school, as an organisation, essentially exists because of people who cannot merely be handled as 'objects' from which information is gained, as a means to answering a research question. Furthermore, he said that such a blatant means-to-an-end approach would surely render any research endeavour exploitative. Thus, it is crucial that when inquiries are conducted within fieldwork settings, the researcher pays considerable attention to, for example, the core principles that have guided their study (Andraos, 2003:39).

## **1.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Educators from only six schools' Grades 7 and 9 will be sampled. District facilitators, who have been involved in facilitating workshops, holding meetings and attending conferences related to OBE and OBA, will also be selected. At least two School Assessment Team members per school will also be included, because of their involvement with educators in policy-related matters and conducting feedback meetings based on policy adherence to the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase. Although this is a relatively small group of participants, the researcher still believes that enough valid information can be gathered, as these are all experienced educators and facilitators in their respective fields.

## **1.9 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

The study will be broken down as follows:

**Chapter 1** has presented the background and orientation, including the problem statement and research questions, as well as brief outline of the research design and methodology. **Chapter 2** will review the literature, out of which will emerge the theoretical framework underlying the study. **Chapter 3** presents the research design and methods of data collection, and **Chapter 4** contains the findings, analysis and interpretation of the data. **Chapter 5** concludes the study and makes recommendations.

The next chapter will look at the theoretical framework of the study by reviewing the documents and other literature relevant to this study. The focus will be on understanding OBA and the policies that surround it.





## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the new assessment policy and the understanding thereof by the educators who have to implement the policy in their daily teaching lives. The developed National Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band (GET), Grades R to 9 and ABET (RSA, 1996), states that its principal aim is to enhance the provision of education for each learner that is continuous, coherent and progressive, making it one of the key elements in the quality management system (DoE, 1998: 5). This policy came into effect in 1999, and, according to the Norms and Standards in the Government Gazette (DoE, 2000(b)), the educator will design and manage both formative and summative assessment in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of learning, and meet the requirements of accredited bodies.

The policy moves from the premise that not all learners possess the same abilities and learn in the same way, and if educators know what learners can do, they will be better able to enhance the provision of education, moving from what is available (i.e. what the learner can do), to what is expected of the learner (in terms of the learning outcomes). In the process of implementing OBA, the educator must obtain objective evidence of the needs of his/her learners through the use of various assessment strategies and tools. Assessment activities must therefore be designed in such a manner that they accommodate the diversity of learners in the classroom. Learning must therefore show coherence between the expected learning outcomes, classroom activities and assessment.

As stipulated in the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) document in the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1996) the responsibilities of an educator, amongst other functions, are to assess and record what learners are taught and to plan, co-ordinate, control, administer, evaluate and report on learners' academic progress (DoE 2001(a): 1).

Educators are therefore expected to be agents of change, who must ensure competency and efficiency in their jobs by aligning their assessment practices with the new OBA approach. This means that educators need to develop effective systems that will enable them to:

- Collect relevant data;
- Analyse the data;
- Interpret the data;
- Record learner achievement;
- Produce qualitative reports; and
- Reflect and review their assessment practices.

A Former Minister of Education, Professor Bengu, stated that: “Just as curriculum transformation is not an event, so too, the transformation of established assessment practices involves a lengthy process of learning and professional development” (RSA 1996: 7). However, as Geyser (2001: 4) asserts, understanding and applying both an OBE and OBA approach will take time. In addition, the Independent Education Board (2004: 27) feels that if teaching methods in OBE are clearly stipulated, educators should understand its changes in order to manage assessment in the classroom effectively and efficiently.

## **2.2 UNDERSTANDING OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT POLICY**

### **2.2.1 The New Policy Document on the Outcomes-Based Assessment approach**

The new policy document on the OBA approach was developed specifically for all stakeholders to be informed of what is expected of them regarding assessment activities. It also had to ensure a broad uniform approach in schools to avoid unfair, impractical, invalid and unreliable assessment practices. This document outlines the new assessment processes designed in a manner that influences classroom practices and ensures the integration of teaching and assessment.

The National Assessment Policy document is designed to ensure that there is a common understanding of the implementation of OBA by all educators in the Senior Phase. All learners are given equal opportunities to achieve the same educational goals. It advocates the principles of the National Qualification Framework (RSA No 27, 1998:8) which seek to:

- Determine whether the learning required for the achievement of the specific outcomes is taking place and if any difficulties are being encountered;
- Report to parents and other role-players and stakeholders on the levels of achievement during the learning process and to build a profile of the learner's achievement across the curriculum;
- Provide information for the evaluation and review of learning programmes used in the classroom; and
- Maximise learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values defined in the national curriculum policy.

Assessment cannot be conducted without the educator and learners' knowledge of the purpose of assessment. Tentatively, the educator must know exactly what he/she wants to assess, why he or she is assessing it and if it is part of a planned and targeted progression relevant to the learning area, grade or phase. Learners on the other hand must know why and how they are being assessed as well as the expected outcome. The establishment of the purpose of assessment will assist the educator in focusing on designing and conducting assessment efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that every assessment must reflect the national assessment principles, guarding against compromising the National Assessment Policy.

The principle underpinning the assessment process is that assessment is an ongoing process with a clear purpose. In its design, it must be accurate, objective, valid, manageable and time-efficient. Different techniques and strategies have to be employed and information gathered from various contexts. The methods and techniques used must be appropriate to the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be assessed, and should consider the age and developmental level of the learner,

learning styles, learner abilities and diversity. The assessment results must be communicated clearly, accurately, timeously and meaningfully, and progression should be linked to the achievement of specific outcomes. Evidence of progress made in the achievement of learning outcomes shall be used to identify areas where learners need support and remedial intervention.

Despite the DoE having developed assessment policies, guidelines, documents, departmental circulars and other assessment related material, the question of adequate educator training, follow-ups after training, and effective and functional quality assurance and assessment structures still have to be considered. Also, educators still have to be capacitated to identify learners with barriers to learning in their classes, analysing learners' results, recording, reporting, administering and scoring. Uniformity in interpreting and understanding the National Assessment Policy is also a cause for concern. The details are as follows:

- Mediation of assessment circulars

Mediation of assessment circulars is crucial. Educators should all move from the same understanding when they have to implement policy. Policy cannot be manipulated, because that can up end with learners being deprived. This may also have a terrible impact on the formative and summative assessment. It is the responsibility of the assessment structures to mediate assessment circulars.

- Training

The duration of training by the DoE is usually inadequate. The whole process takes five days of eight hours each. The focus is always on theory and offers no skills to be used in the classroom. Assessment is always dealt with on the second last day of the training through to the last day. It lasts plus/minus sixteen hours of the whole training. More often than not, the time frames are usually not conducive.

- Development and support

Development and support programmes are never in place to ensure that educators internalise the training and that they are able to deal with context-based issues. The educator is left with the theory learnt and no skill to enhance his/her

practice. Educators need more theory than practice, since they are involved with assessment activities on daily basis. The trainers should be more knowledgeable on OBE and OBA.

- Quality Assurance

Due to the lack of development and support, schools are unable to set up their own systems to ensure that assessment processes are quality assured. This entails proper planning and support to be offered by the relevant structures. School Assessment Teams are usually unsure of the roles that they have to play in the whole curriculum process, because of the lack of knowledge about how the process has to unfold. This means that:

- the development of plans that will enable schools to manage the assessment process is usually not done and this leads to non-compliance with policy requirements;
- the analysis of data captured from the assessment process is not done at schools. This affects the end of the year assessment where decisions have to be taken about learners that have to be retained;
- the maintenance of documentation related to assessment for purposes of providing objective evidence is not properly controlled;
- evidence of reviews to assess the level at which practices impact on learner performance, is not available; and
- mediation and interpretation of assessment policies and circulars to ensure a common understanding are lacking.

The present Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor (2005), in her speech delivered at the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA) on 29 August 2003, stated that many observers in South Africa tend to have an impression of an organised, well co-ordinated and rational set of educational practices in assessment, but a closer look tells a different story and reveals daunting challenges. The fact that some educators are struggling with the implementation of OBA, processes, procedures and systems, cannot be overlooked. The issue of a lack of direction, guidance, follow-up, reflection and feedback from stakeholders involved in assessment activities can result in manipulating the system due to frustration, confusion and anxiety.

Atkin, Black and Coffey (2001: 21) indicate that the challenges facing educators has become the range of factors that constitute assessment activity, and taking full advantage of them to advance curricular, instructional and learning goals. These authors go further to stipulate that educators need support from a larger system to realise and to take advantage of the possibilities of good assessment.

## **2.3 CHANGING TO OUTCOMES-BASED TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

The shift to outcomes-based teaching, learning and assessment requires a change in the whole curriculum practice and systems of schools. This means that a change in the assessment process has to be aligned to a change in the teaching and learning practices. The focus of the three processes is on learning outcomes and how to assist learners to reach set milestones.

This change requires that educators be skilled in the development of their own learning material, which will assist them in providing learners with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to attain educational outcomes.

### **2.3.1 Definition of Outcomes-Based Assessment**

OBA is an **outcomes-driven** approach of gathering, collecting and interpreting information about the learner in the learning process. The approach focuses on the process of achieving the learning outcomes. Its purpose is to identify what learners can do (in terms of the learning outcomes) at a particular point in time, for the purpose of planning educationally relevant programmes to enhance learning.

**'Assessment'** is defined and described in various ways by different authors and educational fraternity materials. For instance, the National Assessment Policy (RSA No 27, 1998: 8 & 9) defines it as a process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about learners' achievement as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning. According to Circular 5 (DoE, 2000(a)), assessment is defined as the process of identifying and gathering valid and reliable

information about the performance of the learner on an ongoing basis, against clearly defined criteria. This is done through a variety of methods, tools, techniques and contexts. The findings are recorded, reflected upon and reported by giving positive, supportive and motivational feedback to learners, other educators, parents and other stakeholders.

### **2.3.2 What is different about Outcomes-Based Assessment?**

In the process of assessing learners, OBA acknowledges differences in learners' learning styles, level of development, and learner achievement against outcomes. The Independent Education Board (2004: 81) regards this new approach as trying to make assessment work for the benefit of learners and planned programmes. In addition, Segers, Dochy and Cascallar (2003: 37) argue that the role of assessment and evaluation in education has been crucial, probably since the earliest approaches to formal education. They further mention that the most fundamental change in views of assessment is represented by the notion of it as a tool for learning, *for both the educator and learner*, whereas in the past it was seen primarily as a means of measuring, and thus as certification. There is now a belief that the potential benefits of assessing are much wider and impinge on all stages of the learning process.

The OBA approach is quite different because it encourages learners to think, solve problems, construct, transform, investigate, create, analyse, make choices, organise, decide, explain, talk, debate issues, communicate, share ideas, negotiate, interpret, assess and explore *at the level at which they can achieve the outcomes*, gain new knowledge and apply that knowledge in situations they are faced with in their day-to-day lives; hence the emphasis on learners becoming "lifelong learners" of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with all the necessary skills. Yet, if learners are to learn and develop into lifelong, independent, self-directed learners, they need to be included in the assessment process so that the 'learning loop' is complete (Segers, Dochy & Cascallar 2003: 142).

Parker (2002: 185) confirms that the assessment of educational programs is of increasing importance for educators and policymakers in the United States and other countries in their effort to monitor and improve education. The development of

meaningful, valid and reliable assessment of learners, understanding of social studies topics, including civic education, is especially challenging. The statement proves how important assessment is considered in other countries.

Educators should be adequately trained for assessment outcomes to be valid and reliable. Another challenge that the DoE faces is that of releasing the budget for all educators to be trained as competent assessors. Competent assessors will face challenges pertaining to learner assessment with confidence; therefore capacitating, empowering and developing educators should be an ongoing process. Segers, Dochy and Cascallar (2003: 142) alluded to the situation as being more acute in higher education, where most instructors do not receive systematic pedagogical training of any kind, the majority having left school before the new forms of assessment were introduced, and so they have not been exposed to it. The same sentiments are shared by Mabunda (2003), when she states that there is a need for professional development programmes for educators, due to rapidly incoming changes in education, and there must be a means to upgrade and update educators so as to make them confident and competent in their work.

