

**ACHIEVEMENT OF 'ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING' AND 'ASSESSMENT FOR
LEARNING' IN PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS CONTINUOUS
ASSESSMENT (CASS) PRACTICES IN TWO EAST LONDON DISTRICT HIGH
SCHOOLS IN THE EASTERN CAPE**

by

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, solemnly declare that the work contained in this research thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted in its entirety or in part to any other university for a degree. The use of both published and unpublished work from other sources has been fully acknowledged in the text and a list of references is provided.

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ABSTRACT

It has been argued that assessing learner performance is considered to be one of the most important things a teacher can do to promote learners' learning. The Mathematics and Physical Science guidelines on assessment make a distinction between 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'. Both processes are seen to be complementary aspects of continuous assessment (CASS) practices which constitute 25% of the final year learner's mark in the National Senior Certificate. How teachers understand these processes and how they achieve them during their CASS practices were the focus of the study.

This was a qualitative study in which two senior secondary schools in the East London District in the Eastern Cape participated. The respondents were four grade 12 Physical Science and Mathematics teachers and two heads of department (HoDs). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

There were five main findings. First, it was found that CASS assessment practices were skewed towards fulfilling accountability requirements of the Department of Education. Teachers focused on the Programme of Assessment (PoA) tasks and ignored other forms of assessment. Second, it appeared the use of the term 'informal' in the Department policy documents with regard to 'assessment for learning' encouraged teachers to treat informal assessment tasks as unimportant, not to be marked and recorded. In some cases assessment tasks were used to 'occupy' learners when teachers did not feel like teaching, so that learners would not be idle and disruptive in class. Third, some teachers did not set their own assessment tasks; they took previous papers and did cut and paste. Such a practice seemed to preclude assessment tasks that are tailor-made for particular learners. This practice also may undermine the alignment of learning outcomes and assessment standards. Fourth, moderation of CASS tasks was sometimes ignored and in other times done not strictly according to guidelines. These findings cast doubt on the validity and reliability of CASS marks. Finally, in most assessment for learning tasks, learners were not given feedback by teachers. This appears to

undermine one of the most fundamental uses of assessment, which is feedback on performance that guides learning.

It can be concluded that the CASS assessment practices did not reflect a balance between 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'. This state of affairs seemed to be encouraged by the fact that district departmental support systems were too technicist and appeared to encourage teachers to do assessment to fulfil accountability purposes rather than for learners' learning. It is recommended that research on assessment practices based on probability sampling for which results can be generalised to the target population should be carried out. It is further recommended that courses on assessment should be run for teachers in order to renew and/or give them assessment skills that will enable them to achieve a balance between assessment for learning and assessment of learning.

KEY WORDS: assessment; continuous assessment; assessment of learning; assessment for learning.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated, firstly, to my mother, Elizabeth Yawson, who set the foundation for my education; secondly, to my late uncles, Paul Yawson and Kwasi Ansah Yawson, who were great contributors of funds in my secondary schooling; thirdly, to my daughters, Carolene Ama-Buya Cobbinah and Christiana Aba Cobbinah, who are the source of my joy; and, lastly, my wife, Noluthando J. Cobbinah, who was a pillar of strength in difficult times.

ACRONYMS

AfL	Assessment for Learning
AoL	Assessment of Learning
AS	Assessment Standards
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CASS	Continuous Assessment
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HoD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
LO	Learning Outcomes
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
MST	Mathematics, Science and Technology
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSMSTE	National Strategy for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education
OBE	Outcome Based Education
PoA	Programme of Assessment
SAG	Subject Assessment Guidelines
SBA	School Based Assessment
SMT	School Management Team
TESA	Teacher Education in South Africa
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As education changes society through its curriculum, its achievement of stated outcomes largely depend on the quality assessment applied by the classroom teachers (Brooks, 2002). The focus of all classroom-based action should be on learning and it is assessment that should be used to induce learning and to distinguish between teaching and learning. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and William (2003) make a distinction between continuous or formative assessment and summative assessment. According to Venter (2003), summative assessment can be seen as a once-off examination which is inadequate for assessing all the abilities of learners.

However, Taras (2005) warns that the distinction between summative and formative assessment is much more complex and argues that both assessments are processes that begin with summative assessment which is judgemental while formative assessment cannot be uniquely formative. Debates about forms of assessment notwithstanding, a problem associated with summative assessment is that it directs teachers to adopt a teaching style that concentrates on transmission teaching of knowledge which has a constricting effect on the curriculum (Brooks, 2002) as it leads to subject testing (rote learning) at the expense of creativity and personal and social development. It is for this reason that formative or continuous assessment - also referred to as school based assessment (SBA) - is emphasised.

Continuous assessment (CASS) in the South African National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is an “integral part of teaching and learning” and for this reason, assessment should be “part of every lesson and teachers should plan assessment activities to complement learning activities” (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2010:4). Teachers’ responsibilities in the classroom according to Imrie (as cited in Isreal, 2005) are to teach, to develop learners’ understanding, and to examine what is taught by assessing learners’ performance. Harlen (2007) urges that, since what is assessed influences what is taught and how it is taught, the opportunities for learning may not be achieved unless assessment purposes are included in what is assessed by the classroom teachers.

Although an old concept, research has shown that the way teachers understand and practise classroom-based continuous assessment remains problematic. For example, Howie (2003) and Grosser and Lombard (nd) have reported a number of shortcomings in the teaching, learning and assessing in the sciences and mathematics in South Africa in that teachers' assessment practices focus on memorisation, conditioning and repetition of knowledge from their learners which have low reliability and validity in assessment processes.

1.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Tan (2011) has distinguished between two main interrelated strands in continuous assessment, namely, *assessment of learning* and *assessment for learning*. These two concepts have been extensively discussed in section 2.3 of Chapter 2.

1.1.1 Assessment of learning

Assessment of learning has been defined by the Department of Education (DoE, 2005:18) and the DBE (2011:5) as formal assessment that provides indications of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner. It includes the strategies designed to confirm what learners know and whether or not they have met the curriculum goals or outcomes. Thus, it is used to certify a learner's proficiency and to make crucial decisions about the learner's future programs or placements. As assessment that becomes public and results in symbols about how well learners are learning, it is associated with learner, teacher, school and curriculum accountability and monitoring (Isreal, 2005).

To this effect, the roles of teachers in assessment of learning become essential and extremely crucial, since unfair tasks and inaccurate reporting on learners can have negative consequences on the learners' future (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Therefore, the methods chosen by the teachers, such as tests, examinations, demonstrations of learning-portfolios or orals, should not be only reliable and valid to address the intended learning outcomes (LO) and assessment standards (AS) but should also be carefully planned, constructed and moderated so that all learners can show their

understanding and produce sufficient information with regard to the nature and quality of their learning (Torrance & Pryor, 1998).

1.1.2 Assessment for learning

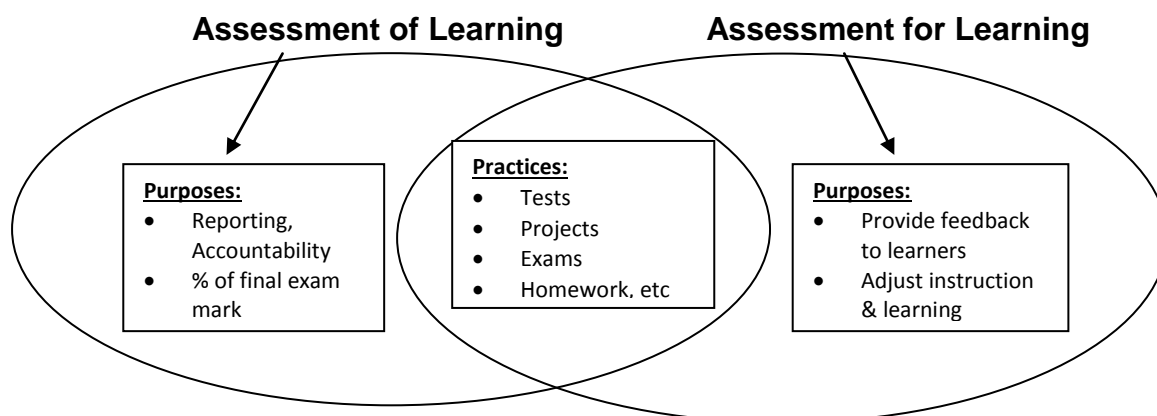
Assessment for learning, referred to as 'informal assessment' (DBE, 2011:4) is carried out with one specific goal, to help learning. Therefore, it is essentially part of an approach to teaching and learning whereby information about what a learner has achieved is primarily used to inform decisions on how to make progress (Harlen, 2007). It aims to monitor and support the learning process by giving constructive feedback to learners (DoE, 2003:3).

The evidence is gathered before, during and after learning activities by the teacher who interprets it in terms of the learning outcomes (LO) and assessment standards (AS), so that where a learner is in the process of learning can be used to indicate what needs to be done next to aid learning (DoE, 2005:14). Thus, evidence of current learning is fed back into the teaching and learning process in order to help a learner take the next necessary step. It is through the feedback that the pace of teaching towards a learning goal is regulated and adjusted to ensure the active participation of learners (Brooks, 2002). The primary purpose of assessment for learning is to improve teaching and learning and not to report to outside stakeholders.

1.1.3 Distinction between assessment of learning and assessment for learning

Harlen (2007), however, warns that there is a thin line between 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' and argues that it is easy to see that these purposes are inter-related and that making changes in one only will not necessarily cause changes in learners' achievement. The nature of the impact of one purpose on the practice of the other depends on how each is carried out by the classroom teachers as well as their intended uses (*ibid*). The distinction between 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' can be depicted in the diagram below.

Figure 1.1: A view of the components of continuous assessment in the Venn diagram



It can be seen from Figure 1.1 that the two concepts overlap on the aspect of practices and differ when it comes to purposes. Tests, projects, exams, etc., can be used during assessment of learning and during assessment for learning. However, the primary purpose of the former will be reporting to stakeholders, whereas that of the latter will be to assist teaching and learning even without reporting to stakeholders.

1.2 RESEARCH ON CASS PRACTICES

International studies such as that of Black *et al* (2003) in the United Kingdom (UK) found that teachers give greater priority to the collection of marks to fill up records than the analysis of learners' work to discern learning needs. This was corroborated by Hume and Coll (2009) who report that in the UK, Australia and New Zealand teachers were using the "...rhetoric of formative assessment, but in a manner in which many of them manifested the practice in classroom teaching and learning was leading to instrumental learning, undermining the validity of assessment goals... ." Such an orientation by teachers focuses on how they can provide evidence and fulfil 'procedural compliance' requirements for their learners' achievements rather than making use of opportunities for originality, creativity and variety in assessment methods that are aimed at improving learning (*ibid*).

South Africa, just like the rest of the world, is not immune to assessment associated challenges. According to the Task Team Committee (DBE, 2009:6), "... assessment has been the area where most criticism has been aimed at the NCS since C2005 (Curriculum 2005)... " In similar vein Chisholm (2005) highlighted that teachers spend slightly less time on their teaching activities overall but rather spend vastly greater amounts of time preparing, designing and recording assessment activities for CASS moderation purposes, hence, much lesser time is really spent on 'assessment for learning' as required by policy. This is not only seen as a serious erosion of instructional time, but also as assessment geared towards fulfilling accountability objectives of matriculation summative assessment. Such an approach to assessment has been characterised by Hume and Coll (2009), as instrumental and skewed towards the assessment of learning approach to CASS.

The instrumentalism in South African CASS practices is further reflected in the lack of correlation between CASS results and the final examination marks. Singh (2004) has reported that the CASS marks submitted by teachers to form 25% of grade 12 learners' final marks were 20% or more above adjusted examination marks. In other words, they were inflated. This lack of correlation and alignment between the scores of CASS and the external final examination in effect gives wrong signals to learners during preparations towards examinations, as a result of which large numbers of under-prepared learners enter the matriculation examinations (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2008).

UMALUSI (2009:84), the quality assurance body, assigned research and analysis on assessment deemed the CASS component invalid and unreliable and as a result statistical moderation is used as a measure to benchmark CASS marks with the adjusted final marks. Among the reasons for CASS unreliability indicated by various studies are that the majority of teachers were under-qualified and therefore lacked the knowledge, skills and understanding of the NCS and its assessment (Lombard, 2002; Singh, 2004; Ramsuran, 2005; Mji & Makgato, 2006); the training of teachers on Curriculum and CASS implementation was once-off, rushed and inadequate while policies were also poorly implemented (Twigg, 2010; Reyneke, Meyer & Nel, 2010; Shezi, 2008; Pudi, 2006; Singh, 2004); and teachers have not received much assistance from subject advisors in relation to content knowledge and assessment issues directly (Dilotsotle, Smit & Vreken, 2000).The current efforts aimed at

developing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) is an attempt to address the identified problems in assessment practices (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

UMALUSI and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) reports of 2010 and 2011 respectively further elaborate on the problem of lack of assessment skills on the part of teachers. The reports conclude that teachers still lack the ability to set valid and reliable assessment tasks as well as marking rubrics or memorandum on assessment; that the standard and weighting of cognitive abilities are poor; that there are no uniformities in assessment among schools leading to varied and inconsistent as well as wide-spread misunderstanding among teachers; and that internal moderation of both school-based and cluster-based assessments are not fully functional.

Research also concluded that CASS lags behind in terms of whether it fulfils teaching and learning purposes or accountability purposes. This has led researchers such as Van der Berg and Shepherd (2008) to attribute lack of teachers' knowledge and assessment literacy among other factors affecting learners' performance. For instance, the analysis of grade 12 matriculation results of 2008 and 2009 show that physical science and mathematics were the two subjects with the highest number of failures out of the approved subject units (SM & L, 2010; DBE, 2010b). Although the focus is on grade 12, a closer look at grade 8 performance in science and mathematics will contextualise the problem far more. Both Howie (2003) and Reddy (2004) reported that South Africa's learners performed fairly poorly in international tests as compared to other participating African countries such as Zambia, Morocco and Tunisia of the TIMSS (Third international mathematics and science study) standardised tests in the years- 1993, 1995 and 2003.

Looking at it from a slightly different angle, Bhika (2004) argues that teachers' assessment practices could be based on their past historical context and experiences. In other words, what teachers are familiar with is to follow the existing traditional practices present at schools and to present conditions, opportunities and constraints present in the classroom and schools. A study done by Vandeyar and Killen (2007) supported the view that teachers' approaches to assessment were clearly influenced by their backgrounds, and their capacity to accommodate the

cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms was severely limited by their own language abilities.

As a result of challenges experienced in continuous assessment, Van Laren and James (2008) have suggested that there is need for further research that explores teachers' assessment practices. This study focuses on assessment in the disciplines of physical science and mathematics where learners' performance is most problematic. Such research could give critical insights into what teaching and learning occurs in the classroom and, in particular, how a balance between *assessment of learning* and *assessment for learning* is and can be achieved through continuous assessment.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

As a physical science and mathematics teacher during the past decade, I have been involved in many assessment related activities such as workshops and moderations. From my informal observations, interactions and discussions with colleagues as well as learners during moderations and classroom teaching, one of the challenges hindering the fulfilment of excellent academic performances in the rural schools is the way assessment is conceptualised and practiced by teachers and Heads of Departments (HoDs) involved in these problematic subjects, especially considering the importance of assessment and its effect on learning as envisaged by departmental policies.

The NCS (DBE 2011) places emphasis on the integration of learning, teaching and assessment, and recognises the need for teachers' assessment to concentrate on the process of learning rather than on the product. Looking at the importance of continuous assessment and its implications as detailed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.3), one would expect teachers' assessment practices to translate into the development of learners' learning. Hence, assessment is often marked with diverse practices and challenges. My observations as a practitioner and my understanding of the importance of assessment in teaching and learning triggered me to seek to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' CASS practices in this study.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Research cited above (Black *et al*, 2003; Hume and Coll 2009; UMALUSI, 2009a, etc) points to the fact that in many countries, including South Africa, teachers' implementation of continuous assessment is based on a narrow interpretation of formative assessment that focuses on procedures and practices aimed at ensuring that learners comply with criteria and achieve awards for external qualifications. It has been argued that such instrumentalism (Hume and Coll, 2009) puts emphasis on accountability requirements, which is assessment of learning (e.g. SBA moderation, Matric results) at the expense of assessment for learning with the critical subjects often the hardest hit. Based on these studies, it is evident that there might be CASS practices which are complimentary and others that are conflicting with the core purposes of formative assessment that balance 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Main research question

How are 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' achieved in CASS practices?

1.5.1 Sub-research questions

1.5.2.1 How do teachers establish a balance in 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' in their CASS practices?

1.5.2.2 What complimentary and conflicting practices of CASS in physical science and mathematics are reflected in the selected schools?

1.5.2.3 What challenges do physical science and mathematics teachers face in carrying out 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'?

1.5.2.4 What support do teachers need with regard to 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'?

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth investigation into the achievement of 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' in physical science and mathematics continuous assessment practices in two East London high schools of the Eastern Cape.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

If assessment is critical to the promotion of teaching and learning as well as the accountability purposes of schooling, it is important that the teacher practices in continuous assessment be in line with these purposes. Data from this study might help establish what is happening to answer these questions. Furthermore, from the data suggestions and recommendations appropriate continuous assessment policies, practices and implementation strategies for all stakeholders can be formulated.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.8.1 Assessment

It is a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information and using evidence to assist teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners (DoE, 2005; Harlen, 2007). This provides an indication of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner by ensuring that adequate evidence of achievement is collected using various forms of assessment such as projects, investigations, verbal questioning, and so on (DoE, 2005).

1.8.2 Continuous assessment

In this study continuous assessment is used to support the learner developmentally and to provide feedback into teaching and learning. It involves recording evidence on the learner's progress and achievements both verbal and written (Brooks, 2002). The emphasis of CASS is placed on formative assessment of learners' work over a period of time, rather than on performance in a once-off achievement based examination (DBE, 2011). Its meaning includes the accountability for evaluating teachers, schools and local authorities because of its record keeping, reports and certification (Harlen, 2007). This is how it is used in the study.

1.8.3 Assessment of learning

This provides teachers with a systematic way of evaluating how well learners are progressing in a particular subject and in a grade (DoE, 2005.c.f. Section 1.1.1). The information is required for keeping records of the progress of individual learners and reporting to parents and other stakeholders (Harlen, 2007). The evidence may be gathered from regular teacher-made tasks or externally developed tasks to 'check - up' on what learners have learned from a series of lessons over a period of time. The aggregated marks gathered by teachers are used for accountability purposes to reflect on curriculum goals (Torrance & Pryor, 1998).

1.8.4 Assessment for learning

It is not used to evaluate learning but to help learners learn better. It is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there (ARG, 2002 as cited in Brooks, 2002). This is done through teacher interactions with learners in order to close the gaps in learners' knowledge and skills through the use of feedback, questioning, sharing criteria and self-assessment (DBE 2011.c.f Section 1.1.2; Black & William, 1998).

1.8.5 Assessment practices

Practice refers to what teachers do in their daily professional life in school and classroom (Lubisi & Murphy, 2002). It includes all that can be observed by another person. Thus, assessment practices cover what teachers do in their daily professional lives in the school and classrooms to acquire evidence about learner's competence. In this study assessment practices comprise all the activities undertaken by teachers and learners which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black & William, 1998).

1.8.6 Assessment task

It comprises of anything that a learner does that provides evidence of some ability or attribute that is required in doing it (Harlen, 2007). Thus, regular work done in the classroom acts as a rich source of evidence about the ability, competence and attribute that the teacher and the curriculum aim to help learners develop. Examples of assessment tasks are projects, investigations, presentations, demonstrations, tests, examinations, oral work, etc. This is the meaning intended in this study.

1.8.7 Feedback

Feedback in this study will mean the information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way (Ramaprasad as cited in Taras, 2005). It is integrated into a learning cycle to be used by learners and includes oral or verbal as well as written components (*ibid*).

1.9 METHODOLOGY

This study used the interpretive paradigm informed by the qualitative approach to investigate the respondents within their own contexts to make meaning of their CASS practices. A multiple case study design was used. Two rural public schools

were selected as cases due to their high correlation of the CASS marks and the final examination marks in physical science and mathematics and the sample of respondents were largely purposeful within the case schools.

The methods employed for collecting data were semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The data was triangulated in order to strengthen validity. Thus the teachers' accounts of CASS practices were compared with those of their HoDs' and the information contained in school documents, including teachers' and learners' portfolios of work.

The data instruments and analysis were informed by categories related to assessment, teaching and learning approaches. The entire methodology is discussed in more detailed in Chapter 3.

1.10 CHAPTER DEMARCATION

- Chapter 1- Introduction and Background
- Chapter 2- Literature Review
- Chapter 3- Research Methodology
- Chapter 4- Data Presentation and Analysis
- Chapter 5- Discussion of Findings
- Chapter 6- Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the literature review. It first looks at the understanding of assessment, its meaning, purpose and principles. It then goes on to explore continuous assessment, its meaning, conceptions and features of assessment strands. This is followed by an examination of the teachers' CASS practices, moderation as quality assurance, and policies and issues around physical science and mathematics subjects. It finally interrogates the theoretical frameworks that help explain the practices in literature as well as the data that will be collected from this study.

2.1 UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT IN EDUCATION

2.1.1 Meaning of assessment

Assessment is a broad term, according to the American Federation of Teachers (1990 as cited in Nitko, 2007); it is a process for obtaining information that is used for making decisions about learners, curricula, programs and schools, as well as educational policy. Since it is practically impossible for teaching and learning to take place without any form of assessment (DoE, 2003), it has been established that assessment is the single most important factor in learners' learning (Falchikov, 1995, as cited in Higgins, Thompson & Montarino, 2010). Therefore, what and how it is carried out has a profound influence, for better or worse, on learning and is a major factor that can encourage either surface or deep learning (George & Cowan, 1999, as cited in Higgins *et al*, 2010).