The OBA approach is informed by the knowledge gained by the educators in implementing the approach. Andraos (2003: 37) indicates that educators' feelings of resistance towards the implementation of OBE are largely rooted in their feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, due to a lack of professional development and adequate training in this regard. Govender (2003: 19) believes that an understanding of what is meant by OBE is, therefore, crucial to the successful development and implementation of OBA, within an outcomes-based paradigm. Attitude plays a very important role in the lives of people, and the researcher believes that not all educators were trained for the same reason. Those who were trained mostly complained about poor quality, short duration and poor timing, which impacted on their implementation of OBE.

Such observations and opinions highlight Govender's (2003: 3) claim that educators generally have a shallow understanding of the process of assessment, and so require grade-by-grade assessment guidelines and learning outcomes in order to establish a minimum acceptable level of sequence of progression. They experience problems as



they are not certain as to how to implement the process of assessment. The strength and success of assessment rests on the professionalism and ability of a highly skilled teaching and training corps who understand, and are able to apply, sound educational assessment principles, and draw from a variety of assessment techniques advocated in the policy document (Govender, 2003: 17).

### **2.3.3 How learners are assessed in the Outcomes-Based Assessment Approach**

The OBA approach came to the fore with a major paradigm shift in how learners are assessed in the new curriculum. Assessment should be integrated in teaching and learning. Both educators and learners have roles to play in the OBA approach. With regard to Curriculum 2005, learners are assessed in terms of whether they are able to demonstrate the specified learning outcomes.

Learners are assessed continuously in an OBA approach and their progress is monitored on an on-going basis. Before an educator assesses the learners in the classroom, she/he needs to establish the purpose of assessment, which, according to the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (RSA No 27, 1996: 10), is important to determine if the learning required for the achievement of the outcomes is taking place and whether any difficulties are encountered. If the educator picks up any difficulties with any learner in the classroom, intervention strategies should be planned for that learner, in order to assist the learner to cope. The policy further states that parents and other stakeholders should get a report on the learner's progress during the learning process and to build the learner's profile of his/her achievement across the curriculum. The policy also states that information should be provided for evaluation and review of learning programmes used in the classroom and maximise learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values defined in the National Curriculum Policy.

Since OBA in Curriculum 2005 expects learners to demonstrate specific learning outcomes, assessment must be criterion-based. This means that learners are assessed against criteria that indicate if an outcome has been achieved. This is the

opposite of the old way, where learners were assessed against one another or other learners, i.e. norm-referencing.

Assessment should be linked to the activities and the educator must know what she/he wants to assess her/his learners on. Learners on the other hand should know what they are going to be assessed on, coupled with clear and specific instruction. It can be easy for the learner to focus on an activity and achieve the outcome provided if they know precisely what to do. Learners who do not achieve the outcome should be assisted by the educator to meet the criteria. The researcher previously indicated that this major paradigm shift poses a big challenge to educators, because they must move away from the old to a new way of assessing learners, using the OBA approach.

### 2.3.4 The shift to an Outcomes-Based approach

The table below will illustrate the shift from norm-referenced assessment to criterion-referenced assessment. The focus will be on a **comparative analysis** of the two approaches. An examination will be made of the assumptions, administration, and format of assessment, learning styles, and learner abilities of both processes.

**TABLE 2.1: The shift to an Outcomes-Based Approach**

(Source: IEB Assessment Education and Training, 2004: 83)

ASSESSMENT – OLD PARADIGM	ASSESSMENT – NEW PARADIGM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each educator assessed individual learners, recorded marks, worked out averages for term marks and year marks and ranked learners.</li> <li>• Mainly written assignments/tests based on information in textbooks mediated by educators – learners were seen as “empty vessels”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school assessment policy directs the assessments and recording mechanisms. Co-operative learning and Critical Outcomes are assessed in the same way by all educators.</li> <li>• Learners investigate and solve problems in activities. The outcomes are assessed using a number of different, suitable assessment methods and tools.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners spent time learning content by heart and reproduced information in end-of-term/year tests.</li> <li>• A set number of pieces of work had to be completed and marked each term. Term marks were averages of all done.</li> <li>• Classroom/syllabus-based.</li> <li>• End-of-learning experience was formalised by assessment/exam.</li> <li>• Marks were recorded in mark books.</li> <li>• Assessment was summative and final, based on a completed syllabus.</li> <li>• Pass/fail situation (norm-referenced).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners understand and can use information critically. Assessment is integrated and designed to assess competence.</li> <li>• Learners are assessed formatively and a continuum of learning is maintained with particular outcomes targeted for assessment. Learners achieve outcomes at different levels and averages are meaningless.</li> <li>• Learning programmes are designed so that learners are given the best possible opportunity to achieve outcomes of learning in a context that is relevant and practical.</li> <li>• Evidence is gathered during the learning process and as an end product. Integrated assessments assess a variety of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.</li> <li>• A teacher's record file and learner portfolios contain evidence of learning. Should there be learning difficulties, action plans are included. The school keeps learner profiles to track and support learners with difficulties.</li> <li>• Assessment is used formatively to identify gaps in learning and assist in the review/design of learning programmes.</li> <li>• Not competitive. Criterion-references of learners' progress with age cohort.</li> </ul>
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In a comparative analysis of the two approaches, the assumption around the assessment in the old paradigm indicates that the focus was on summative assessment; the new assessment paradigm focuses on both the formative and summative. These two aspects will be dealt with in the next sessions. Rote-learning was the core in the past and learners' abilities were only partially recognised,

whereas in the new assessment approach, learners are encouraged to be creative decision-makers and explorers in the learning context. In the past, learners' individual learning styles were not considered and all learners were expected to succeed at the same time despite the barriers they experienced in learning. The OBE assessment approach paints a different picture of learners not able to succeed at the same time because they are cognitively not the same.

## **2.4 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NORM-REFERENCED AND CRITERION-REFERENCED ASSESSMENT**

### **2.4.1 Norm-referenced assessment**

Criterion-referenced assessment focuses on an individual's achievements, while norm-referenced assessment is concerned with how a learner's score compares with others learners' scores. Norm-referenced assessment compares the learner's score on a composite of items with the scores of a large number of other learners in a class or school. It shows that a learner is at a level higher or lower than the norm of his/her age or grade. Norm-referenced assessment labels learners, but gives educators no specific information on a learner's basic strengths and problems or what they need to be taught. Such assessment might identify a learner as being in the bottom 10% of his/her class in mathematical skills, but will say little about what the learner knows, why he/she cannot achieve specific learning outcomes, or what specific skills he/she needs to acquire for him/her to progress. The results are based on the total of the individual differences among all learners assessed in a classroom or school. The result is not based on a single individual learner's performance against a learning outcome.

### **2.4.2 Criterion-referenced assessment**

Criterion-referenced assessment is a form of assessment that underpins all assessment done in the learning site. In this case, learners are assessed against pre-set criteria rather than against one another. The purpose of criterion-referenced assessment is to help schools assess the capabilities of learners so that educators can design programmes to fit the individual needs. Criterion-referenced assessment

describes the level at which the learner has achieved the learning outcome in a particular learning area, at a particular point in time.

## **2.5 TYPES OF ASSESSMENT WITHIN THE OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT CONTEXT**

### **2.5.1 Baseline assessment**

Baseline assessment is an assessment of prior learning, usually taking place at the beginning of a grade, phase or new learning activity. The purpose of baseline assessment is to establish what learners already know and what they can demonstrate in order to assist the educator to plan learning programmes and learning activities. It also assists him/her to decide what level of demands to build into the learning experience plan.

### **2.5.2 Formative assessment**

Formative assessment is both formal and informal, and can be vital to education. The idea behind this kind of assessment is that, if educators know precisely what individual learners can do, they will be better able to prescribe the next step in the learning process.

The result does not apply a generalised label, but measures a specific, observed behaviour or skill. The learner is assessed for what he/she can do. Educators are not calling the learner 'gifted', 'average' or a 'slow learner'. They are simply identifying the learner's particular knowledge, skills and abilities at that point in time.

Formative assessment is used in order to:

- analyse evidence and reflect on the information gathered;
- use constructive feedback to enable the learner to grow and to improve his/her learning;
- use feedback to inform him/her to select appropriate follow-up activities;

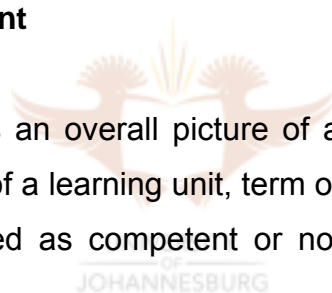
- determine what the learner’s strengths and developmental needs are in relation to a particular learning outcome or assessment standard;
- indicate which situations help or hinder the learner’s strengths; and
- indicate which assessment methods, tools and techniques are appropriate for the learners (DoE, Circular 22 of 2002).

### **2.5.3 Diagnostic assessment**

Diagnostic assessment must be followed by appropriate guided support and intervention strategies. Intervention and support should be planned, undertaken and monitored as closely as possible and, in areas in which support is needed, action must be taken and outcomes of the action for learners in need of support in specific areas recorded on the GDE 450 forms.

### **2.5.4 Summative assessment**

Summative assessment gives an overall picture of a learner’s progress at a given time, for example, at the end of a learning unit, term or year, or on transfer to another school. The learner is judged as competent or not competent against nationally agreed outcomes.



### **2.5.5 Systemic evaluation**

According to Departmental Circular 22 (2002), systemic evaluation is used to evaluate the appropriateness of the education system. It involves monitoring of learner attainment at regular intervals, using nationally or provincially defined measuring instruments. This form of evaluation compares and aggregates information about learner achievements so that it can be used to assist in curriculum development and evaluation of teaching and learning. Systematic evaluation is conducted at the phase exit levels, i.e. Grades 3, 6 and 9, for use in the education system.

## **2.6 PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT**

The curriculum design of the school should be integrated into the assessment processes. The School Assessment Team or the School Management Team should plan how they are going to implement, manage and control assessment activities. The four basic principles underlying planning for assessment are as follows:

### **2.6.1 Design down**

It is crucial that whilst keeping a clear focus, the educator should design down from the point where she or he intends to finish, and then back to where she or he should start. This is because, after designing down, it is easy to deliver up. In practice, the outcomes to be addressed through teaching and learning are first clearly stated, before developing the teaching and learning activities the learners will engage in. When planning assessment, educators must start by separating outcomes to be assessed from those that are to be addressed through teaching and learning. The next step is to choose appropriate assessment methods, tools and techniques, and activities to be used when assessing the chosen outcomes.

### **2.6.2 Clarity of focus**

Educators are expected to know and inform learners beforehand as to what they are to be assessed on, who will be involved in the assessment intended, how they will go about it and what assessment criteria will be applied. Outcomes-Based Education has no surprises as compared to the old way in which learners were assessed. There was no transparency when coming to what the learners are to be taught in the past. Learners did not know what to expect, only the educator knew.

### **2.6.3 High expectations**

High expectations imply that the educators should expect the best performance from the learners, bearing in mind that all learners can succeed at their own pace and level. A high expectation also implies that the educator must assist learners to reach their full potential and raise standards of acceptable performance. The educator should also eliminate success quotas and increase access to the high-level

curriculum. Learners on the other hand must know exactly what is expected of them with regard to the standard set.

Most educators are still battling to see their learners as thinkers and pro-active problem-solvers, and to give them the opportunity and the platform to raise opinions or to express their feelings. Most educators are very judgmental and like to label learners as people who are 'stupid', congenitally disabled, lacking in future plans or not having the 'right material' for the learning area – be it Mathematics, Science or Technology. Only a few educators expect their learners to perform to the best of their abilities; those being the types who believe in their learners.

#### **2.6.4 Expanded opportunities**

Educators often mention a number of factors that they claim to be a hindrance towards applying the principle of expanded opportunities, including the ratio of educators to learners; given pacesetters for various learning areas with rigid time frames; introduction of too many programmes and projects to be implemented; and too much paperwork, specifically with the completion of the GDE 450 forms during the cause of the year up to the end of the year. Assessment in OBA relies on genuine evidence from the educator of the learners' progression.

However, the basic principle of assessment with reference to expanded opportunities states that educators must find multiple ways of exposing learners to learning opportunities that will help them to demonstrate their full potential in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. It is therefore imperative that learners are motivated and also confident about education, so that they are able to take responsibility. Each learner's progress is based on demonstrated achievement and that should be acknowledged by way of positive feedback to the learner. Each learner's needs are accommodated through multiple teaching and learning strategies during the educator's planning of activities. Every learner should be provided with the time and assistance to realise his or her potential.