2.1.2 Purposes of assessment in education

The purposes served by assessment are broad and diverse, some of which have been highlighted by Bell (2003) as follows:

- judging mastery of essential skills and knowledge;
- measuring improvement over time;
- providing feedback to students;
- evaluating the effectiveness of the course; and
- motivating students to study.

However, these purposes are grouped into two broad kinds of assessment, summative assessment and formative assessment (which also constitute continuous assessment in South Africa).

According to Dreyer's (2008) argument on the above two kinds of assessments, summative assessment is assessment that is done with the purpose of checking achievement of competence at the end of a single learning activity. Therefore, it concerns itself with the final end of year assessment. However, before the end of year examination or summative assessment, it is the formative assessment which reveals whether progress is taking place or not so that various activities and interventions would be adapted during teaching and learning to rectify the situation.

2.1.3 Contestations of summative and formative assessment

There are many debates concerning these assessment purposes. Although some educational researchers like Ramsden (1992 as cited in Higgins *et al*, 2010) claim that the stark distinction between formative and summative assessment does not really exist, Taras (2005) argues that formative assessment is seen as a magic formula which is not only separate and distinct from summative, but incompatible with it and, as such, summative assessment has been blamed for many problems related to assessment in the educational system and as an obstacle to the growth of formative assessment. This has been the source of tension and separation brought between the two. According to Taras (2005), the earlier promoters of formative assessment, such as Wiliam (1994 as cited in Taras, 2005), evokes these complications and tensions while Scriven (1967 as cited in Taras, 2005) did not wish to create a dichotomy.

However, other researchers go for the balance between formative assessment and summative assessment rather than taking sides. Stiggins (2000) argues that, because end of year tests provide information once a year, they cannot serve all the assessment purposes. Rather, it can reflect on large-group increases or decreases in learning on an annual basis, and can serve as gatekeepers for high-stakes. Therefore, formative assessment needs to be used to serve the other purpose of assessment which is providing information on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis to inform the instructional decisions made by learners and teachers during the learning process as it unfolds. A similar notion raised by East (2010) is that, instead of perhaps becoming overly concerned with whether an assessment is formative or summative in nature, it may be better to see them as a continuum of the formative learning experience.

2.1.4 Principles of effective assessments

2.1.4.1 Validity

Because teachers use the results of assessment to make decisions about their learners, it has been argued that it is accurate assessment which will improve the quality of their decisions (Popham, 2002). Hence, assessment tasks need to satisfy a construct such as validity. According to Hill (1981), the concept of validity is captured in the phrase, "... a test measures what it is meant to measure". This well-known definition has been questioned by Messick (1989 as cited in Vandeyar & Killen, 2003) who points out that such a definition is narrow since it just gives an indication of the content relevance and content representativeness of the test or task. Based on this, he sees validity as an evaluative judgement on the degree to which there is evidence to support the appropriateness of the inferences or interpretations that are drawn as a result of assessment. In support of this definition, Popham (2002) observed that some teachers talk about 'validity of test' or 'a test's validity' (based on Hill's validity description) which is technically inaccurate since validity relies on the accuracy of teachers' inferences about learners' status in accordance with an assessment domain or relevance.

This means that, even if a teacher uses a well constructed test with the wrong group of learners or administer it under unsuitable circumstances, it can still lead to invalid inferences. To this effect, Popham (2002) argues that it is the test-based inferences that teachers ought to be concerned with as the focus of validity - not on the tests themselves.

Based on the above suggestion, Le Grange and Beets (2005) found that 'validity as inference' is a useful idea because it holds the promise of liberating assessment practices from its behaviourist orientations informed by measurement theories of the 1950s. Moreover, being satisfied with validity as inference, Vandeyar and Killen (2007) advocate that no longer can a teacher claim to be using a valid assessment task simply because it is clearly linked to the curriculum content, or because someone else has used the test and decided that it is valid, or because it produces results similar to those obtained from other assessment tasks. Instead, the teacher must question the validity of the inferences they are making as a result of having used the assessment task.

2.1.4.2 Fairness

Fairness ensures that everyone has an equal chance of getting a good assessment (Atherton, 2011). In other words, all learners have to have equal opportunity to demonstrate the skills and knowledge being assessed. However, authors such as Lang and Wilkerson (2008) and Nitko and Brookhart (2007) explained that the fairness of the assessment is jeopardised if bias exists either in the task or the marking memorandum. Hence, they argued that for a task to be fair its content, context and performance expectations should reflect: knowledge, values, and experiences that are equally familiar and appropriate to all learners. The teacher's assessment procedures should also consider learners from all ethnic, cultural, disabilities, gender and socio-economic backgrounds.

This made, Vandeyar and Killen (2003) pointed out that it would be unfair to ask learners questions in a language they did not understand or to expect learners to answer an extremely large number of questions in a short time. Therefore, the

elimination of bias is to make assessment task accurate and valid, which includes consistent marking and vigilant efforts displayed by the teacher not to discriminate.

2.1.4.3 Reliability

This is often equated to consistency by many authors. For instances, Popham (2002) defined reliability as “the consistency with which an assessment procedure measures whatever it’s measuring.” Reliability also refers “to the consistency of assessment results” (Nitko & Brookhart, 2007). Reliability, therefore, ensures that assessment tasks are free of errors of measurement, meaning that they can produce dependable results or results will remain constant on repeated trials and those results are, therefore, said to be trustworthy. That is, if the same information was assessed on different occasions, with no intervention, and the results were largely the same, then the assessment is consistent so it’s reliable (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003; Popham, 2002).

Lang and Wilkerson (2008) picked an argument here. To them there is a problem with the repeat of assessment without intervention since it limits reliability to a specific form, ‘test-retest reliability’, which is not likely to be useful in the accreditation process. To these authors, it is not normal or even advisable to repeat a test without intervention just to see if they provide a similar response, or worse.

Even though the above authors questioned the practicality of repeating tests or tasks, Vandeyar and Killen (2003) urge teachers that it does not mean they should ignore the need for reliability. They argued that teachers should rather try to minimise the extent to which learners’ performance in each assessment task is influenced by unwanted variables from the learners, such as hunger, tiredness, stress, etc, or the assessment task itself, such as confusing or complexity in the wording. Furthermore, teachers should minimise the extent to which their judgements of learners’ understanding are influenced by undesirable factors that include interruptions to marking or preconceived ideas about the learners’ capabilities in their continuous assessment practices.

In this section, assessment meaning, purposes, contestation and principles were closely examined and now I will look into the formative aspect of assessment termed CASS in the South African context.

2.2 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although CASS has a long history, its fully fledged implementation was announced in 2001 by the then Minister of Education. According to this approach, a candidate, especially a grade 12 learner, had to meet the requirements of a classroom assessment component, now CASS or SBA, and a written examination to obtain a National Senior Certificate (NSC) (DoE, 2001).

2.2.1 Meaning of continuous assessment

The term continuous assessment (CASS) has various definitions. According to Falayalo (1986 as cited in Dilotsohle et al, 2000) CASS is “a mechanism of which the final grading of learners in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning systematically takes account of all their performances during a given period of schooling.” It entails assessing the process of knowledge and understanding by learners, their attitudes, motives and interests as well as their ability to use their hands during interactions, construction and participation.

Both DoE (2000a) and UMALUSI (2006) describe it as a process of assembling legitimate and consistent data regarding the learners’ achievements continuously, in relation to undoubtedly explicit measures, by means of a range of processes, devices, procedures and frameworks. The DoE (2006) further sees it as a process of assessing the learners in totality, with learners being assessed to explicit standards for valid decisions.

Similarly, Dreyer (2008) describes CASS as “the constant process of assessment that spans the entire learning process.” Thus, its assessment that starts when learning starts and becomes on-going throughout the learning process. Hence, it has been described by Higgins *et al* (2010) as the journey, not the outcome and that it

takes place during and after the learning period with the aims of helping learners improve on their learning and to report on learners' developments.

Drawing on the above, Isreal (2005) sees CASS as a means to 'find out' what has been gained from a variety of learning activities (tests, projects, assignments) in terms of knowledge, thinking and reasoning through monitoring each learner in a continuous and progressive manner as well as through the judicious accumulation of assessment information to guide learners and to make decisions about the teacher's methodology.

From examining these definitions one could infer that CASS is a 'process' rather than a once-off event and that its meaning includes systematic, formative, cumulative, guidance inspiring and accountability. Thus, it involves recorded evidence both verbal and written on learners' progressive achievements (Brooks 2002) over a period of time rather than the performance in a once-off examination. Black and Wiliam (1998) found that formative assessments result in great learning gains, amongst the most considerable for educational interventions. Hence, it is the teachers' views and conceptions of it that would lead to the learning gains.

2.2.2 Teachers' conceptions of CASS

Teachers' conceptions, as argued by Brown (2003), affect all pedagogical acts, such as the act of teaching, the process and purpose of assessment and the nature of learning. Additionally, several researchers have revealed that teachers' conceptions of assessment in general, and CASS in particular, are strongly interwoven with their views on the broader issues of teaching and learning (Brown, 2003; Deland Shere & Jones, 1999 as cited in Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Therefore, its consequences can be positive or negative because such conceptions act as filters through which teachers view and interpret their own learning environment and can act as barriers to change (Richards & Killen, 1993 as cited in Vandeyar & Killen, 2007).

However, in Brown's (2003) research, he suggested that teachers hold one of the four conceptions of assessing learners continually. That is, continuous assessment is seen as:

- useful because it can provide information for improving instruction and learning;
- a necessary process for making learners accountable for learning;
- a process by which teachers and/ or schools are made accountable; and
- irrelevant to the work of teachers and the life of learners.

Those different conceptions lead to teachers using different CASS practices. For example, teachers who view assessment as a useful means of gathering data on which decisions about learning and their own teaching could be based, as elaborated by Vandeyar and Killen (2003), will obviously make an effort to make assessment an integral part of teaching as stressed by the policy (DoE, 2003). Among other things, they will place emphasises on progressive rather than summative assessment, rely on feedback and tend to take responsibility for the learning that takes place in the classroom and endeavour to use assessment to improve learners' learning.

Also, teachers who view assessment as a mechanism for learner's accountability will lean towards summative, high-stakes assessment; they may blame the learners' lack of ability or socio-economic conditions and tend to absolve themselves from responsibility for learner failure. However, there are teachers who view CASS as part of teacher and school accountability and hence favour summative or quasi-formative assessment practices that concentrate on the generation of marks that can be reported to external agencies or authorities. Those teachers viewing it largely as irrelevant, however, will probably avoid assessment or rather take a haphazard approach to summative assessment leading to the self-fulfilling prophecy that CASS is a waste of time (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007).