Educators provide a variety of dimensions of opportunities, for example:

- methods of modalities;



- teaching time, learning time and suitable length of time; and
- performance standards.

If educators can be consistent, systematic, and creative, and simultaneously focus on their exit outcomes, planning backwards all the steps of how to get to where they want to be, and have high expectations of their learners, they should achieve success.

## **2.7 ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES**

An assessment strategy covers the overall plan; the all encompassing approach to be followed in the school to be able to plan and manage the assessment activities effectively. Concerning OBA Policy, Module 2 (DoE 2000(d): 54) stipulates that:

- a variety of methods and appropriate tools and techniques that commensurate with the learner's needs, must be used;
- chosen methods, tools and techniques must provide a range of opportunities to learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes;
- the purpose of assessment greatly impacts on the methods, tools and techniques of assessment to be used. The educator's choice of methods depends highly on what is to be assessed;
- a method of assessment refers to a procedure to follow when assessing the learners;
- a tool is an instrument that the educator uses when assessing, and is appropriate to the method of assessment; and
- a technique is a special way in which the educator uses the method and tool to provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their performance evidence in various ways.

The assessment methods, tools and techniques that educators use, mostly exclude learners with barriers to learning. These occur because educators are not well equipped in dealing with such learners. They cannot identify them or they do not


know how to include them. These and other problems motivated the researcher to conduct research in this field.

## **2.8 SOME OF THE ASSESSMENT METHODS**

A method can be described as the way in which the educator decides to assess his/her learners, e.g. peer assessment is a method and it should have a technique of having clearly defined roles with associated criteria necessary for the method to be successful.

There are a number of different assessment methods of learner-centred education, and ways in which they fit into the assessment system. It should be clearly understood by educators that all assessment strategies are fully underpinned by the principles of assessment, and therefore assessment should be aimed at the growth and development of the learner. The following are some of them:

### **2.8.1 Self-assessment**



In this method, learners are guided to assess their own work or performance. The educator should make sure that more time is spent helping them to reflect on their performance, so that they are able to take more responsibility for their learning. The learner will assess his or her performance against the desired outcomes and be able to determine strengths and weaknesses that can be improved after identifying them through this method of assessment. Evaluation of own work also helps the learner to focus and become motivated, accountable and responsible for his/her learning. Learners tend to be independent and can make the right decision to access learning opportunities through their lives.

### **2.8.2 Peer assessment**

When using this assessment method, the educator can apply learner-to-learner assessment, involving two learners assessing one another on an assigned task. They might also work group-to-group, involving one group assessing another on a given task, or as group-to-learner, a method that is important because learners are

able to assess one another's contributions to group activities with skilful handling, and assess given work, having clearly spelt out assessment criteria openly and transparently to involved groups.

### **2.8.3 Group assessment**

Group assessment helps the educator pick up leadership qualities, communication skills and time-management skills amongst the learners. Teamwork and team spirit are immediately picked up through the observation method, during the process of learners assisting one another to do the task well and making sure they meet the criteria and enjoy the task as a group.

### **2.8.4 Pen and paper assessment**

The traditional pen and paper method of assessment can still be used in continuous assessment, but there should be specified assessment criteria that are understood by learners. This method of assessment includes worksheets, drawings, written exercises, reports, diagrams and journals.

### **2.8.5 Question and answer assessment**

Verbal question and answer assessment is often effective with learners whose communication skills are better than their writing skills. The educators, when using this method, are able to identify learners who are less confident than others. The educators allow learners to make mistakes in their learning with no fear of being ridiculed. Constructive feedback and positive remarks should take precedence in the learning site.

### **2.8.6 Classroom observation**

Educators have always been observing learners, but currently with this method of OBA, they are expected to do so for a particular purpose and also for recording progress.

## **2.9 SOME ASSESSMENT AND TOOL TECHNIQUES**

### **2.9.1 Assessment tools**

An assessment tool is used for recording information when engaged in assessment activities. A tool can be a worksheet, a rubric, a checklist, an observation sheet or even a task. It is crucial that an assessment tool be appropriate to the task and is linked to the criteria, which include making it known to the learner prior to the task, applying it when assessing the task and giving constructive feedback for learners to know how to improve their future levels of performance.

A variety of assessment tools can be carried out for purposes of recording, planning and feedback, such as checklists and lists of criteria to be achieved. These are useful for ensuring that learners are assessed accordingly, but not suitable for answers that require problem-solving.

Another tool is an assessment grid, which according to Govender (2003: 36), is meant to provide a comprehensive overview of how learners are coping. She goes on to say that one way of designing the grid is to have a column listing all the performance indicators of the different assessment criteria and outcomes relevant to the learning area. The educator uses assessment grids as a record of learner's performance and progress. Once evidence has been gathered that the learner is able to attain the expected outcome, a tick can be made next to the performance indicator.

A rubric is another tool, laying out a continuum of product or performance quality from not yet achieved excellence. Attached to each level of the rubrics is a narrative describing what a product or performance achieving that level, might look like. Rubrics and level descriptors provide a continuum of quality, with a rubric enabling two or more educators to view learners' performance or product in the same way. Educators at different grade levels can thereby provide continuity of teaching and learning from grade to grade and learning area to learning area (IEB 2004: 40).

The above-mentioned and all the other assessment tools should be valid, reliable, open and transparent to the learner. Naledi Pandor, the present (2006) Minister of Education in her speech at the 21st Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA: 2003), further alluded to “South Africa’s tools of assessment having had many peculiarities that our education policy experts are grappling with even today”. Indeed, if the assessment tools are not used appropriately, systematically and constructively, this will have a negative impact on the learner. The outcomes of poor assessment of learners can result in non-compliance with the National Assessment Policy of the DoE.

## 2.9.2 Assessment techniques

A technique is referred to as the application of the method intended to be used. The educator should be mindful of three aspects, i.e. method, technique and tools, before planning any assessment activities. The proper application of these three aspects can assist in accommodating learners with forms of barriers to learning. The table below shows some of the different methods, tools and techniques that educators can apply when planning activities:

**TABLE 2.2 – SOME ASSESSMENT METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

<b>METHODS</b>	<b>TOOLS</b>	<b>TECHNIQUES</b>
Self assessment	Portfolio	Project work
Peer assessment	Observation sheet	Collage
1. Group-to-learner	Worksheet	Research project
2. Group-to-group	Journal	Assignment
3. Learner-to-learner	Questionnaire	Survey
4. Learner-to-group	Cassette	Debate/argument
5. Class-to-learner	Assessment grid/Rubric	Role-play
Group assessment	Exhibition	Interview
Interviews	Photographs/Videos	Drama
Conferencing	Class list	Presentation
Observation	Profile	Panel discussion
Oral questions/answer	Tests, examination	Practical demonstration

Self-reporting and answers by learners Performance assessment Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Written assignments	Scenario Construction Music/Songs Poetry/Rhymes Story telling/Oral presentation Model making/plans/ Designs, e.g. toys Sculpture/Paintings Drawings/Graphs Mind mapping Game design Physical activities Maps Posters Charts Tables Descriptions Written presentation, e.g. reports, essays
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(Source: GICD, Module 2: On assessment, methods, tools & techniques)

Planning in assessment is critical because the educator has to embrace diversity. The methods, tools and techniques should be appropriate and well thought of. All learners should be able to participate and get involved in the learning process if the three aspects have been correctly selected. The educator can also assess if he/she has chosen the correct methods, tools and techniques. The National Assessment Policy expects the appropriate selection of these aspects for assessment to be transparent, fair and reliable.

## 2.10 RECORDING ASSESSMENT

The researcher agrees with the Gauteng Department of Education/Gauteng Institution for Curriculum Development (GDE/GICD 2001(b): 24) that recording and

reporting assessments are amongst the hardest aspects of the new curriculum to master. From the researcher's hands-on experience of this aspect, it is noted that on a daily basis, educators experience serious problems as to how, what, and when to record learner progression and performance. It is also noted that keeping records is very complicated, with some educators attached to the old way of recording marks and comments on learners' work. However, OBE requires keeping of records in different ways and on more aspects of learners' work.

Some educators are grappling with keeping records of learner's work in an outcomes-based curriculum, and with reporting on learner's progress. More often than not, educators overlook reporting in the framework of the National Assessment Policy and in developing the School Assessment Policy, which should be in line with the National and Provincial Assessment Policies of the DoE. Educators inevitably are responsible for assessment that requires them to report on learners' progress to people outside their own classrooms (Atkin, Black & Coffey 2001: 59).

### **2.10.1 Recording learner achievement**

According to IEB (2004: 204), learner achievement is recorded for the following purposes:

- supporting the daily classroom practice;
- encouraging learners to learn because their achievements are valued;
- identifying the next step in learning;
- providing information about the learner as a person as well as a learner;
- recording the progress of each learner;
- helping with the evaluation of teaching strategies;
- feeding into review learning programmes;
- ensuring continuity and progression; and
- giving a basis for reporting to parents.

The Outcomes-Based Assessment approach demands that the educator develop and assist the learner to achieve the desired outcomes. It is crucial for educators to feedback and also reflects on their teaching and learning. Reflections help the

educators to discover or assess their assessment strategies. Feedback is vital to the learners, with regard to identifying weaknesses and strengths, and to the educator it help to identify shortfalls for the purpose of introducing intervention programmes to fast track some learners experiencing learning difficulties.

### **2.10.2 Errors in judging and recording learner achievement**

Educators tend to use their own discretion in assessing learners. Mostly their focus on this aspect is not based on the learning outcome to be attained. This is evident of how important it is for educators to be capacitated on a continuous base. Pretorius (1998) tabulated a list of errors made during judging and recording learner achievement:

- Pre-judging occurs when educators develop expectations of what their learners are capable of. This leads to judgment based on perceptions of learner ability, rather than on the actual performance of learner.
- Confusing achievement with effort: Educators often feel that a learner's effort should be rewarded, which leads to a higher and unrealistic judgment of learner performance. Conversely, a learner who is not performing as he/she should is sometimes assessed low in order to shock him or her into putting in more effort. Using assessment to send messages to learners undermines the validity and reliability of the assessment.
- Different standards are applied to different learners as a result of educators' perceptions regarding the learner's ability. This leads to inaccurate judgments.
- Cultural stereotyping, where educators tend to assign higher performance assessments to learners of their own race, has been well documented. The possibility of cultural bias due to stereotyping needs to be borne in mind and dealt with to ensure valid assessments.



- Gender stereotyping lead to the same bias as mentioned above. Educators should be aware of gender differences and how these impact on assessment methods and learner performance.
- The 'halo'-effect arises after an educator's assessment of an aspect of a learner's performance, for example the tendency to rate a learner's essay high on content because of good quality of the language structure.
- The 'proximity' error refers to the tendency by educators to assess similarly on outcomes that are closely related. This reported tendency found that assessors gave similar ratings to outcomes that appeared in close proximity on an assessment form.
- The 'central tendency' error relates to reluctance on the part of some of the assessors to assign very low or very high ratings. Caution on the part of assessors leads to judgments that describe most learners as being 'average'.
- 'Severity/leniency' errors occur when some assessors consistently give high assessments while others give low assessments. Educators need to be provided with exemptions on which to base judgments in order to prevent this error from occurring.

### **2.10.3 What educators should record?**

The educator should ensure that he/she records daily activities on each theme in the context of performance measured against criteria, using a variety of tools, e.g. assessment sheets and observation books, etc.

As far as progress in relation to Learning Outcomes and Critical Outcomes is concerned, these should take place at designated times in a term. Achievement in relation to Learning and Critical Outcomes needs to inform overall achievement in the Learning Area. This should be recorded right at the end of the year.

The evidence that can be available in the classroom may be formal or informal. Formal evidence may be direct or indirect. Direct evidence is when samples of the learners' drawing work, artwork or writing are witnessed or seen being done on a worksheet. Indirect evidence refers to the need to undergo some sort of processing before it is useful and can be assessed, e.g. educators having to comply with classroom observations on an observation sheet. Some evidence may come from learners engaged in a debate or having a role-play activity, which may be recorded using a video recording or photograph for assessment purposes.

#### **2.10.4 How learners' progress should be recorded**

##### **Classroom records**

It is the responsibility of the educator to develop different tools to record both planned and unplanned assessments during learning activities. It is crucial that educators do not record performance only, but also make sure that they analyse the records. The information contained should be used to ensure that each of the learners progress towards the achievement of outcomes. It should be ensured that the performance of learners in one learning experience informs the kinds and levels of activities that are set in the next learning experience. Keeping informative, continuous classroom records assists the educators to plan for learner progression. It is very important for the educator to ensure that from time to time, he/she makes summative decisions about the learner's performance, linked to outcomes.

There is a need for the educator to review the formal and informal records kept, and use them to describe what learners are capable of doing. The educator also needs to use information from several tools, for example integrative assessment tasks, assessment sheets, etc, to summarise performance on a learner profile. Decisions on learner competence should be based on a number of assessments. All the collected evidence should be placed in the learner's portfolio to support summative decisions.

#### **2.10.5 When should learners' progress be recorded?**

It is not necessary for the educator to record every assessment learners do, or have evidence of every assessment they do, or mark every piece of evidence they produce. Formative assessment can often be a sorting process, rather than a marking process. Thus, those who are progressing satisfactorily towards the target outcomes and those who are not, can be quickly identified.

Learners can be assessed according to the educators' grouping, instead of all of them at the same time. There should be an observation book handy to note down any special, noteworthy observations about the learners' progress. Formal recording is done when learners have had sufficient time to develop a particular skill. Generally it should take place twice a term.

## **2.11 REPORTING AND FEEDBACK**

It is through reporting that educators are accountable to learners, parents, the education system and the broader community. Educators have the responsibility of reporting on assessment in meaningful ways to the parents of their learners, through parents meetings, report cards and assessment portfolios. The continuous model adopted in South Africa can only be successful if adequate records and sound methods of recording learner achievement are kept. Reporting ensures that learners receive oral as well as written comments on their work, which are helpful and will advise the learner on how to continue with his or her tasks (Pretorius, 1998).

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grades R to 9, states that every report on a learner's overall progress should include information on the learning achieved, the learner's competencies and the support needed. It should also give constructive feedback, which includes comments about the learner's performance in relation to his/her peers, and the learner's previous performance in terms of the requirements of the learning areas. The researcher is concerned about what the majority of educators report on, which often does not comply with policy. This is to the disadvantage of learners, who are discouraged by reading reports that are meaningless. Much as the RNCS documents state categorically how and what

educators should report on, there are still some who are experiencing problems with it.

The DoE views reporting as an essential and multifaceted process that provides a great deal of information for a variety of purposes (DoE, 2002(b)). The National Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band Grades R to 9 and ABET (DoE, 1998) states that the reporting process should include the following aspects, which are relevant to a well-rounded and comprehensive report:

- it should provide regular feedback to learners as part of the everyday teaching and learning process;
- it should provide an accurate description of progress and achievement;
- it should allow for comment on the personal and social development and the attendance of the learner at the learning sites; and
- it should give an indication of the strength and development needs, and identify follow-up steps for learning and teaching.

The educator should encourage motivation through a constructive approach and become a focal point for dialogue between home, learning site and (where appropriate) work, and further education and training. He or she should enhance accountability at all levels of the system, and in the case of learners in Grade R to 9, be sensitive to the needs and responsibilities of parents.

According to the RNCS, educators should report on:

- the learner's attitude to the learning area, educator and fellow learners;
- the attitude of the learner towards his/her work, as well as the learner's ability to make effective and meaningful contributions in the classroom;
- the learner's ability to complete tasks within a specified time frame, at the same time following instructions and completing the work neatly; and
- the learner's attitude toward homework tasks and projects.

Educators must bear the following aspects in mind when preparing a report card: Firstly, make comments specifically and not generally. Secondly, all comments should be relevant and accurate. Thirdly, try to focus on what is known and try to

avoid speculation, even though this is difficult when assessing attitudes. Fourthly, acknowledge all growth made by the learner, and distinguish between the learner and his or her work. Finally, use the accumulated assessment records in reporting, but respect the confidentiality of these records (DoE, 2002(b)).

Educators should bear in mind that learners are very sensitive to negative criticism and therefore they must ensure that they play the role of assisting the learner to reach his or her full potential by giving feedback on progress made, focusing on learners' strengths and, when necessary, commenting on the aspect of work or behaviour that needs attention. The comments should indicate the intervention strategies that will be applied to improve the learner's situation.

In commenting on the report, the following are examples of words that can be used by the teacher: 'motivated', 'diligent', 'conscientious', 'willing', 'assertive', 'insightful', 'enthusiastic' and 'hardworking'. Those are encouraging words that can make a learner look forward to improving on his or her weaknesses. Words such as 'stupid', 'lazy', 'horrible', 'hopeless', and 'useless', destroy the learner's confidence.

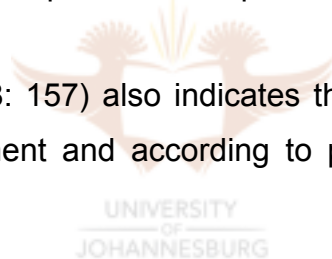
Pretorius (1998: 156) describes reporting and feedback as a means of communicating between learners and educators. He feels that feedback during class and feedback received by means of report cards need to be distinguished, although both are of the utmost importance as they focus on what the learner is learning, as compared to the outcomes of the learning programmes. Learners should receive feedback on the quality of their efforts in order to learn and help their classmates learn, so that they can continually improve.

In the OBE and OBA approach, feedback is crucial, especially to the parents, for motivational purposes, and in order for them to be actively involved in educational matters and be part and parcel of what their children are learning. These can also result in parents becoming actively involved in the education of their children. Parents need to be informed of the progress of their children, through meaningful meetings and discussion (Pretorius, 1998).

This raises the question as to how meetings work in a South African context, with large classes and with parents away working long hours of every day. Regarding the question raised, Pretorius (1998) highlights that:

- collaboration requires time, and time is a fixed course;
- the process of managing partnerships requires attention, so feedback about the effectiveness of meetings will help to improve strategies for the future;
- the meetings must be kept to a high standard so that the setting and abiding by the rules enhance relationships:
  - always start and finish on time;
  - always display courtesy and respect;
  - have a good sense of humour;
  - agree to disagree;
  - take care of personal needs within the group, listen attentively and avoid biased conversations; and
  - contribute to the personal and professional sharing opportunities.

In conclusion, Pretorius (1998: 157) also indicates that recording and reporting are integral elements of assessment and according to policy, and they need to meet certain aims.



## **2.12 THE FUNCTIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES**

It is imperative for any organisation to ensure that there is quality and standard, and structures, systems, procedures and processes in place. Ideally quality assurance should not be negotiable if national education imperatives are to be attained. The DoE is not different, as per DoE Circular 41 of 2001(b).

Provided below is a summary of the official functions of the Provincial Assessment Team (PAT) the District Assessment Team (DAT) the Cluster Assessment Team (CAT) and the School Assessment Team (SAT) according to the abovementioned departmental circular.

### **2.12.1 Provincial Assessment Team (PAT)**

PAT is a professional assessment forum to serve at provincial level. Its two main functions are to co-ordinate development regarding the implementation of policy, and co-ordinate consultation regarding implementation.

Other functions of PAT are to draw up detailed management plans for assessment activities; ensure that all assessment projects initiated by the district officials are monitored and coordinated by the District Assessment Team (DAT) in conjunction with the District Management Plan; co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate all activities related to assessment; co-ordinate and mediate developments regarding the implementation of policy and assessment systems, procedures and materials; disseminate and mediate policy, Report 550 and other assessment information; and ensure fair, valid and reliable assessment at provincial level. Assessment is based on OBE principles (including CASS). The implementation of assessment policy, guidelines and regulations must be ensured to counter the abuse of assessment as a means of exclusion. That facilitates multi-level and multi-functional assessment practices, on a bias-free assessment system. The professional development of educators to become assessors must be facilitated in order to improve progression in grades implementing Curriculum 2005 and Report 550. Even parents and/or learner appeals against assessment decisions must be facilitated, whilst reports to Senior Managers, Units, District Assessment Teams and unions must be done formally.

### **2.12.2 District Assessment Team (DAT)**

The District Assessment team is a structure established at the district level. Its main functions are to ensure the implementation of assessment policy at district, cluster and school level; to manage and monitor assessment processes in the district; and to liaise with the cluster and School Assessment Team members.

### **2.12.3 Cluster Assessment Team (CAT)**

Cluster Assessment Teams are formed at school level, according to subjects. Each appointed cluster leader by the relevant subject facilitator is responsible for the implementation of assessment policies in the schools within their clusters and subjects. They also discuss assessment issues in the various learning areas,

including continuous assessment and internal and external moderation of portfolios. Cluster leaders give educators under their clusters support, guidance and assistance with regard to policy expectations within their learning areas.

#### **2.12.4 School Assessment Team (SAT)**

This structure functions at school level. Its main functions are to address assessment in their whole school development planning. They should also develop and maintain a school assessment policy, which must be in line with the provincial and national assessment policies, implement and monitor the implementation of policy and lastly, evaluate the school policy on an ongoing basis and, where necessary, make amendments. A member of the SAT must attend and participate in CAT meetings.

#### **2.13 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, a description of the new assessment policy was given in order to clarify that every stakeholder understands what is expected of him/her regarding their assessment activities in the classroom. From the discussion, it seems that the main problem that educators are struggling with is the fact that they still do not understand the new ways of assessment and therefore do not know how to implement it. This needs to be addressed very urgently, because the understanding of the OBA approach forms one of the foundations of the new curriculum.

The researcher has explored some of the problems experienced by educators in the Senior Phase. Adequate training, at the conducive time, with reasonable duration, can be of assistance with regard to the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase. Regular educator support from the districts, the province and the national education departments will be welcome in order for the educators to ensure that they are in compliance with policy at all times. Leaving them to find their way out after a short training session confuses them. This is mostly witnessed during meetings, when they don't even know which aspect of assessment they need help in.

Assessment systems play a vital role and the establishment at school level is a serious cause for concern. Assessment policy does accommodate such structures



and their roles and responsibilities are clearly stipulated. Direction should be given to schools to start forming those assessment structures, which could be of greater help when they come to the monitoring of assessment activities.

The mediation of assessment policies is necessary so that the implementation of such a policy can be uniform with regard to interpretation. Quality assurance structures will ensure that there are proper moderation at school and provincial level, and educators will always be up to date with the pacesetters distributed by the DoE. A paradigm shift is necessary to avoid doing things the same old way. OBA is different and should be treated likewise by all stakeholders. A change in the way learners are being assessed currently should be embraced by everybody. Assessment is necessary within each of the learning areas. Assessment should not be treated as an aspect on its own, but should be integrated within teaching and learning.

These and other challenges have to be acknowledged so that they can be addressed. If not attended to, the impact will be unbearable and the consequences immeasurable. The results of the learners might not be reliable and valid if the implementation of assessment is not fully complied with. These may result in an educational disaster that may impact on the economy of the country. The new OBA approach in assessing learners is aimed at producing a highly skilled learner.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, the researcher will discuss the research design and methodology of the study in order to create a sound framework against which the data can be gathered and analysed.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the design of this study, and the data collection methods that will be applied. Gay and Airasian (2003: 163) define the research design as a general strategy or plan for conducting a research study. According to Ismail (2002: 79), research design is a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem, including the aim of the research, the selection and design of a particular method, a random selection of participants and considerations of validity and reliability. The approach to be taken and detailed information on the design of the study will be presented.

### **3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

The researcher applied the qualitative strategy for this study, which as Gay and Airasian (2003: 163) indicate, meets a variety of objectives that differ from those of the more statistically-based quantitative strategy. Qualitative research provides a distinctive kind of information and is useful for exploring complex areas about which little is known. Anderson and Kanuka (2003) state that qualitative research relies on the informal wisdom that has developed from the experiences of the researchers, as in the case of this study, in which the researcher was motivated by acquired information from some years of experience as an assessment facilitator.

In qualitative research, data is in the form of words and images from the relevant documentations that the researcher might have read. Data can also be collected from observations and transcripts. In order to analyse data, the researcher is mindful of the fact that analysis proceeds by extracting themes from the accumulated evidence and data organised, to present a coherent and consistent picture. Furthermore, qualitative researchers often depend on interpretation or social science, and speak a language of cases and contexts, also emphasising conducting detailed examinations of cases arising from the natural flow of social life.