Based on the above four conceptions, it can be inferred that the issue of teachers' conceptions cannot be overlooked, especially when their effects adversely affect classroom assessment practices. Hence, Vandeyar and Killen (2007) strongly argued that any efforts to change teachers' pedagogical practices, whether by mandate or through professional development activities, may be doomed to failure if these conceptions are not acknowledged, challenged and eventually changed. This implies that teachers become reluctant to change their assessment practices in

response to new policies and curriculum guidelines due to their ingrained conceptions on CASS and, as a result, they will not make the necessary conceptual adjustments.

The reasons cited as major influences on teachers' conceptions of CASS in the South African context are linked, foremost, to their understanding of the subjects they teach, which has its root in the apartheid education system's poor training of black teachers (Calderhead, 1996). Although there has been improvement over the past years, Govender (2005) claimed that it is still a significant factor in determining the quality of teaching and learning in many schools. Another influence has been the NCS's strong emphasis of CASS as designed to "support the growth and development of learners" (DoE, 2002) but yet its clear focus on accountability purposes can easily blind teachers to the needs of individual learners (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). More often, this can be attributed to the system within which teachers work because when the system demands conformity, high-stakes or accountability, that is what they believe in and it could be difficult to change it once it has been established. This may determine the purpose of their continuous assessment.

2. 2.3 Purposes of CASS

Kanje's (2009) highlights of the purposes of CASS are as follows: to allow teachers to measure the learners' progress, to compel learners to work consistently, to re-instate the culture of teaching and learning, and to diagnose areas of lack of progress to enable focused teaching and learning.

According to the DoE (2007), teachers have the responsibility to assess the progress of learners in achieving the expected outcomes and to report to parents and other stakeholders on the levels of achievement acquired by learners during the learning process and be able to improve standards and measure learners' attainment in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

For the context of this study, CASS judges fitness-for-purpose in two ways as described by Harlen (2007) and Tan (2011), that is, to report on what has been achieved (assessment of learning) and to inform decisions about learning experiences (assessment for learning).

According to the National Protocol for Assessment, Grades R to 12, (DBE 2011) policy document on CASS, classroom assessment should provide indications of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner through the use of various forms of assessment to ensure that adequate evidence of achievement is collected by the teacher. In addition, the classroom assessment should be both formal (assessment of learning) and informal (assessment for learning). This document warns teachers to focus on both formal and informal assessments. Further, the above policy document (DBE 2011) and the Subject Assessment Guidelines (DoE 2007) postulate that assessment tasks used for the purpose of assessment of learning are referred to as formal assessment tasks and those used for assessment for learning purposes are informal assessment tasks.

Based on these two purposes or strands of CASS, teachers generally need to undertake or participate in assessment of learning (AoL) as the basis for reporting and meeting accountability standards. It is unavoidable because reports and schedules on learners have to be made and records kept at regular intervals (DoE, 2002; Harlen, 2007; DBE, 2011).

However, Boston (2002) has pointed out that the goal of assessment for learning (AfL) is to gain an understanding of what learners know (and do not know) so that responsive changes in teaching and learning could be made. In other words, it is an opportunity to find out if the learning teachers planned is actually happening so that, based on the judgements, remedial action can be taken before it is too late to do so (Petty, 2004). Therefore, Black *et al* (2003) report that assessment for learning can occur many times in every lesson; it can involve several different methods for encouraging learners to express what they are thinking as well as several different ways of acting on such evidence.

Harlen (2007) writes that teachers' judgements based on the evidence they have collected during assessment for learning can be used for reporting purposes and a valid report can be used to inform and aid learners' learning, which is assessment for learning. In a more elaborative way, when assessment is used for assessment of learning purposes, the chief aim is to put together what has been learned. Hence, the process of putting together or gathering and interpreting the information of a learner may have some impact on learning, or the outcome may be used in planning

future teaching , but assessment of learning is not carried out primarily with these uses in mind; its rationale is to report a learner's achievement at a particular time. This makes Harlen (2007), as mentioned elsewhere, think that there is no hard and fast dividing line between assessment of learning and assessment for learning.

According to DBE (2011) under the national curriculum statement (NCS), both assessment strands are equally important to assess holistic learning. In Dreyer's (2008) view, we should assess the process of learning as well as the products of learning in order to assess the actual competencies of learners, not merely knowledge of content.

Continuous assessment has various meanings and the teachers have their conceptions which may determine the purposes assigned to it. The next section deals extensively with the two purposes of CASS envisaged in the assessment policy (DBE, 2011).

2.3 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT STRANDS

The importance of the two strands or purposes of continuous assessment, namely, assessment of learning and assessment for learning, have been generally highlighted by Crooks (2004) as follows:

- they assessed significant outcomes that summative examinations might not assess;
- the assessments take place in various instances, dropping sample threats associated with one-off exams;
- they broaden the assessment weight throughout the course, promoting additional reliable work and they decrease the threat of excessive assignment apprehension; and
- if specific outcomes are assessed continuously, they permit the likelihood of discovering unusual routines or development in routines, which can be allowed for in the ultimate judgement.

These two purposes or strands of CASS are elaborated further below.

2.3.1.1 Assessment of learning meaning.

Assessment of learning or formal assessment (c.f. Chapter 1 Section 1.1.1) requires the collection of sufficient, appropriate evidence on which to base judgement about achievement against the relevant national standard (DoE, 2001) and includes all the activities undertaken by the teachers and learners as a means of collecting information about learners' understanding (Stiggins, 2000). It offers clear descriptions of the intended learning, sound design and clear purpose, and serves as a process that makes it possible for learners to demonstrate their competence and skills through a range of alternative mechanisms for assessing their learning outcomes (Brooks, 2002).

2.3.1.2 Assessment of learning features

Assessment of learning as it has been outlined earlier is not about end of year high-stake examinations but the use of a combination of any assessment tasks or methods to show as evidence to report on a learner's performance (Harlen, 2007). Therefore, it distinguishes itself from summative assessment which concerns itself with promotions and hence bases its promotion decisions on the results of a single test or examination only.

The five assessment of learning features as highlighted by Harlen (2007) are that it:

- may be based on teacher's judgements or external tasks, or a combination of these;
- provides results expressed in terms of publicly available criteria for levels;
- judges all students by the same criteria or standards; and
- is a cycle taking place as a regular part of learning not only at times when achievement is to be reported.

In the first feature, assessment of learning is based on the judgements of the teacher's own set task or the use of an external task to assess learners. In a way it serves to give teachers the opportunity to know and understand their learners and also to be able to set appropriate tasks to measure their level of attainment with

regard to the standard intended in the curriculum (Brooks, 2002). This is because it is equally important to know whether learners have the knowledge and basic skills that underpin the development of broader tasks. Harlen (2005) acknowledges that there are potential advantages of using teachers' judgement both internally and externally since they make judgements about learners' attainment in the course of their normal interactions during teaching and learning, and in the process they build a picture of learners' attainments across the full range of activities and goals.

Hence, when the process is in the hand of the teacher, there is the potential for gathering information about a range of different learning goals including, for example, affective outcomes (learners' use of hands during interactions); problem solving; and creative, critical and other high-level thinking skills. Therefore, it places the teachers in charge of the assessment process by making sure that the tasks which serve as the purpose of assessment of learning emphasise genuine learning for understanding rather than just recall of facts.

Secondly, assessment of learning provides results which are used by the public as available criteria for the levels of learners. Achievements from regular work or special tasks and teacher-made or externally developed tasks conducted over a period of time are combined by the teacher as learner evidence. This evidence is recorded by the teacher as a report which is interpreted to bear testimony to a particular learner's ability at a particular time during the curriculum implementation process (especially with regard to content taught).

Harlen (2005) added that such data when reported and interpreted must be done in the context of the broad set of indicators of school and teacher effectiveness. To her, in relation to monitoring standards of learners' achievements at the system level, data is needed that is derived from a wider base of evidence than results from a single task from individual learners. The DoE (2001) is in agreement with Harlen (2005), emphasising that the best way to achieve a balanced assessment of a learner's achievement is to provide him or her with a variety of opportunities of demonstrating of competence in different ways across different contexts. The information generated through the assessment of learning could be used for purposes such as the programme of assessment (PoA), record keeping and reports to parents, learners and teachers, while the information could also be used to

evaluate teachers and schools, as well as for national standards' accountability purposes.

Thirdly, it judges all learners using the same criteria or standards. This means that evidence is compared with criteria that are the same for all learners in a grade which makes it a criterion-referenced assessment. Its criterion-referenced perspective allows "a test or other type of task to be designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpretable in terms of a clearly defined and delimited domain of learning tasks" (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). It implies that a specific task a learner performs is compared to a set of performance standard and decides whether he/she meets a given standard rather than being ranked against each other as is the case in norm-referencing.

As argued by Dunn, Parry and Morgan (2002), the quality of assessment in criterion-referenced assessment is not dependent on how well other learners in the class or grade have performed but on how well the individual learner has performed as measured against specific criteria and standards that are clear and appropriate. In this case assessment criteria or standards become guidelines that are used by the teachers to determine what should be taught and assessed as well as what learners should learn in order to bring about standardised assessment (Dreyer, 2008).

Assessment of learning requires teachers to make judgements and interpretations on learners' performances and therefore, it needs some measures to assure reliability (Harlen, 2007). Green (2002), argued that the use of the 'same criteria' helps to reconcile the problems of 'unreliable' teacher judgements in assessment of learning and such criteria aid to increase the credibility of valid and reliable assessment of what learners know, understand and can do in the context of transparency, clarity and shared understanding. This enables all the learners by the time of assessment to have equal chances and be at the same level of understanding by their teacher.

The last feature of assessment of learning is that it takes place when achievement is to be reported rather than being a regular part of learning. Even though it has been mentioned above that it can in a way help learning, its purpose does not allow the teacher to concern him or herself with using assessment tasks during teaching and learning process as evidence to report on a learner's achievement. The evidence

collected relates to the achievement of broad goals expressed in general terms and must come from reliable assessment tasks that have been carefully planned and designed (Harlen, 2005). The teacher first has to identify goals and assessment criteria with reference to the teaching and learning that has taken place over a period of time in order to have an idea of what to assess in the formal assessment tasks. According to DBE (2011), any task(s) which may be used by the teacher to collect evidence from learners should be moderated and that the assessment standards, knowledge and skills should be clearly communicated to the learners before administering such task(s).

In short, figure 2.1 below summarises the features of assessment of learning as reviewed above.

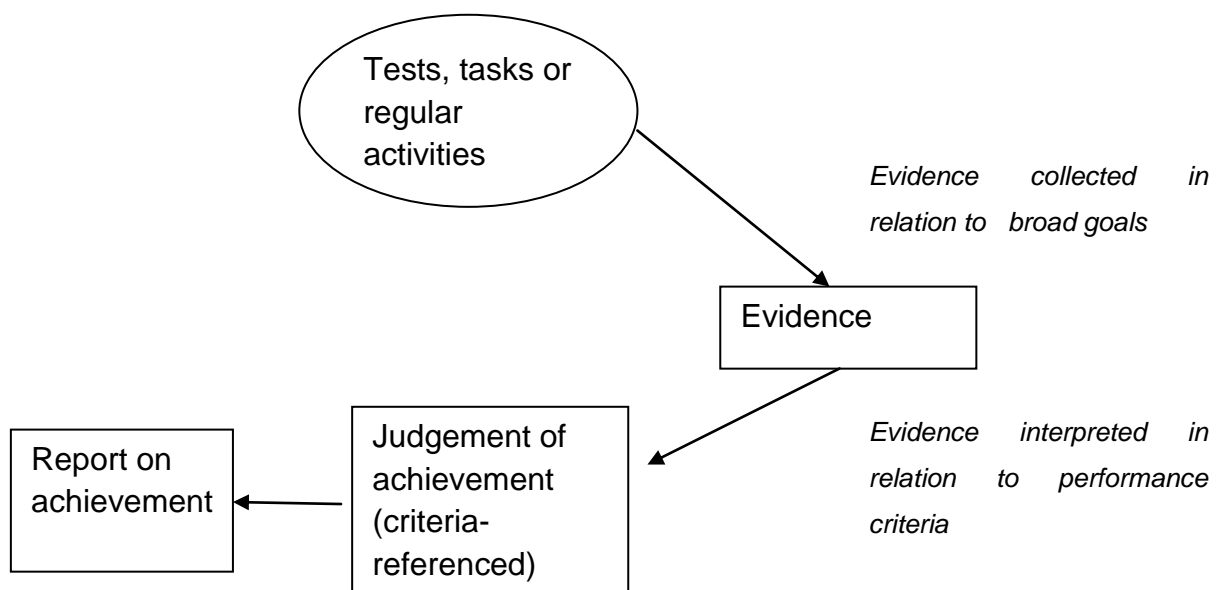


Figure 2.1: Assessment of learning (Adapted from Harlen, 2007)

Figure 2.1 above shows that assessment of learning is not a cycle of events but that assessment task results are used as evidence which is interpreted in terms of the assessment criteria or standards to become the report of a learner’s achievement.

2.3.1.3 Assessment of learning challenges

Some of the challenges associated with assessment of learning have been documented by various authors. For example, according to Harlen (2007), assessment of learning has come to focus on individual learner's results as an indication of teacher assessment effectiveness. There is also a problem of using learners' assessment results for teacher and school accountability without considering other factors such as the learners' prior learning, and many out-of-school influences and conditions that affect their learning. This implies that the high stakes attached to learners' assessment results as a sole measure of the effectiveness of teachers, schools and the entire system has led teachers to stick to the use of one-shot examinations rather than the use of various methods and instruments (*ibid*).

Similar to the above argument, Burns (2005 as cited in Kuze & Shumba, 2011) in relation to the assessment of learning taking place only to report on learners' achievement is that teachers concentrate on using high-stake assessment tasks which tell them which learners in their class have failed and which have not but they do not tell us the kind of instruction the learners need to master the outcomes.

However, Hagar, Gonczi and Athanasou (1994 as cited in Dunn *et al*, 2002) claimed that the use of 'same criteria' and criterion-referenced in assessment of learning, only assess the trivial part of the learning process and involve subjective professional judgements which may be unreliable due to variations in teachers' judgement based on different characteristics of knowledge. It also focuses on the product at the expense of process.

Based on the above challenges, UMALUSI (2010) advises that, since the results of assessment of learning tasks being internal or external - is used beyond the schools, such tasks must be pitched at the required cognitive levels since they influence learners directly. Also, there remains the obligation to ensure that teachers' judgements are reliable through moderation processes.

2.3.2. Assessment for learning

2.3.2.1 Meaning of assessment for learning

Assessment for learning (AfL), also known as informal assessment (c.f. Chapter 1 Section 1.1.2), is far more than testing frequently, although this step is part of it. Assessment for learning, in addition, involves learners in the learning process (Stiggins, 2002). Adding to the definition elsewhere in this study, Qualters (2002) sees assessment for learning as those activities that are used to improve learners' learning since "they provide learners with information that allows them to learn something about their own knowledge or skills, make a change, and ultimately improve their learning." The primary goal of assessment of learning is, therefore, to improve the quality of the learners' learning.

It is a process which requires teachers to implement assessment strategies during classroom instruction, ranging from informal observations and conversations to purposefully planned instructional techniques designed to track learners' learning and to inform and adjust instruction to aid learners' learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010). As a powerful weapon to be communicated in the right way and at the right time to help all learners, it gives particularly good results with low achievers since it concentrates on specific problems with their work as well as giving them both a clear understanding of what are wrong and achievable targets for putting them right.

2.3.2.2 Features of assessment for learning

Black and Wiliam's (1998) booklet entitled, *Inside the Black Box*, attracted world-wide attention due to its attempt to quantify the positive impact of assessment for learning in the classroom. In their research, which involved a review of numerous international studies on assessment, identified five key features or components of assessment for learning, summarised as follows:

- feedback provision;
- students understanding the goals;

- students engagement as learning resources;
- dialogue; and
- self-assessment.

One of these features, feedback, has been identified as an essential part of assessment for learning since it influences learners' achievement and motivation. This, according to Shute (2008), is information communicated to the learners that is intended to modify thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning. Feedback to learners should be about the particular qualities of a learner's work with advice on what he or she can do to improve. Drawing from Sadler (1989 as cited in Black & Wiliam, 2001), there are three elements in feedback about the effort of a learner who is trying to learn. These are the desired goal, the evidence about their present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between the two. Therefore, it is of no doubt that these three elements need to be understood by learners and their teachers before they can take action necessary to improve their learning.

The issue of what constitutes good feedback has been addressed by Black and Wiliam (2001) when they made it clear that giving questions of good quality is essential to ensure the quality of the feedback. They maintain that class tests and tests or other exercises set for homework are also important means to promote feedback but that good tests have to be a learning as well as a testing occasion, and not too frequent to be counter-productive. But they highlighted that the quality of the test items, such as their relevance to the main learning aims and their clear communication to the learners, needs scrutiny. Hence, teachers need to collaborate to set such good questions or draw critically on outside sources.

They also acknowledge that feedback has improved learning where it gives each learner specific guidance on strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, as a critical feature, the way in which test results are reported back to learners must be in a way that they can identify their own strengths and weaknesses and they must be given the means and opportunities to work with evidence of their difficulties. Boston's (2002) report echoed that the most helpful type of feedback on tests and homework provides specific comments about errors and specific suggestions for improvement,

and encourages learners to focus their attention thoughtfully on the task rather than on simply getting the right answer. The use of verbal questioning and classroom discussions also serve as better opportunities to effect feedback. She cautioned that teachers need to make sure to ask thoughtful, reflective questions rather than simple and factual ones. Black and Wiliam (1998) identified two functions of feedback, directive and facilitative. They argued that directive feedback tends to be more specific compared to facilitative feedback which provides comments and suggestions to help guide learners in their own revision and conceptualisation. However, in the case of feedback, teachers also receive learner's related information and use it as a basis for altering instruction.

The second feature of assessment for learning is the learner's understanding of the goals of their work and having a grasp of what is good quality work. This involves the clarification, understanding and sharing of learning intentions by the teachers so as to reinforce learners' understanding. Stiggins (2000) emphasises that, when teachers are informing learners about the learning goals, they must do so in terms that learners understand and must be done from the very beginning of the teaching and learning process. To him and Harlen (2007), understanding and articulating in advance of teaching the achievement targets or lesson goals that their learners are to hit, provide an opportunity for them to obtain evidence which is relating to the achievement of these goals. Harlen (2007), however, maintains that, in order to interpret the evidence acquired during teaching and learning process, it needs both teachers and learners to know what 'good planning' means because, through it, learners will have some understanding of the criteria, which the teacher has planned in advance, to apply when assessing their own work and of how their work will be assessed by their teachers. Therefore, the clear understanding the learners and their teachers get leads into decisions about relevant next steps in learning.

Furthermore, to enhance learners' understanding of what is to be learnt and the learning goals in order to produce quality work is up to the teachers. They have to become assessment literate and thus be able to transform their expectations into assessment exercises and scoring or marking procedures that "accurately reflect students' achievements" (Stiggins, 2002). Imperatively, they have to use classroom assessment to build learners' confidence in themselves as learners and help them to take responsibility for their learning so as to lay the foundation for lifelong learning.

The third feature is about learners' engagement as learning resources for one another. This needs to be activated by the teachers assessing for learning. William (2008) uses terms such as collaborative learning, reciprocal teaching and peer-assessment to qualify this form of learning engagement. The implication is that no longer is the classroom centred on the teacher and the teaching but the responsibility for learning is now shared by learner and learner and learner and teacher. The teacher needs to give opportunity to the learners to interact and assist with each other and to express their understanding to one another whilst he/she provides them with support.

In support of the above, Heritage (2010) pointed out that assessment for learning requires substantial shifts in the nature of the classroom contract between teachers and learners in order to achieve this shared responsibility in the classroom. Further, he highlights that learners' frequent engagements result in their willingness to participate in routine school activities besides classroom learning, such as attending class, submitting required work, following teachers' directions in class, and so on. In other words, they are motivated by the relationship that exists among themselves and the teacher and therefore become active participants in education in general.

Moreover, dialogue as the fourth assessment for learning feature is an equally important strategy to aid learners' learning. It is the dialogue between learner-learner and teacher- learner that encourages reflection on learning. Black and William (2001) maintain that discussions, in which learners are led to talk about their understanding in their own ways, are important aids to an improved knowledge and understanding. These authors further write that dialogue with the teacher also provides the opportunity for the teacher to respond to and re-orient the learner's thinking. It implies any piece of teaching or task designed on the basis of assessment for learning must create chances where learners can express their understanding on learning which will further give an indication to the teacher on how to assist those learners.

Through this dialogue a teacher will get a sense of what learners know or understand to decide on whether to move on or re-teach a certain concept or topic in a different way. Thus, a teacher uses the information gleaned from learner responses to direct the subsequent discussion and teaching. William (2008) is of the

opinion that teachers should be in position to engineer effective classroom discussions, questions and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning. Stiggins (2002) went further to report that teachers actively have to involve learners in communication with their families about their achievement status and improvement.

The fifth component of assessment for learning is about learners' self-assessment. Learners' involvement in self-assessment enables them to think about learning, to have deeper understanding of their own learning (Heritage, 2010) and to take part in identifying what they need to do to improve or move forward (Harlen, 2007). Two experimental research studies have also shown that learners who understand the learning objectives and assessment criteria and have opportunities to reflect on their work show greater improvement than those who do not do any self-reflections (Fontana & Fernandes, 1994; Frederikson & White, 1997 as cited in Boston, 2002).