The methods used in qualitative research, which the researcher applied, are explained below.

### **3.3 THE INTERVIEW**

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004: 50) acknowledge that interviewing has become a way of life in society. The use of interviews in research marks a move away from human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations. Before the researcher embarked on the process of interviewing, cognisance was taken of the principles of respect and courtesy, confidentiality, integrity and individualisation.

#### **3.3.1 Focus group interviews**

According to Anderson and Kanuka (2003), a focus group interview is a unique kind of interview, because it draws data from a number of people in a manner that is non-quantitative. Anderson and Kanuka (2003) state that focus groups can be used for both exploration and confirmation, and are particularly effective for collecting data about attitudes, perceptions and opinions. In addition, focus groups can be useful especially for revealing the complexities of the problem, as well as for evaluation purposes to identify strengths, weaknesses and needed improvements. Anderson and Kanuka perceive focus groups as particularly effective for gaining a more in-depth understanding of the topic, and hence a better definition of the research question. Thus, when beginning to explore a topic for investigation within a field of education, focus groups can effectively narrow the topic, define the research question and identify the delimitations of the study (Anderson & Kanuka 2003: 102).

Ismail (2002: 82) states that the typical size of the focus group is six to eight people, the duration being from one to two hours. According to Radebe-Hawu (2001: 55), focus group interviews are effective because they:

- take advantage of group dynamics to produce additional data;
- are held in a comfortable and non-threatening environment that can make people less inhibited, more relaxed and more willing to talk;

- yield a diverse array of responses;
- can release the inhibitions of individuals as they listen to others with similar experiences;
- can activate forgotten details amongst individuals that would otherwise not be recalled;
- stimulate ideas;
- may encourage participants to disclose behaviour and attitudes that they might not consciously reveal in an individual interview; and
- allow participants to feel more comfortable and secure in the company of people who share similar opinions.

According to Radebe-Hawu (2001) in focus group interviews, the interviewer should create an atmosphere of friendliness in which there are no correct or incorrect answers, only self-explanatory ones. He further states that given the proper environment in focus group interviews, participants could be less on guard against personal disclosures, because the atmosphere would be tolerant, friendly and permissive. The reason for using focus group interviews instead of individual interviews is not to reach consensus, but to exhaust an exploration of questioning of the different perspectives under scrutiny. The focus group interview has many advantages over other types of research, as outlined by Mochatsi (2003) as follows:

- data is obtained from a group more quickly than from the same number of individuals;
- such interviews allow for clarification and lend themselves better to probing as well as clarification of responses. Non-verbal behaviour can also be observed and can contribute to the findings; and
- focus groups encourage respondents to make their inputs in their own words. They further encourage respondents to build on the responses of other group members.

### **3.3.2 How questions will be asked**

It is natural for interviewees to be nervous when engaged in any form of activity. To avoid nervousness, rigidity and tension amongst or between participants, the

researcher ensured that the atmosphere was relaxed and everybody was at ease before starting the process. For the purpose of full participation and involvement, the researcher built a rapport between the two parties for the prevalence of trust. Questions were arranged according to sections and headings, as indicated in Annexure A, and a brief introduction to the section being discussed was followed by open-ended questions proposed by the researcher, with an emphasis on gaining insights through group opinions rather than on specific fact (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003: 103).

The researcher spoke very little in order to give the participants the opportunity to provide information without being interrupted, and guarded against asking leading questions. Questions in each case were designed to gather as much information related to the heading under discussion as possible. Interviewees have a tendency to deviate from the topic, so the researcher had to be in a position to bring them back on track by using her interviewing techniques. The researcher applied probing in order to get more information from the participants. As the interview progressed with the posing of the research questions, the researcher had to ensure that questions were in keeping with the aims and objectives of the study. An interview guide was compiled by the researcher with three questions in each section, thus ensuring that similar interview data could be obtained from all groups.

According to Andraos (2003), an additional benefit of using the interview schedule is that it not only enables the interviewer to remain focused during the interview situation, but also ensures that time is used effectively. Ismail (2002: 84) claims that an interview guide is often a useful tool for the researcher to use in the focus group interview situation. The focus group interview guide aims at establishing the groups' agenda, guiding both the interviewer and the interviewee in developing the framework for the interview.

Mochatsi (2003) warns against tape recordings, since they can have a negative inhibiting effect on the interviewee. He adds that tape recording is time-consuming when it comes to listening. However, the researcher recorded all interviews so that the responses were well captured, for information not to be distorted, for validity and reliability during data collection, and for analysis for reliable interpretation.

### **3.3.3 Interview guide/protocol/interview schedule**

The interviews were conducted in English, with the researcher clarifying the purpose of the inquiry before starting each one. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were written by hand as the process proceeded. According to Andraos (2003: 32), an interview guide or schedule, in this case consisting of three open-ended questions in each section, was prepared as a means of increasing the comparability of data. The researcher had to ensure that similar interview data was obtained from all other focus groups.

As suggested by Andraos (2003: 32), an additional benefit of using an interview guide or schedule is that it ensures that time is used effectively. Through application of the interview guide or schedule, the researcher was able to maintain a certain amount of structure, while members of groups and groups themselves were afforded the opportunity to express their individual experiences and perspectives.

The researcher used the probing technique to encourage the groups to come forward with information that would be of assistance to the researcher. She spoke very little during the interview process, maintaining focused flexibility and being emphatic. Participants dominating the interviews, instead of the group, were prevented. Reserved members were also encouraged to participate by giving their views. Additional comments were made by participants before the completion of each interview.

The duration of each focus group interview was an hour. The researcher thanked all the participants for their positive attitude and cooperation. She also requested that they show equal willingness should the researcher wish to conduct further research in future.

## **3.4 INTERVIEW GUIDE**

The interviewees were later given the questions asked during the focused group interviews to respond to individually. The researcher deemed it important to find each

individual's opinions. The advantage of this method is that it encourages them to provide data with limited or no interference, and no probing by the researcher.

In order to determine what was going on in the minds of individual respondents, the researcher decided to use an interview guide. It is human nature to behave or respond differently in different situations. The researcher believes that when people are not under any form of pressure, they tend to think otherwise. Each individual was given the same questions asked during the focus group interview to answer (Appendix B), the purpose being to supplement the focus group interview and to get individuals' views.

In interview guides (often also called questionnaires), it is important to avoid leading questions which more often than not suggest that there is only one acceptable answer. It is also important to be mindful of the compilation of complex, negative and irritating questions, because the participants may become confused and lose interest in the process.



### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection is considered as one of the core aspects of any research project. Careful consideration is deserved when decisions and choices around the methods and processes are made. Data may be defined as information collected during processes of inquiry and it often constitutes findings. The researcher should guard against contaminating the data, for example by putting words into the candidates' mouths in order to influence the conclusions of the research questions. Data needs to be reliable and valid. It is ideal to use more than one method of collecting data. This is known as triangulation and involves investigating the same problem using various methods.

Data was collected through the focus group interviews that were conducted at different sampled schools, and also at the District Office with the district facilitators involved with the Senior Phase. The researcher's interviewing technique assisted her in collecting data. As well as providing the tape recorded interviews, participants were observed to detect their reaction during the process of the interviews. An

interview guide/questionnaire was distributed at the end of the interview in order to obtain each individual's opinions and views on the research problem.

### **3.6 THE SAMPLED SCHOOLS**

The schools were chosen according to their proximity. They were also categorised as township, farm and ex-model 'C' schools. Each of the sampled schools was given assumed names:

- Coronation Secondary School;
- Dr. Pieter Secondary School;
- Lerato Senior Primary School;
- Motlholo Combined School;
- Zanele Secondary School; and
- Grootboom Combined School.

The selection criteria of the six educators from each of the schools in Gauteng West were as follows: They must have been educators in the Senior Phase, and must have taught in the phase since the implementation of OBE and OBA.

The four district officials also had to be involved in the Senior Phase since the implementation of OBE and OBA.

The researcher decided to use the said criteria because she believes that experience gained by the selected participants and hands-on experience in the phase would be of benefit in terms of information needed regarding the research study.

### **3.7 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The researcher decided to use purposive sampling, that is, as the term implies, the sample has been chosen for a specific purpose. Because qualitative samples tend to be small relative to quantitative samples, and because many potential participants are unwilling to undergo the lengthy demands of participants, sampling in qualitative research is always purposive (Gay & Airasian 2003: 116). Anderson and Kanuka



(2003: 109) state that purposive sampling is generally used when choice of the invited participants is based on predetermined criteria (e.g. past courses taken, geographic location, employment). In addition, they also indicate that an important consideration in constructing focus groups is to ensure the invited participants are reasonably homogeneous with respect to the topic to be discussed, but that they will also represent diverse experiences and perceptions relative to key issues being investigated.

### **3.8 SUMMARY**

Chapter 3 dealt with methods of collecting data, the criteria used to select sampled schools and the district officials who have been involved in facilitating assessment at district level. The next chapter will deal with data analysis and interpretation.



## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on analysis and interpretation of data with the purpose of establishing problems experienced by educators regarding the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase. Comments from the six schools will be analysed to determine whether the schools have a common understanding and interpretation of OBA as stipulated by the National Assessment Policy. The analysed data will be interpreted according to responses generated by the six sampled schools interviewed. According to Andraos (2003:8), the ultimate goal of analysis is to produce from the mass data collected, the identification of threads that can be woven together to tell coherent, focused and comprehensible information that was observed and recorded.

The interpretation will include a tabular illustration in the form of percentages to indicate the level of understanding of the whole OBA implementation by the 36 educators. The interpretation will also examine the implications for the existing gaps within the education system. Deductions and conclusions will be made in line with the findings, related to the training and systems in Chapter 2.

Radebe-Hawu (2001:62) states that data analysis in qualitative research involves examining, organising and reducing information into smaller segments from which patterns and trends could be seen.

### **4.2 ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS FROM THE SIX SCHOOLS**

The focus in this section is on issues raised by the six schools during the focus group interviews.

#### **SECTION 1: The implementation of OBA according to the National Assessment Policy of the DoE**

The aim of this section was to establish success of the implementation of OBA, problems emanating from the implementation and gaps identified by educators. The following questions were asked during the interview:

1. How do you find the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment principles by educators in the classroom?
2. Are there any problems regarding the implementation of OBA?
3. Are there any gaps within the National Assessment Policy that you know of?

Educators raised the issue of a change in attitude. OBA needs a new mind shift. Educators need to adapt and adopt the transformation in the education system. A major paradigm shift is to be encouraged for the success of the implementation of OBA into teaching and learning. There was an indication that educators treat assessment as an aspect on its own. Integrating it into teaching and learning is problematic due to more emphasis on theory than on practical application, which was one of their concerns. This reveals that alignment of assessment, teaching and learning poses a challenge to educators.

When considering why these issues came up, it nullifies what the researcher alluded to in the literature review (Chapter 2) when she referred to 'training'. During training, these issues can be resolved.

Educators are expected to comply fully with the Assessment Policy, which can happen if all educators interpret assessment in the same way and with a common understanding. The success of the implementation relies on all role-players.

Educators complained about too much workload, which according to them prevents them from implementing OBA according to policy. These suggest that educators are not fully complying with policy during the implementation of OBA. There is also a concern of inconsistency in the annual staff establishment. This impacts negatively on OBA implementation, because an educator, who is not trained in OBA, may have problems with the implementation. The researcher feels that training and development of educators in OBA should be continuous, because of developments in assessments. The School Management Team should play this role.

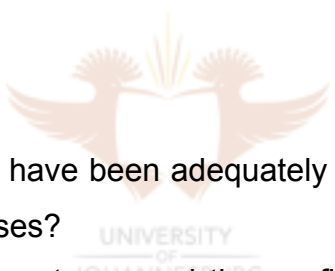
Educators need regular guidance, support, motivation and follow-ups. That is crucial for ensuring that all schools comply with policy. Reflection is also important because strengths and weakness can be identified and schools with good practices can also be noted.

Educators hesitantly alluded to assessment gaps. The inability of educators to notice any forms of gaps within the Assessment Policy is evidence of a lack of understanding in implementing OBA.

## **SECTION 2: Educator development**

The aim of this section was to establish the adequacy or inadequacy in OBA training in relation to the National Assessment Policy.

### **Questions:**

- 
1. Do you think you have been adequately trained to implement OBE and OBA in your classes?
  2. Do you have competency and the confidence to be able to apply the principles of OBA in teaching and learning?
  3. What are your problems pertaining to educator development, if any?