Also, there is a large body of evidence suggesting that learning effectiveness is enhanced when the learners pay attention to their own learning experiences by reflecting on their learning process and the state of their knowledge (Schon, 1987; Boud *et al*, 1985 as cited in Kay, Li & Fekete, 2006). It is argued further that, through self-assessment, learners develop meta-cognitive skills which help develop the capacity to identify their strengths and weaknesses and be directed to areas that require improvement (Boud *et al* as cited in Kay *et al*, 2006). This also provides a way of creating independent, "reflective learners who plan and assess their own progress" (Young, 2005) and give teachers the opportunity to give feedback to inform learners about their learning. In effect, as pinpointed by Stiggins (2002), assessment for learning as it happens in the classroom, is that learners keep learning and remain confident that they can continue to learn at productive levels.

In fact, it is worth noting that learners are generally honest and reliable in assessing themselves and one another, and can be too hard on themselves as often as they are too kind (Black & Wiliam, 2001). This seems to indicate that self-assessment in the case of learners is not a problem of reliability and trustworthiness but a matter of having sufficient information on the goals or outcomes that their learning is meant to attain. When learners get a clear picture of the criteria or targets on which their learning focuses, they commit and effectively assess themselves. In this case, their

own assessments become an event of discussion with one another and the teacher, which, in effect, result in reflection on one's own ideas.

2.3.2.3 Assessment for learning challenges

Although assessment for learning seems to be so natural that it happens automatically in every classroom and with any teacher and any assessment, to Black and Wiliam (2001), it is not. They claim that there are such discussions where teachers have unconsciously responded in ways that inhibit the future learning of a learner. They argue that because some teachers do not have the confidence to deal with unexpected responses from learners; they look for a particular response instead of being flexible. Hence, they tend to manoeuvre the conversation or discussion to avoid unusual, often thoughtful attempts by the learners in working out their own answers.

Other evidence in support of their claim is that teachers do not allow enough quiet time when they are in discussion with learners so that learners can think out and offer an answer. The teachers answer their own questions after only two or three seconds, which prevents learners from thinking on their own or discussing with others, and often the teacher relies on the few who can provide quick answers, making the dialogue a ritual.

Additionally, it has been argued that many learners do not read or often misunderstand or do not simply act upon feedback. According to a national survey on learners done in the UK, feedback receives lower scores than other indicators in learners' satisfaction with assessment (Nicol, 2009). Sadler's study (1989 as cited in Brooks, 2002) pointed out that if feedback is not acted upon, for example, if a teacher simply makes record of results or a learner ignores their implications for future performance, then the activity could not be regarded as a genuine aid to learning. In the same light, according to Ofsted (1995 as cited in Brooks, 2002), it was noted that teachers feel uncomfortable about giving negative messages or feedbacks, albeit constructively, in writing; they find it even more difficult to do this in discussion with parents. Thus, teachers are anxious to avoid anything which could undermine the learner's self-esteem and motivation.

This was also noted by Black and Wiliam (1998) who indicated that incomplete or poor feedback may be as useless and unhelpful as none, and also that a test aimed at assessment for learning which comes at the end of a block or module of teaching is pointless in that it comes too late for the teacher or learners to work with the results (Black & Wiliam, 2001).

Nevertheless, the engagement of learners in learning-oriented assessment practices may not always result in an enhancement of their learning. Hernandez (2010) argues that one cannot underestimate the challenges learner engagement entails since this approach has pedagogical implications such as some learners may adopt the 'cramming' mentality by focusing on the traditional end of year exams rather than opening up and sharing knowledge with others for the sake of competition.

This section has examined the features of both assessment of learning and assessment for learning as two purposes of CASS and their challenges. The next section will look at the practices of the teachers that lead to these purposes.

2.4 TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Teachers are expected by the Department of Education (DoE, 2007; DBE, 2011) to assess learners during their continuous assessment practices using both assessment of learning and assessment for learning features detailed above. They are obliged to undergo the following practices in order to achieve these purposes of CASS.

2.4.1 Assessment planning

Assessment can only begin with careful planning since it helps the teacher to determine his or her needs and purposes for the assessment, and it aids to create a plan of implementation (DBE, 2011). In short, Nitko and Brookhart (2007) state that "... plans for teaching are incomplete unless they contain plans for assessment..." because planning is at the heart of teaching and learning.

Assessment planning may be short term or medium term. Short term planning may involve one unit of instruction that the teacher needs to choose and decide what methods of assessment to use. They must also identify why and how those assessments are related to the lessons and what actions to take to ensure learners' learning (Nitko & Brookhart, 2007; Brooks, 2002). It also includes the planning of the assessment tasks to be used as teaching and learning activities in the subject classroom (DBE, 2011).

Despite teachers having a plan for daily lessons and assessment tasks, they also should have an assessment plan for the year indicating in the formal scheme of work the programme of assessment (PoA), the time scale of which could be several weeks, half a term, a term or even longer. This term of planning must be communicated to learners, parents and the school management team (SMT) in advance, which is at the beginning of the academic year. Also, teachers are urged to include in their planning any additional support needed by learners who experience learning difficulties (DBE, 2010a).

However, some of the problems associated with teacher planning were identified by the task team committee (DBE, 2009) and Chisholm, Hoadley and wa Kivilu (2005). They found that there is a significant amount of overlap and duplication required in the different planning forms which has generated misunderstandings amongst schools and teachers. Also, some teachers carry assessment planning done in one year over to the next, whilst others devote greater time to plan in order to complete the documents as a degree of compliance even without teaching. Another problem has been that teachers devise their own requirements that do not tally with that of the Department.

2.4.2 Setting of assessments tasks

By definitions the formal assessment tasks are a systematic way of assessing to determine how well learners have performed in a grade and in particular subject, which includes the PoA tasks. More so, informal assessment tasks serve as stepping stones to monitor, enhance and assess the progress of the learners (DBE, 2011; DoE, 2007).

The components of formal and informal assessment tasks include control tests, examinations, projects, investigations, class work, homework, assignments and short tests. These assessment tasks are to be carefully designed or constructed by the teachers and, in some cases, by the provincial department with regard to grade 12 preparatory examinations, to address the content competencies, skills, values and attitudes of the subject. Also, they should be used to provide the Department, learners, parents and teachers too with results that are meaningful indicators of what the learners know, understand and can do at the time of the assessments, as well as allowing learners to be assessed on a regular basis during the year (DBE, 2011; DoE, 2007).

Drawing from the Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAG) for both mathematics and physical science and the policy document (DBE, 2011), a summary of how to set assessments tasks, such as projects, investigations, control tests and examinations, has been provided as indicators for teachers to set their own assessment tasks to meet departmental requirements, which include the right assessment standards (AS), the choosing of appropriate learning outcomes (LOs) and the balancing or weighting in terms of the use of cognitive levels from Bloom's taxonomy. Moreover, they must meet the constructs such as validity, reliability and fairness as reviewed earlier.

For instance, in physical science, a teacher setting a project as an assessment task should make sure that he or she assesses the different cognitive levels across all the three learning outcomes but with a greater focus on the assessment standards of learning outcome three (LO 3). This means that despite the fact that the project tasks should contain LO 1, to allow learners to use their critical thinking and scientific reasoning to investigate and solve problems, as well as LO 2, to make learners use their ability to state, explain, interpret and apply scientific and technological knowledge in everyday contexts, the emphasis for this task in particular should be LO 3 so that learners will be able to identify and critically evaluate scientific knowledge claims and the impact of this knowledge on the quality of socio-economic, environmental and human development. Therefore, a project should involve a framed question which would demand the collection of data and/or information to solve a problem or to understand a particular set of circumstances. After setting a project task which satisfies the above requirement, a teacher needs to design a

specific assessment tool, like a rubric, specifying the assessment criteria with specified characteristics in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes and assessment standards.

In the case of control tests and examination task setting, teachers are expected to assess performance at different cognitive levels across all the learning outcomes but this time with a greater focus on learning outcome two (LO 2). Furthermore, the questions that the teacher frames should assess the knowledge areas that are covered in the particular school term or terms as indicated in the subject work schedule or syllabus. The teacher must then design a memorandum for the learners which give possible answers to the posed questions. However, for assessment tasks such as homework and class work, they should be short, focussed and assess only one assessment standard within a learning outcome at a time but they can, as well, integrate all learning outcomes and assessment standards at times. In terms of mathematics, almost the same principles of setting assessment tasks are to be applied by teachers.

2.4.3 Marking of assessment tasks

With regards to marking as stipulated in the SAG's documents, teachers should mark some of the assessment tasks meant for informal assessment so that, based on the learners' performance, he or she can provide verbal or written feedback to learners, SMT and parents to address learning barriers. Also, at times the teacher should allow groups of learners to mark some of these tasks to enable them to learn from and reflect on their performance as self-assessment. However, in the case of the formal assessment tasks, teachers are expected to mark all those tasks by themselves.

All the marking should be accompanied by relevant marking tools or instruments or criteria such as rating scales, checklists, rubrics and memorandum (DoE 2003). As envisaged by the above policy, rating scales involve any marking system where a symbol (such as A or B) or a mark (5/10 or 50%) is defined in detail to link the coded score to a description of the competences that are required to achieve that. Unlike the traditional marking, rating scales provide descriptive details, making it easier to

have a sense of the learners' strengths and weaknesses in terms of intended outcomes.

With checklists, teachers are to use discrete statements (criterion) to describe the expected performance in a particular task. For example, when a particular statement on the checklist is observed as having been satisfied by a learner during a performance, it is ticked off. It is useful, especially in peer or group assessment activities or practical work. There is also a rubric which is a combination of rating codes and description of standards. It consists of a hierarchy of standards with benchmarks that describe the range of acceptable performance in each code band. Rubrics require teachers to know exactly what is required by the outcome and is worthy to record in the assessment task. Also, the memorandum has possible answers to each question with the exact mark allocation. This makes it easier for teachers to tick and award marks based on the relevance of the learners' given response to the possible answer (DoE, 2003; DBE, 2010b).

2.4.4 Recording of assessment

Recording is defined as "a process in which the teacher documents the level of a learner's performance" (DBE, 2011). All teachers are expected to keep and maintain records such as progress, attainments and difficulties of the learners they teach and report the information to interested parties (Brooks, 2002). The records of a learner's performance should provide evidence of the learner's conceptual progression within a grade and should be used not only to monitor learning but to plan ahead.

The assessment records that should be developed and kept at school include record sheets, schedules, teacher files, learner files and report cards. These cumulative records should provide information on the holistic development of the learner (DBE, 2011; DoE, 2003; DoE, 1998).

Brooks (2002) highlights five purposes of recording. Amongst them are that it serves as a matter of professional decision-making, allowing schools and teachers to have information about a learner which could be updated constantly to resemble that learner at any point in time. It also enhances formative assessment. Although the work or task completed currently might seem like a natural starting point, when

recorded, it serves as a baseline when that learner assumes responsibility for learning. Thus, the information of the prior attainment and difficulties help smooth the transition from one point in time to the next and further enable teachers to provide information for continuity and progression in teaching and learning.

Moreover, this information can be used by teachers and schools to make meaningful reports to parents and, in the instances when parents make contact to question their children's progress, regular updated records enables schools to respond quickly and confidently since they have tangible evidence. As a result, they can offer a statement of what has happened as well as a tangible focus for attention which is more easily grasped than abstract generalisations.

Based on these, the Department required teachers to record their learners' performance in all formal assessment tasks. However, they should also record performance in informal assessment tasks in some cases to support the teaching and learning process. A problem with this is that bias, subjective or inaccurate recording may disadvantage such a learner.

Even though the policy documents did not elaborate on the number of informal assessment tasks to be administered, marked and recorded, it was mentioned in the SAG documents of 2007 that a simple checklist should be designed and used for recording by teachers. Imperatively, in terms of formal assessment tasks, the CASS guidelines for both physical science and mathematics provided by the Eastern Cape Department (ECDoE, n.d) stipulates the number of formal assessment tasks (total of 18 tasks) to be recorded by teachers teaching these subjects. This document contains two recording tools. One is to record the overall formal assessment tasks (all the 18 tasks administered), called the 'mark schedule for annual assessment plan', while the other recording sheet or tool only records those formal assessment tasks (total of 7 out of the 18 tasks) which forms a grade 12 learner's 25% CASS marks as part of certification. This form is referred to as the Programme of Assessment (PoA) schedule which contains the minimum formal assessment tasks.

These two assessment tools are tabulated in the appendices as tables 2.1 (Appendix I) and table 2.2 (Appendix J). They show the two recording schedules for the formal assessment tasks.

The table 2.1 mark schedule for the annual assessment plan indicates the 18 formal assessments tasks to be administered and recorded by the physical science teachers. It clearly distinguished the PoA tasks from the other formal assessment tasks per term. In term one for instance, this schedule indicates that the teachers should give learners three control tests and three practical investigation tasks. Amongst those tests, the third control test and the third practical investigation should be used as the PoA. The second table 2.2 shows the schedule that is to be used to record only the PoA tasks. It contains the minimum tasks per term that teachers should administer and record as evidence of learners' PoA. These two tables clearly indicate to teachers the formal assessment tasks they have to record for the year besides the informal tasks. The same number of tasks for physical science applies to mathematics.

2.4.5 Reporting on learners

The recorded learner performance by teachers or schools does not remain secret. It has to be reported to interested stakeholders. The DBE (2011) describe reporting as a process of communicating learner performance to learners themselves, their parents, schools, employers, tertiary institutions, etc. The main purposes of reporting highlighted in the above document are to:

- provide learners with regular feedback which is developmental;
- inform parents/guardians on the progress of the individual learner; and
- give information to schools and districts or provincial offices on the current level of performance of learners.

To the classroom teachers, it pointed out that recorded information about a learner is a vital source of information: to provide constructive feedback to the learner about progress, and to inform the planning of teaching and learning activities and intervention strategies, including corrections of assessment tasks needed to assist the learner.

Based on the above, teachers are expected to use formal assessment tasks which fall in each term as a learner's termly report and also use the designated minimum formal assessment tasks to form the 25% CASS marks. However, they should use

informal assessment tasks to induce learners' learning through feedback and corrections (DoE 2007).

2.4.6 Portfolio organisation

Wilkinson and Buchner (1998 as cited in Tisani, 2006) claim that growing interest in assessment through the provision of evidence in terms of portfolio keeping is a way of improving teaching and learning. A definition by Martin-Knip (1993 as cited in Grosser & Lombard, nd) captures its essence when he states that "... a portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas... ."

There have been strong arguments presented by educationalists on a portfolio preparation. One is that it forces learners to reflect on the teaching and learning and hence places education on a developmental trajectory (Yorke, 2005). In other words, this method of assessing by portfolio places the learner at the centre, engages him or her over some time, promotes self-assessment, adds meaning to assessment itself and lets a learner feel valued in the process (Tisani, 2006; Lumina, 2005; Brown & Knight, 1994).

Further advantages of portfolio assessment are that it tells learners how well they are developing their skills, abilities and acquired dispositions, and what they need to do to develop them further. It also provides visible proof of their achievement (DoE, 2000a; Gwele, 2001). In this regard portfolio use gives learners opportunities to take charge of their own learning - to assume ownership of it by realising that assessment forms part of their learning (Ellery & Sutherland, 2004). Therefore, portfolios thus represent possibilities for integrating assessment with instruction and learning, the development of higher-order thinking skills and for a collaborative approach to assessment that enables teachers and learners to interact in the teaching, learning and assessment process as well as encouraging the learners to reflect critically on their experiences (Lumina, 2005; Gwele, 2001).

According to DoE (1998) and DoE (2002) policy documents, teachers must provide a clear indication about how well each and every outcome is being taught and learned. Learners must show evidence of progressing towards achieving all those outcomes. They directed further that learners have to be accompanied by evidence of

achievement in the form of portfolios or files containing samples of learners' work. Thus, the evidence of all learner performances in assessment tasks such as tests, assignments, investigations and projects should be stored in portfolios.

The two forms of portfolios to be kept are a learner's portfolio which contains both formal and some informal assessments tasks and a teacher's portfolio which contains all the recordings and planning, the formal programme of assessment, evidence of learner assessments or performances, all formal tasks and marking guidelines, the annual teaching plan and work schedule, and other resources (DoE, 2002; DBE, 2011). Prior to 2010, a learner portfolio as evidence of learner's work did not need to be kept in a 'special file' but both formal and informal assessment tasks could be kept in work books, exercise books or other relevant subject-specific formats such as ledgers, cash and journal books and folders (DBE, 2009).

The importance of portfolio keeping as a requirement by the teachers has been cemented in the recent DBE (2011) policy document, warning that "failure by the teacher to maintain a file with assessment tasks constitutes an act of misconduct and will be dealt with in terms of *paragraph 5(3)* of the policy document, *National policy on the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate: A qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualification Framework (NQF)*, or other appropriate measures."

Even though Shuman (as cited in Tisani, 2006), admits portfolios have the potential to link meaningfully teaching and learning processes and can be a useful means of assessment, he argues that they are difficult and complex to construct, especially when used as assessment tools. Further, Grosser and Lombard (nd) argued that although the use of portfolios in assessment is challenging, the way it is currently implemented is not fulfilling the expectations of assessment for learning. Since the implementation thereof is not negotiable, portfolios appear to remain show-case documents, bearing little evidence of learning independence by the learners during its compilation.

The maintenance of learner portfolio files is seen by many teachers as time-consuming, expensive and not adding any value to the learning experience (DBE, 2009; Chisholm, 2005). In their report, the Task Team Committee highlights that one of the consequences of keeping learners' assessment evidence in a file is that

learners do not receive their assessment tasks and so do not learn from the assessment experience since teachers keep those files because of the fear of learners losing them.

Teachers' assessment practices, including planning, setting of tasks, marking, recording and reporting on learners' achievements and keeping the evidence in portfolios, have been discussed. The moderation process which ensures the reliability of the teachers' assessment practices will now be examined.

2.5 MODERATION AS QUALITY ASSURANCE OF CASS

In Harlen's (2007) view, one way to minimise the threats to reliability and to increase the reliability of teachers' judgements is for teachers to moderate each others' judgements in the moderation procedures. Moderation is regarded as a crucial and compulsory component of assessment in further education and training (FET) classrooms for progression and promotion (grade 10 and 11) and for the awarding of grade 12 learners' National Senior Certificates (NSC).

DBE's (2011) recent report posits that school-based assessments (SBA) in Grade 12 must be moderated by school Head of Departments (HoDs), at the school level by the district subject specialist, at cluster level by the moderator, and at provincial level by external moderators appointed by UMALUSI. These four levels of moderation of internal assessment tasks are required to ensure quality assurance processes as well as to ensure that standards are aligned within and across schools.

2.5.1 School- based assessment moderation

Internal or school-based assessment has become a feature in schools since its assessment tasks come from the classroom teachers and, in some cases, the district or provincial offices, rather than the national department. They have to be moderated and verified so that a school or a learner may not be disadvantaged in the process of internal assessment. This moderation focuses on the input into the internal assessment system, the process of implementation of internal assessment, and the criteria for good internal assessment tasks.

Therefore, it is per policy (DBE, 2011) that each school appoints an internal moderator or assessor, often referred to as the Head of Department (HoD), who has the appropriate subject knowledge, understanding, and skills and experienced enough in the area being assessed. These HoDs occupy post level two which comes with extra financial remuneration. Their job is to:

- set tasks or ensure task specifications are in line with subject guidelines;
- ensure that learners' work and teachers' tasks are submitted in strict accordance with the assessment body and UMALUSI requirements;
- mark learners' portfolios;
- assist with the moderation of learners' work; and
- authenticate learners' work before allowing for next level of moderation with report or comments.

Moderation at this school level is conducted any time a teacher has to give assessment tasks, and also once every term the HoD has to moderate ten percent (10%) of learners' portfolios for cluster moderation as well as for the teacher's file. Both DBE (2010) and UMALUSI (2010) reports claimed that this level of monitoring is not thorough at all in most schools but only fully implemented in functional schools.

2.5.2 Cluster moderation

At the cluster level moderation, schools are grouped together (approximately six schools per cluster) according to their proximity to each other and per subject where a cluster leader is selected from these schools to play a supervisory role and to coordinate the activities of the cluster. This cluster moderation takes place once per term where a ten percent (10%) sampling of learners' evidence and one teacher's portfolio per school from SBA are moderated. At this level, teachers exchange files (both learner and teacher portfolios) among themselves under the supervision of the subject advisor for peer moderation. The moderation involves checking for compliance in terms of the SAGs and also evaluating the assessment tasks administered to ascertain whether they are pitched at the appropriate level (DBE, 2010b). The teachers' involvement in this moderation processes is seen as very

crucial as they, in most cases, set assessment tasks and administer all the required tasks.

Associated challenges of this cluster moderation as contained in the DBE's (2010b) report shows that the checking of assessment tasks in most provinces does not serve the purpose as it is and that in some provinces there is a lack of commitment in terms of participation and attendance by the teachers of cluster meetings.

2.5.3 External moderation

After the provincial moderation, where some teachers are appointed by the province to meet and further moderate the SBA, a sample of portfolios (both learners' and teachers') within selected subjects are identified for moderation by external moderators in accordance with the set criteria by UMALUSI. Moderation at this level focuses on compliance with national policy; pays much attention to the calculation of marks conversion, as well as the adjustment of marks and, importantly, the standardisation of the overall work of the learner (UMALUSI, 2010).

2.5.4 Standardisation of CASS marks

Effective quality management procedures are needed if a system requires teachers' assessment to be extended beyond a single school and to achieve acceptable levels of consistency (Harlen, 2007). Hence, external moderation is regarded as a good quality assurance tool where the external moderators (appointed by UMALUSI) ensure that the examiners and internal moderators, such as teachers and HoDs, follow established procedures and arrive at well-founded decisions as to the validity of the instruments or question papers set and administered (UMALUSI, 2006).