Educators raised the issue of inadequate training based on its short duration and the time they are expected to attend the workshops on OBA. This is a result of poor planning of major projects by the DoE, which impacts badly on the skills and knowledge educators are to acquire, especially as assessors in their own learning areas. They also indicated a lack of confidence in the application of the OBA principles. The uttered statement shows that educators should be trained and developed continuously.

Assessment structures at school level should play this role. The argument may be that some of the structures are also not knowledgeable on OBA, so they have nothing to offer.

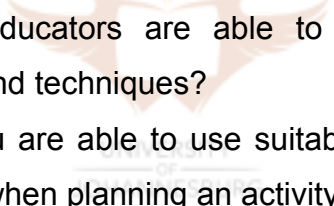
The issue of 'resistance to change' came up. This is an indication that a mind shift is needed, because it can hinder progress in the transformation of education, especially in relation to OBA implementation.

The 'once-off' training is an issue for concern. Educators want to be trained continuously because of changes within the assessment systems, processes and procedures. The researcher concurs with educators in this aspect.

### **SECTION 3: Appropriate selection of methods, tools and techniques**

The aim of this section was to establish if educators are able to select appropriate methods, tools and techniques when planning activities to assess learners.

#### **Questions:**

- 
1. Do you think educators are able to use appropriate assessment methods, tools and techniques?
  2. Do you think you are able to use suitable assessment methods, tools and techniques when planning an activity?
  3. Why is it important to use various assessment methods, tools and techniques in assessing learners?

Distinguishing the three aspects pose a challenge to educators, hence they just choose methods, tools and techniques not appropriate to the activities. The researcher decided to provide Table 2.2 on page 34 in Chapter 2. The National Assessment Policy states clearly that the appropriate methods, tools and techniques should be selected in order to accommodate all learners.

### **SECTION 4: Recording and reporting learners' progress**

Many educators say that recording and reporting assessment are amongst the hardest aspects of the new curriculum to master (Source: Guide Book 3, Report and record assessment, GICD 2001: 24).

The aim of this section was to establish educators' opinion on the posed statement, find out if they knew the purpose of recording and reporting learners' achievements and what they tended to report on.

**Questions:**

1. What is your opinion on the statement?
2. What is the purpose of recording and reporting learners' achievement?
3. What do educators tend to report on?

Recording for official reporting should take place within the framework of the school assessment policy, which should be in line with the National Assessment Policy. The researcher was convinced after the interviews that some educators were still hanging on to the old way of recording and reporting, because they even used the wrong terminology of passing and failing. Learners are either retained or progressed to the next grade when reporting in OBA. Educators are expected to report on performance in a specific learning outcome, but they tend to report on learners' behaviour and absenteeism at school and base the outcome on that. Policy also expects educators to report on the achievement of a learning outcome in a specific subject.

The researcher sensed that educators' inability to identify learners' strengths and abilities is due to the lack of skill in recording and reporting, which is the purpose of why they are expected to record and report, and not only for the sake of giving feedback to all stakeholders concerned.

Educators tend to report on everything. Educators should know that reporting is the form of feedback that can be most effective when it confirms that learners are achieving the learning outcome envisaged, and also when it stimulates improvement of an activity performed and suggestion for improvement.

**SECTION 5: Administering, scoring and interpreting results of the learners**

The aim in this section was to get a sense of how educators go about administering, scoring and interpreting results of learners, problems they experience and the purpose for administering, scoring and interpreting results.

**Questions:**

1. Do you think you are able to administer, score and interpret results?
2. What are the problems you are having with this aspect?
3. Why should you administer, score and interpret results?

There was not much interaction in this section, which according to the researcher reveals that educators are not too sure of how to go about administering, scoring and interpreting learners' results.

**SECTION 6: Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement plays a very important role in the transformation of the education system. The idea behind this section was to find out about parental involvement, its importance and the effect of a lack of it on the school.



**Questions:**

1. Why are some parents not actively involved in the education of their children?
2. Why is it important for parents to be involved in the education of their children?
3. What is the effect of parental involvement in the school?

This issue of parental involvement was echoed by all six sampled schools. Educators blame the high rate of illiteracy in this respect, ignorance and a lack of interest and love in some parents. OBA expects parents to be involved part-and-parcel, because they play a crucial role in reaching the achievements of desired outcomes by learners. Parents' absence in the problems encountered by learners makes educators' lives very difficult.

## **SECTION 7: Quality Assurance Structures**

The effectiveness and functionality as well as the existence of assessment structures are a necessity. The purpose of this section was to verify this statement.

### **Questions:**

1. What are the responsibilities of the assessment structures?
2. How do you maintain standard of work at school?
3. Do you have a school assessment policy and what does it entail?

The structure at school level seems to be dysfunctional and ineffective. According to the researcher, these structures are custodians of policy and they are supposed to be very active, knowledgeable, informed and skilful (See Chapter 2, Literature Review).

The researcher made mention of the establishment of assessment structures for the purpose of putting systems in place at school level. Curricular 41/2001 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the assessment structures in the context of the National Assessment Policy.

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### **4.3 DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE COMMENTS FROM SCHOOLS**

The focus of this topic will be on detailed analysis of the data for the individual schools. The purpose of analysing individual schools is to establish the problems each school is experiencing regarding the implementation of OBA. The Assessment Policy is designed to assist educators to implement OBA effectively and efficiently. Jansen and Christie (1999: 248) demonstrate that assessment guidelines and policies cannot be implemented effectively unless teachers/educators understand why they are assessing, what they are assessing, and how to assess in a manner appropriate to the purpose of assessment.

Evidence to the above was observed as individual schools responded to the interviews conducted. The researcher's deductions are as follows:



**Coronation Secondary School** showed a shallow understanding of the implementation of OBA. The effect of inconsistency in the annual staff affected the school badly. Educators are not trained in OBA and have neither experience nor knowledge of OBE, and may not comply with policy regarding the latter; hence the need for continuous training and development in the National Assessment Policy that informs the implementation of OBA. This school also revealed the issue of training in OBA as having confused them. Some educators ended up using their own discretion regarding policy interpretation. Educators seem not to understand why they should use appropriate methods, tools and techniques when planning activities. Their recording and reporting is still partly done in the old way. This is very problematic, because assessment of their learners should be learner-centred and recording and reporting should be accurate and in line with the new way of assessing learners. What the researcher could deduct in this school is that there are no proper systems in place. The existing assessment structures do not know the roles to play and interaction with policy is lacking. Most parents are not involved in the education of their children; this is a serious concern to educators at this school.

Meanwhile, **Dr Pieter Secondary School** and **Lerato Secondary School** share the same sentiments. These two schools seem not to be clear on how to go about assessing learners in the OBA approach and this is coupled by resistance to change or a mind shift. It is difficult for them to adapt to and adopt the new way of assessing, recording, reporting, administering and scoring learners' results. Diversity is not embraced when planning their activities. Their results can be argued in relation to fair, reliable and valid in the OBA context. The existence of assessment structures does not benefit the two schools, because of the problems they experience. The School Assessment Team is the relevant structure to intervene, but because of a lack of relevant skills, knowledge of OBA and minimal interaction and misinterpretation of policy to some extent, compliance to the National Policy is not achieved.

**Motlholo Secondary School** issues need clarity on appropriate assessment practices, which will yield successful implementation of OBA. Despite educators seeking clarity on appropriate assessment practices, they do however implement without confidence. The workload on educators regarding the completion of the 450 forms (see Appendix D for the forms), is also a problem. What interested the

researcher about this school was the positive attitude and acknowledgement of the existing change.

In **Zanele Secondary School**, the ratio of educator to learners seems to be contributing to educators' problems regarding the implementation of OBA. The lack of proper documentation and material related to assessment was also hinted. The researcher would argue that a problem of accountability and responsibility towards the learner is at stake. Sharing of information by the relevant assessment structures is deemed a serious problem. There is a need for training and development regarding OBA implementation and the policies thereof.

In **Grootboom Combined School**, large class issues also came up, which prevent the educators from covering assessment activities prescribed in the assessment guidelines. However, this is one school that shows good practices in OBA implementation. Diversity is recognised and assessment done for the benefit of the learner. Strategies to get parents involved are in place. The assessment structure is able to put systems in place for the smooth implementation of OBA.

#### **4.4 INTERPRETATION OF THE ANALYSED DATA**

##### **SECTION 1**

The focus of this section is to interpret the analysed data as indicated at the beginning of Chapter 4. The interpretation on 36 educators will be illustrated in tabular form, in percentages. The objective is to explore problems experienced by educators in the implementation of OBA.

##### **Questions:**

1. How do you find the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education principles by educators in the classroom?
2. Are there any problems regarding the implementation of OBA?
3. Are there any gaps within the National Assessment Policy that you know of?

**TABLE 4.1 – Levels of problems as experienced by educators**

This table illustrates the levels at which educators view their problems with OBA implementation.

<b>No problems</b>	<b>Experiencing problems</b>	<b>Partly experience problems</b>	<b>Do not know</b>
17%	67%	11%	6%

Comments on the above table show that 17% had no problem with the implementation of OBA, 67% are experiencing problems, 11% partly had problems and 6% did not know whether they had problems or not regarding the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase. The discrepancies in Table 4.1 show that 67% of educators are experiencing problems regarding the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase in the classroom. Only 17% indicates that they do not have problems and this is a serious cause for concern. The table illustrates that further training and development is necessary for problems to be eliminated in OBA implementation.

## **SECTION 2: Educator development**

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The aim of this section was to establish the adequacy or inadequacy in OBA training in relation to the National Assessment Policy.

### **Questions:**

1. Do you think you have been adequately trained to implement OBE and OBA in your classes?
2. Do you have competency and the confidence to be able to apply the principles of OBA in teaching and learning?
3. What are your problems pertaining to educator development, if any?

**TABLE 4.2 – Rate of educators in training and development**

The table below indicates the rate of educators in development out of 36 educators.

<b>Think they are adequately trained</b>	<b>Think they are inadequately trained</b>	<b>Partly adequately trained</b>	<b>Not trained at all</b>
11%	50%	11%	28%

The table above illustrates that 11% of the educators in the Senior Phase thought they received adequate training, 50% thought they had not been adequately trained, 11% felt they had been partly trained and 28% had not been trained at all. If 50% educators think that they are inadequately trained and 28% have not been trained at all. This implies that the Education Department has a challenge of ensuring that adequate training is given to all educators since they are involved in assessment activities in their classrooms. Training in OBA by competent trainers should be on a continuous basis in order to empower newly appointed educators and those who came from Grades 10, 11 and 12.



### **SECTION 3: Appropriate selection of methods, tools and techniques**

The aim of this section was to determine if educators are able to select appropriate methods, tools and techniques when planning activities to assess learners.

#### **Questions:**

1. Do you think educators are able to use appropriate assessment methods, tools and techniques?
2. Do you think you are able to use suitable assessment methods, tools and techniques when planning an activity?
3. Why is it important to use various assessment methods, tools and techniques in assessing learners?

**TABLE 4.3 – Selection of appropriate tools by educators**

The table below shows how educators attempt to select the appropriate methods, tools and techniques.

<b>Select appropriate methods, tools and techniques</b>	<b>Never select appropriate methods, tools and techniques</b>	<b>Confusing methods, tools and techniques</b>	<b>Sometimes select appropriate methods, tools and techniques</b>
38%	17%	17%	28%

The table above shows that 38% of the interviewed educators selected appropriate methods, tools and techniques when planning their activities, 17% never bothered about selecting appropriate methods, tools and techniques, 17% confused methods, tools and techniques, let alone their appropriateness, and 28% sometimes thought of selecting appropriate methods, tools and techniques. These show that diversity is still an issue and most learners are left out to see for themselves, because they might not be accommodated in the planning of activities by educators.

#### **SECTION 4: Recording and reporting learners' progress**

The aim of this section was to establish educators' opinion on the posed statement, find out if they knew the purpose of recording and reporting learners' achievements and what they tend to report on.

##### **Questions:**

1. What is your opinion on the statement?
2. What is the purpose of recording and reporting learners' achievement?
3. What do educators tend to report on?

**TABLE 4.4 – Status of recording and reporting learner progress**

<b>Know how to record and report</b>	<b>Does not know how to record and report</b>	<b>Still recording and reporting on new and old</b>	<b>Just record for the sake of recording</b>
28%	17%	22%	33%

This table establishes the status of recording and reporting learners' progress.

The table above illustrates that 28% of the interviewed educators knew how to record and report, 17% did not know how to record and report, 22% were still mixing both the new and old ways of recording and reporting learners' progress, and 33% just recorded and reported because they were expected to do so in order to give feedback to the relevant stakeholders. This is also an indication that educators need direction and guidance in this section. 33% reveals that formative and summative assessment are jeopardised by poor recording and reporting methods. The implications are that the results may not be valid and reliable for individual learner or the entire school.

### **SECTION 5: Administering, scoring and interpreting results of the learners**

The aim in this section was to get a sense of how educators go about administering, scoring and interpreting results of learners, problems they experience and the purpose for administering, scoring and interpreting results.

#### **Questions:**

1. Do you think you are able to administer, score and interpret results?
2. What are the problems you are having with this aspect?
3. Why should you administer, score and interpret results?

**TABLE 4.5 – Educators’ understanding of administering, scoring, and interpreting learners’ progress**

<b>Have the knowledge and skill</b>	<b>Have no knowledge and skill</b>	<b>Partly knowledgeable and skilful</b>	<b>No idea of how to do it</b>
56%	22%	17%	6%

This table indicates how educators understand administering, scoring and interpreting learners’ results.

Table 4.5 shows that 56% of the interviewed educators were able to administer score and interpret the learner’s results, 22% did not have the knowledge and skill, 17% partly had the knowledge and skill and 6% just used their own discretion. It is crucial that all role-players are deemed competent in this aspect, because wrong interpretation, scoring and administering may lead to learners losing interest in their education. Yet, OBA is about the learner and how she/he is being assessed.

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## **SECTION 6: Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement plays a very important role in the transformation of the education system. The idea behind this section was to find out about parental involvement, its importance and the effect of a lack of it on the school.

### **Questions:**

1. Why are some parents not actively involved in the education of their children?
2. Why is it important for parents to be involved in the education of their children?
3. What is the effect of parental involvement in the school?

**TABLE 4.6 – Parental involvement in schools**

The table below shows parental involvement in schools.

<b>Parents are fully and actively involved</b>	<b>Partly involved</b>	<b>Neither active nor inactive</b>	<b>Not involved at all</b>
28%	22%	17%	33%

This table shows that 26% of the parents at the sampled schools were actively involved in the education of their children, 22% were partly involved or inactive, 17% were neither active nor inactive, and 33% didn't bother about what was happening in the education of their own children. This was mostly witnessed in parents' meetings attendance and during the election of the School Governing Bodies.

This is a challenge to all of us to ensure that parental involvement is successful, because OBA recognises the participation and involvement of this structure in the context of guidance to their children and educators. Parents have important roles to play in this new dispensation, especially regarding OBA approach in teaching and learning. 33% of parents who are not involved shows that educators are struggling with some of the learners with barriers to learning. Educators and parents are supposed to be in partnership. This is challenge for all of us to ensure that we establish strategies that will make parents how valuable they are in this new education system.

## **SECTION 7: Quality Assurance Structures**

The effectiveness and functionality as well as the existence of assessment structures are a necessity. The purpose of this section was to verify this statement.

### **Questions:**

1. What are the responsibilities of the assessment structures?



2. How do you maintain standard of work at school?
3. Do you have a school assessment policy and what does it entail?

**TABLE 4.7 - The effectiveness and functionality of quality assurance structures**

The table below shows the effectiveness and functionality of quality assurance structures the sampled schools.

<b>Structures are functional</b>	<b>Partially functional</b>	<b>Not functional at all</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
24%	17%	39%	20%

The table above illustrates that in the 36 sampled schools, 24% of quality assurance structures were functional, 17% were partially functional, 39% were not functional at all, and 20% were not sure if the structures were functional. The 39% reflecting assessment structures that are not functional in schools signifies the lack of assessment systems, processes and procedures that need to be in place for the success of the implementation of OBA in the classroom. Schools are experiencing problems regarding the implementation of OBA, because custodians of the policy according to Jansen and Christie (1999: 248) lack understanding of the complexity of issues involved around the implementation of OBA.

#### **4.5 SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS**

The analysis of data and the interpretation thereof reveal major challenges with regard to problems experienced by educators in the implementation of OBA. The focus in this section was on a synthesis of the different schools. The approach was that of synchronising questions from each section and coming up with certain deductions. Only the heading of the sections were shown. The researcher argued that the problems experienced by educators revolve around educator training, policy interpretation, functional systems and quality assurance structures.

Educators were not able to identify gaps due to their lack of understanding of the National Assessment Policy. Some of the gaps that the researcher could identify were the need for training, empowerment of quality assurance structures and the lack of parental involvement.

#### **4.6 SUMMARY**

The analysed data in the chapter indicated that when training of educators takes place, the emphasis is more on theory than practice. Educators showed a lot of low morale because they feel helpless and in need of assistance and support. They sounded insecure because they are not sure if they are on the right track with regard to policy compliance. What bothers educators most is the 'how' to go about the implementation in their specific subjects, since the workshops they attended were not subject-specific. The next and final chapter will focus on a summary of the research, the findings, conclusions and recommendations.



## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher will consolidate the findings of the study with reference to the problems educators struggle with regarding the implementation of OBA. The consolidation will begin by examining each chapter in detail, with a focus on issues raised by each chapter and the findings thereof. In Chapter 1, the researcher gave the historical background and introduction of the research topic. The problem was stated, and the aims of the study were spelled out in clear terms: to establish whether educators understand the policy and implement the new assessment methods in their classrooms. Chapter 2 was dedicated to the theoretical framework. Here the researcher dealt with definitions of assessment, types of assessment, strategies, methods, tools and techniques of assessment and quality assurance structures to ensure that assessment is done validly and in a reliable fashion. In Chapter 3 the researcher discussed the research design and methodology of the study itself. A discussion of the qualitative research method of interviewing was given, how the educators and schools were selected was explained, and the protocol of the research process was given. Chapter 4 dealt with the analysis of data and the interpretation of the findings. In this final chapter (Chapter 5), the researcher will conclude by outlining the summary, the research findings, conclusions and the recommendations of the whole research project. The researcher will also refer to important practical implications that emanated from this research, while at the same time pointing out the future research possibilities that can be deducted from this dissertation.

### **5.2 SUMMARY**

The main aim of the study was to investigate problems experienced by educators regarding the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment in the classroom in the Senior Phase. The findings show that they do experience a variety of problems in their efforts to implement the new policy on assessment in their classrooms.

The purpose of exploring the abovementioned issues was to attempt to explain how the research problem was identified, how the research came about, what informed the critical questions guiding the research, and the results of the strategy that assisted the researcher in formulating the research questions. Issues explored in this chapter were as follows:

- Transformation in the education system;
- the introduction of Curriculum 2005;
- the OBE approach in teaching and learning;
- a new way of assessing learners; and
- the formulation of the below-mentioned critical questions to direct the research topic:
  - Do educators understand the National Assessment Policy?
  - Are educators adequately trained in the implementation of OBA?
  - Are educators able to select appropriate methods, tools and techniques when planning their activities?
  - Are educators able to administer, score and interpret learners' results?
  - Can educators record and report on learners' progress?
  - Is there parental involvement?
  - Are assessment structures functional and effective?

The results showed a significant lack of understanding of the policy and lack of competence in implementation of the new ways of assessment. A dire need for skills emerged; a need for skills such as the management of planning assessment, and the management of recording and reporting assessment in order to be competent in the implementation of OBA. The involvement of parents in the education of their own children came forward as an outcry of most of the educators.

In Chapter 2 literature, including all other documents and assessment materials relating to the research topic, was interacted with. Issues explored in this chapter were as follows:

- Assessing learners in an OBA approach using different methods, tools and techniques;
- how educators should record and report learners' progress in an OBA approach;
- the roles and functions of quality assurance structures;
- training and development for educators in the context of OBA; and
- the shift from an old paradigm to a new paradigm.

The purpose of exploring these issues was to examine compliance with policy when implementing OBA. In addition to that, it was also to obtain other authors' views on the research topic. The findings revealed that change is necessary with regard to the old and new way of assessing learners. The roles and responsibilities of quality assurance structures should be clearly spelt out to all educators.

Chapter 3 revolved around the criteria used to select the sampled schools. The methods of collecting data were also explored. The reasons behind the issues explored in this chapter were to ensure that the relevant processes and procedures had been adhered to. This forms the crux of the assurance as far as validity and reliability are concerned.



Chapter 4 focussed on the analysis and interpretation of data. Issues explored emanated from the questions formulated. The purpose was to analyse the comments of the educators from the different schools, to come up with the researcher's own conclusions and deductions and thereafter, her personal interpretation of the data. This was verified against the background of the literature review in Chapter 2. The analysis and interpretation of data revealed the following critical issues as the main categories to be addressed:

- The need for understanding of the National Assessment Policy;
- The need for assessment policy mediation;
- Serious and effective educator training and development;
- Mediation of assessment policies;
- Involvement of parents in the education of their children; and

- Why quality assurance structures should be in place and functioning.

The above issues were explored and the responses of the participants helped the researcher in determining why educators are experiencing problems in the implementation of OBA. The discovery or 'unveiling' of these categories of problems at the same time serve as a contribution to the body of knowledge of curriculum evaluation and development, which can, when properly administered, play a role in the improvement of issues surrounding assessment, AND speed up the process of transformation and change, which are the keystones in every curriculum implementation exercise.

In this chapter, Chapter 5, the final focus is on findings, conclusions and recommendations. The findings in this study refer back to the critical questions on which the study was based. The aim of these findings is to highlight the existing gaps with regard to the implementation of OBA. It is expected that these findings will create awareness that there is a need to re-examine the manner in which educator development is designed and the need to empower educators to enable them to interpret and translate policy. The researcher has the following findings on the research topic:



### 5.3 FINDINGS

- Educators' **lack of understanding of the National Assessment Policy** is quite evident from the interpretation of the analysed data. The failure of educators to understand the policy or to know whether there are gaps in their implementation thereof, show that assistance is needed in this aspect. There is a need for a **major paradigm shift** and **change of attitude for educators** to be able to deal with new issues around the understanding of the National Assessment Policy. The Department of Education tries to put policies, systems and strategies in place, but if educators do not adapt and adopt to change, and also do not acknowledge, accept and embrace change, the success in assessing learners in the OBA approach may be hindered. The researcher's finding is echoed by Jansen and Christie (1999: 247) when they say that it is widely agreed in the educational policy circles in South Africa


today that a paradigm shift in assessment is required in order to ensure that assessment practices guide, support and underpin our transformative outcomes model for education and training. Educators are neither confident nor competent in the implementation of OBA.

- There is a problem around **educator development**. The training sessions that educators attended are viewed by them as being of poor quality, resulting from some incompetent facilitators. They indicated that there was more theory than practice in the training. The timeframes and the duration of the training was also a cause for concern.
- The **selection of appropriate methods, tools and techniques** pose a big challenge to some educators. Some educators cannot differentiate between the three aspects: The selection of the appropriate methods, tools and techniques should make every learner to be accommodated in the activities planned. It is crucial for educators to apply this strategy in order for assessment to be fair, reliable and valid.
- There is a paradigm shift needed as far as the **recording and reporting system** of learners is concerned. Some educators indicated that they were not sure on what, when and how to report in an OBA approach. More often than not, some educators like to report on learners' behaviour, or the number of times she/he has been absent from school. Recording and reporting should focus more on the outcome achieved or not achieved, i.e. it should be performance-based.
- **Administering, scoring and interpreting learners' results** are also not well handled by educators. This is one of the challenges to educators and it also came out as an important finding. Educators are not that well informed about it, and this can impact badly on the results and the morale of the learners.
- In the OBA approach in teaching and learning, parents have a role to play. Educators complain of parents not attending meetings, and not responding in

case of their having to be part of the problems their children are experiencing. **Parental involvement** is lacking in most of the schools, and educators indicated in the interviews that this needs to be addressed hastily.

- The DoE must be commended for having policies, processes, procedures and systems in place, according to the respondents. The purpose was to measure **Quality Assured Assessment** practices as they unfold amongst stakeholders. It is important that these systems are also established in the learning sites. There should be the District Assessment Teams (DAT) at district level to monitor, support, develop, guide and motivate the School Assessment Teams (SAT) at school level. The structures at school level seem not to know their roles and responsibility. This was evident in the data analysed and interpreted. Some educators indicated that there are School Management Teams who are still not well informed about OBA.

#### 5.4 CONCLUSIONS



South Africans are experiencing a total transformation in education. The Outcomes-Based Education approach in teaching and learning resulted in learners being assessed in an Outcomes-Based manner in the classroom. It is the researcher's conclusion that **a major paradigm shift is therefore necessary** from all stakeholders, especially educators involved in the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase.

The **development of the new assessment policy document** show that the Department of Education is aiming at guiding and assisting educators to approach assessment of learners in an OBA way. This research has exposed problems experienced by the educators regarding the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase. Educators are to do away with the old way with how assessment was done in the past and adopt a new way. This is posing a big challenge to the Department of Education.

The researcher commends the Department for the establishment of assessment policies, systems, processes and procedures that are in place. However, if those



policies do not translate to practice the educators will continue to experience problems with implementation. The possibility that **schools will implement the assessment policy** with different understanding and interpretation cannot be ruled out.

The beneficiary in OBA approach is the learner. One of the principles of OBE is that all learners can succeed given the necessary support. The focus in OBA approach expects the educator to know how to assess, what to assess, when to assess and also what to do with all the information gathered. The educators will only do that if they are well equipped and capacitated on a continuous basis. Educators as assessors need to be confident and motivated. Quality assurance structures are unable to achieve the degree of excellence required. The **lack of proper systems** in place at school level and not informed about roles and responsibilities of such structures is a serious cause for concern.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS



The researcher's recommendations are based on the findings of the study. The National Department of Education is faced with numerous challenges, problems and opportunities with regard to the implementation of OBA in the classroom in order to produce the type of learners the Constitution of this country envisaged. This can be achieved by addressing the following:

- **Policy mediation and interpretation** - There should be advocacy around the National Assessment Policy for educators. These should be continuous, because sometimes these policies are reviewed. Interactions with the policy will assist educators to understand and interpret it the same way. This is where the complexities revolving around assessment can be resolved and clarified. Aspects such as how to record and report learners' progress can be addressed amicably during this process.
- **Teacher training and development** - Assessment has a lot of developments. It is for this purpose that educators must be trained on a continuous basis. This will assist educators who are joining the system, those who did not

receive training and those who moved from Grades 10, 11 and 12 to Grades 7-9. OBA training and development should be prioritised for educators in the Senior Phase.

- **Systems** - Assessment systems should be in place to keep educators abreast. A school assessment policy should be in place. Educators should be involved in drawing up such a policy so that they are informed and empowered. Systems will assist the educators in ensuring that assessment activities are adhered to.
- **Workload** - The Department of Education should look into the issue of reducing the workload of educators. That will assist them to be more focused on teaching and learning, and assessing learners in an OBA approach.
- **Quality Assurance Structures** - The District Assessment Teams at district level should be effective and efficient. If the DAT is functional, it is easy to monitor and support the School Assessment Team at school level.
- **School Assessment Teams** - It is the responsibility of the quality assurance structures to manage and control assessment activities at their schools. These structures are also responsible for the development and growth of their subordinates. Quality assurance structures are established in the sampled six schools, but unfortunately, most are ineffective, as the interpretation of the data revealed.

## 5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

Educators raised a number of issues related to the integration of teaching and learning with assessment. They also indicated that most educators see assessment as an aspect on its own. Further research would be valuable for the institutions and stakeholders involved in education and training in finding reasons why educators are unable to integrate teaching and learning into assessment.

## **5.7 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE STUDY**

### **5.7.1 Strengths**

It is imperative that educators should have a clear understanding of policy to enable compliance with educational requirements. Training of educators is not enough, development is also necessary. There should be follow-up, monitoring, support, guidance, feedback and reflections for educators. Quality Assurance Structures should also ensure that national standards are applied and carried out by all educators. Setting up assessment systems processes and procedures does not suffice. The processes have to be bolstered by management systems that will support and assist the educator to reach his/her best practices in assessment. The District Assessment Teams (DAT) based at district level to ensure consistency in assessment activities across the district to ensure implementation at school by liaising with the School Assessment Teams (SAT). The SAT should draw a School Assessment Policy which will assist educators to identify assessment activities and their due dates. The issue of lack of parental involvement needs to look at differently. Parents may be scared to come and interfere in professional matters. The ideal situation would be to empower parents as well so that they know where to draw the line. These are some of the strengths that came from the study conducted.

### **5.7.2 Weaknesses**

The criteria used to select sampled schools could have involved more schools. This might have shown in the data analysed that socio-economic factors, the educators' background and the educators' understanding of diversity were taken into cognisance. But, although the research was conducted on a rather limited scale, the findings were quite comprehensive and generalisable. A similar study undertaken in another district or even province may produce similar or may be even more generalisable results, and therefore, an article to make known these findings will be submitted for publishing.

## 5.8 FINAL SUMMARY

The researcher trusts that this study will serve as a practical tool for educators and stakeholders involved in the implementation of OBA in the Senior Phase to assist them in their task of assessment of learners in their classrooms. From the study conducted it is evident that mediation of the National Assessment Policy informs the implementation of OBA. However, such a policy can be deemed as not implementable if educators are not assisted to understand it. It is also expected that dedicated educators will seriously and fervently attempt to adapt to transformation and change in their approach towards assessment in future, and that they will adopt the new ways and means offered to them by the authorities in education. It is said by some anonymous author somewhere that an educator affects eternity – no one can tell where his/her influence stops.



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## **APPENDIX A**

QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW - EACH SECTION OF THE QUESTION IS PRECEDED BY A SHORT PREAMBLE ON QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED.

### **SECTION 1**

#### UNDERSTANDING THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY

- You have interacted with the National Assessment Policy of the GDE in terms of implementation.

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. How do you find the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) principles by educators in the classroom?
2. Are there any problems regarding the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA)?
3. Are there any gaps within the National Assessments policy that you know of?

### **SECTION 2**

#### EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT

- The National, Provincial and Districts has conducted numerous workshops, trainings, information sharing meetings, seminars, conferences on Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) approach in teaching and learning.

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think you have been adequately trained to implement Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) principles in your classes?

2. Do you have the competency to and the confidence to be able to apply of Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) in your classrooms?
3. What are your problems pertaining to educator development if there are any?

### **SECTION 3**

#### **APPROPRIATE SELECTION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

- Continuous assessment must be undertaken with a variety of suitable assessment methods, tools and techniques according to Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think educators are able to use appropriate assessment methods, tools and techniques?
2. Do you think you are able to use suitable assessment methods, tools and techniques when planning an activity?
3. Why is it important to use various assessment methods, tools and techniques in assessment?

### **SECTION 4**

#### **QUESTIONS BASED ON RECORDING AND REPORT LEARNERS PROGRESS**

- Many educators say that recording and reporting assessment are amongst the hardest aspects of the new curriculum to master. (Guide Book 3 - Report and Recording Assessment GDE / GICD (2001: 24).

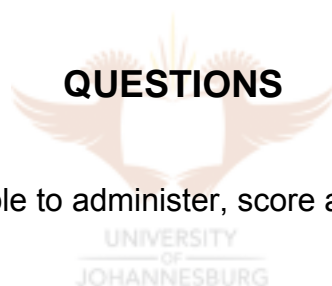
## QUESTIONS

1. What is your opinion on the statement?
2. What is the purpose of recording and reporting learner achievement?
3. What do educators tend to record and report on?

## SECTION 5

### QUESTIONS BASED ON THE ADMINISTERING, SCORING AND INTERPRETING RESULTS OF THE LEARNERS

- Administering, scoring and interpreting results is very important in OBA.



1. Do you think you are able to administer, score and interpret results?
2. What are the problems you are having with this aspect?
3. Why should you administer, score and interpret results?

## SECTION 6

### QUESTIONS BASED ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Parents are the most important component in the Department of Education because they have a vital role to play in the education of their own children and the education system at large.

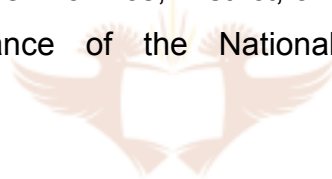
## QUESTIONS

1. Why are some parents not actively involved in the education of their own children?
2. Why is it important for parents to be involved in the education of their own children?
3. What is the effect of lack of parental involvement in the school?

## **SECTION 7**

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

- According to Circular 41 / 2001 there are official assessment structures that should be in place at the Province, District, and Schools and these structures must ensure compliance of the National Assessment Policy by all stakeholders.



### **QUESTIONS** JOHANNESBURG

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of the assessment structures?
2. How do you maintain standard of work at your school?
3. Do you have the school assessment policy and what does it entail?

## APPENDIX B

**You will remain anonymous.**  
**You are not being tested.**  
**The interest is only your genuine opinions.**  
**Answer as individuals.**

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL'S OPINIONS. EACH SECTION OF THE QUESTION IS PRECEDED BY A SHORT PREAMBLE ON QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED.



### UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY JOHANNESBURG

- You have interacted with the National Assessment Policy of the G.D.E. in terms of implementation.

## QUESTIONS

1. How do you find the implementation of Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) principles by educators in the classroom?

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3. Are there any gaps within the National Assessments policy that you know of?

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**SECTION 2**  
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EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT

- The National, Provincial and Districts has conducted numerous workshops, trainings, information sharing meetings, seminars, conferences on Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) approach in teaching and learning.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think you have been adequately trained to implement Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) principles in your classes?





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3. What are your problems pertaining to educator development if there are any?

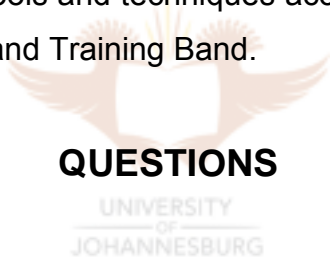
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### **SECTION 3**

#### **APPROPRIATE SELECTION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

- Continuous assessment must be undertaken with a variety of suitable assessment methods, tools and techniques according to Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band.



### **QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think teachers are able to use appropriate assessment methods, tools and techniques?

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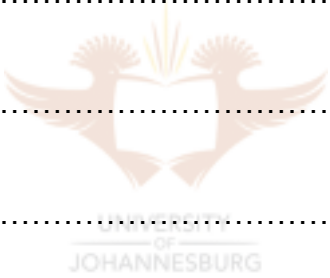
2. Do you think you are able to use suitable assessment methods, tools and techniques when planning an activity?

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3. Why is it important to use various assessment methods, tools and techniques in assessment?

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**SECTION 4**

## RECORDING AND REPORT LEARNERS' PROGRESS

- Many educators say that recording and reporting assessment are amongst the hardest aspects of the new curriculum to master. (Guide Book 3 - Report and Recording Assessment GDE / GICD (2001: 24).

### QUESTIONS

1. What is your opinion on the statement?

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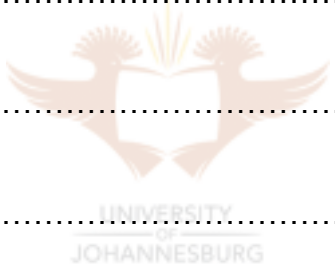
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**ADMINISTERING, SCORING AND INTERPRETING RESULTS OF THE LEARNERS**

- Administering, scoring and interpreting results is very important in OBA.

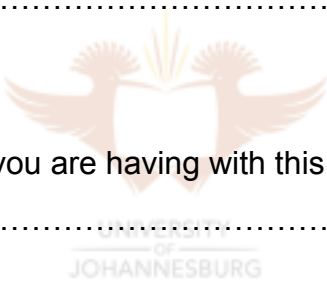
**QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think you are able to administer, score and interpret results?

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3. Why should you administer, score and interpret results?

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## SECTION 6

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Parents are the most important component in the Department of Education because they have a vital role to play in the education of their own children and the education system at large.

### QUESTIONS

1. Why are some parents not actively involved in the education of their own children?

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3. What is the effect of lack of parental involvement in the school?

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**SECTION 7**

**QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES**

- According to Circular 41 / 2001 there are official assessment structures that should be in place at the Province, District, and Schools and these structures

must ensure compliance of the National Assessment Policy by all stakeholders.

## QUESTIONS

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of the assessment structures?

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