According to UMALUSI (2010:23), teachers' judgements of work for an external award need to be checked by the awarding body through the use of statistical moderation as a quality control measure. This process sees to it that all CASS marks (PoA) submitted by teachers are standardised according to the following standard deviation mean formula with regard to adjusted exams marks designed by UMALUSI below:

- between 5 – 10% above the adjusted examination mean will be accepted as is;
- less than 5% above the adjusted examination mean must be brought up to 5% above the adjusted examination mean;
- more that 15% above the adjusted examination mean must be brought down to 5% above the adjusted mean; and
- between 11% and 15% above the adjusted mean of the examination mark will be scaled down as follows:11% scaled down to 9%; 12% scaled down to 8%; 13% scaled down to 7%; 14% scaled down to 6%; 15% scaled down to 5%.
(Adopted from Twigg, 2010)

UMALUSI's highlight on the above is that it only results in a transformed CASS mark for a learner but it does not affect the ranking of a learner in the CASS. This implies that a top learner of the class still remains a top learner even though the CASS marks may be scaled down or up according to the standard deviation with regard to the adjusted exams marks.

According to Twigg (2010), this statistical moderation by UMALUSI has been met by severe criticism by both the teachers and the public, since it is perceived to subvert the teachers' assessment decisions in the classrooms and disadvantage the top grade 12 learners in the final results.

2.5.5 CASS marks versus final examination marks

In terms of measurement, Van der Berg and Shepherd (2008) and UMALUSI (2009) argued that, since CASS marks are determined at the school level, usually based on assessment tasks that are not standardised across schools and at the same time vary by the teacher in terms of number, level of difficulty and marking accuracy, then such marks are less accurate than the externally set, marked and moderated final examinations. Hence, it is therefore fair to use the final examination marks of the grade 12 learners as the standard against which to judge their 25% CASS marks submitted by the teachers.

Basing their logic on validity and reliability outlined elsewhere, Van der Berg and Shepherd (2008) point out that alignment in the standards of the examination and the CASS should ensure minimal gaps between these marks as well as a strong correlation between them as they sought to measure the same concept, which is the knowledge of the curriculum.

These researchers' study in corroboration with that of Singh (2005), distinguished between two types of assessment inaccuracies with regard to statistical qualities with different signalling dimensions. They found assessment leniency which indicates a situation where CASS marks are higher, particularly in physical science and mathematics, than the final examination marks obtained by the same learners. It has been argued that inflated CASS marks much higher than those of exams marks can give learners a false sense of security about how well they will be prepared for the final examinations in that subject. As a result, the learners may diminish their efforts which could further weaken their exams results. Also, they noticed that a few teachers purposely limit CASS marks to encourage learners to work harder for the examination, which is not common practice since only 12,2% of the cases in the selected subjects used in their study did learners' exams marks exceeded CASS marks.

The second is the low assessment reliability where performance measured by CASS and exams marks is only weakly correlated. Here, as argued, a poor correlation between CASS and exams marks shows that the CASS mark is an unreliable indicator of each learner's relative ability as compared to his or her classmates. In such a case, a learner who scores low in CASS may unexpectedly score well in exams and vice versa which again gives wrong signals to learners.

The next section highlights the policies that underpin teachers' CASS practices.

2.6 POLICIES ON CASS UNDER NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENTS

With the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) up to date, a number of assessment related policies and guidelines that placed emphasis on classroom assessments have been introduced, specifically including the Assessment Policy in the GET Band, Grade R-9 and Adult Basic Education and Training (DoE, 1998a); the Policy Framework for the Assessment and Promotion of Learners Grade 9 (DoE, 2003); the National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the GET and FET Bands, Grades R-12 (DoE, 2005); the Revised National Curriculum Statements for GET & FET on Assessments (DoE, 2007); the National Policy on the Conduct, Administration and Management of the Assessment of the Senior Certificate (DBE, 2010); the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12 (DBE, 2011); the National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (DBE, 2011), and other related Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAGs).

The proliferation of the above policies on assessment became necessary since post-apartheid election in South Africa required educational initiatives such as CASS and C2005 to be instrumental in redressing the past injustices and eliminating the apartheid curriculum of “racially offensive and outdated content” (Jansen, 1997 as cited in Jansen, 1998). Jansen and Hoadley (2009) noticed that the ‘old’ curriculum was content led, and this content was organised according to separate subject disciplines which were not only abstract and theoretical but biased and unrelated to most learners’ experiences of the real world. This curriculum did not lead to the development of learners’ competences to deal with the world challenges since its assessment focused on the ability of learners to recall content, and teaching tended to be teacher-centred. According to the DoE (1997b), the assessment tasks were usually single occasions which only happened at the end of teaching, and learners were assessed individually with much secrecy surrounding the tests whose assessment criteria were rarely made explicit before learners attempted the assessment tasks.

Hence, therefore, the Draft Assessment Policy document of 1998 stressed that “a dramatic paradigm shift” is needed in assessment practice in education and training in South Africa to address the above challenges in the new dispensation. This policy

added that the critical characteristic of the required shift is the move from the “judgmental to the developmental role of assessment” (DoE, 1998a). Thus, under C2005 and National Curriculum Statement (NCS), assessment practices moved from an emphasis on summative assessment, founded on the psychometric model, to a broadly based approach which foregrounds support for learning as the key purpose of assessment (Gipps, 1994 as cited in Pryor & Lubisi, 2002). The principal aim of these policies is to enhance the provision of education for each learner to be continuous, coherent and progressive.

This means that it distanced itself from a system that is dominated by public examinations, which are ‘high stakes’ and whose function has been for ranking, grading, selection and certification, and moves towards a system that informs and improves the curriculum and assessment practices of teachers. Another matter that received attention in these myriad of policies is that the learning outcomes are grounded in the assessment standards to serve as the basis for assessment and must be made explicit. Also, the learners must receive clear explanations with an indication of areas that need further work and must be assisted to reach the required criteria and outcomes. The teachers have the overall responsibility to assess the progress of learners through a variety of suitable tools in continuous assessment to enable their learners to achieve the expected outcomes in a learner-centred manner (DoE, 1998b).

The traditional caricature of schools depicts learners sitting silently in rows, passively absorbing what the teacher says whilst their natural desire to probe, inquire and question is not taken into account (Horn, 2009) hence, the prevalent popularity of the learner-centred aspect of the policies. Admittedly, Horn (2009) in support of learner-centred discourse, holds, on one hand, that the principal agent of learning is the activity of the learner’s own mind simply because knowledge acquired through hands-on learning is more likely to be remembered than knowledge presented verbally. On the other hand, knowledge gained in a familiar, relevant and problem-solving context is better understood and integrated. The learner-centred learning puts the learners first, at the centre of the learning process, allowing them to actively construct their own learning and is in contrast to teacher-centred learning where teachers are the primary source of knowledge. It is defined by Hansen (2000 as cited in Labuschagne, 2004) as learning where the learner is the main character in the

learning process: he or she takes the initiative, controls the learning process, and actively learns in a socially interactive way.

However, Swartz (2006) and Salatial (2003) maintain that, the provision policy makes for schools to deal with issues of curriculum and assessment indicate whether the national and its departmental powers filters down to the schools and to the teachers who are the agents of delivery and change, or whether the power becomes a force that restricts and stifles teachers' and learners' potential creativity and innovation. In support of this challenge, Pudi (2006) added that as assessment policy-makers and curriculum designers rarely visit the schools where implementation takes place, they may tend to operate on a wavelength that is totally different from the reality in the classrooms.

Despite the plethora of policies, the main emphasis has been to discontinue the traditional way of teaching and assessing under the old educational system and re-introduce teachers into fresh assessment practices and teaching. The next sections will discuss issues around physical and mathematics subjects under the NCS.

2.7 PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS UNDER THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT

2.7.1 Interventions of physical science and mathematics subjects

Over the past 18 years there have been major efforts to improve the quality of education in South Africa. It is increasingly acknowledged that if South Africa is going to compete in world markets, then a well-educated corps of people with knowledge and skills (Howie, 1999) at all levels in mathematics, science and technology will be needed. A survey by Eiselen, Stauss and Jonck (2007) confirmed this sentiment and suggested that increasing the number of science-orientated graduates to meet the technological challenges of the 21st century is imperative for economic sustainability and growth.

Therefore, the mathematics, science and technology (MST) education has been a national priority for several years. A major example is the National Strategy for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (NSMSTE) devised by DoE in

2001, also well known as the Dinaledi school project. According to DoE (2001), the mission of this project was to strengthen the teaching and learning of science, mathematics and technology using appropriate curricula, teaching methodologies and learning support materials with the vision of achieving a scientifically literate, technologically fluent and mathematically literate society that empowers individuals to participate in the emerging knowledge-based economy and supports sustainable development.

In terms of appropriate curricula, the proponents of this strategy claim that the development of NCS will ensure that learners across the education and training system will consistently receive challenging learning programmes that will capture their interest and prepare them for lifelong learning. In effect, the learners will be equipped with knowledge and skills enabling them to compete in a global economy.

Since the launch of the strategy up to 2011 the evaluation of NSMSTE shows that there has been significant progress, particularly in mobilising resources for over 500 Dinaledi schools, an increase in the level of participation and a systematic improvement in the performance of learners in mathematics and science. The Dinaledi school teachers have had, as well, access to training opportunities to strengthen their subject content knowledge in mathematics and science, leading to notable improvements in the pass rates achieved at Dinaledi schools.

Analysis of the 2010 results shows 57% of learners passing mathematics and 59% passing physical science in these Dinaledi schools. Yet the performance of learners in those subjects generally has been problematic. The 2010 NSC results show that the number of learners who enrolled for mathematics and physical science has generally been declining.

2.7.2 Learners' performance in mathematics and sciences

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) decided to let learners in South Africa participate in the TIMSS project as a means of monitoring trends in teaching and learning of mathematics and science on both a provincial and a national scale. Monitoring the educational plans of the government by way of involvement in

international studies is one way of objectively assessing both positive and negative trends in the education system as a whole (Howie 2003).

The 1995 TIMSS results for grades 7 and 8 and grade 12 learners, according to the national report with reference to the performance of mathematics and science, were received with shock and dismay because they were, in fact, the lowest of all the participating countries. The results showed that the average mean in all the three grades (7, 8 and 12) in South Africa were lower than the international mean in both mathematics and science.

Moreover, in terms of internal grade 12 matric results, as argued by UMALUSI (2010) is that one of the measures of school quality is the achievement scores of learners at a particular exist point, it provides an indication about the performance of the education system at the secondary level. According to a study done by Simkins (2010), on analysis of 2007 and 2008 mathematics and physical science matric results, he concluded that some 90 per cent of our schools are still failing to meet the minimum performance standards in mathematics and science education, thus undermining the potential of millions of young South Africans, and hampering national development. To add to the above, table 2.3 below shows the actual performance of Grade 12 matric results in these two critical subjects since the introduction of the NSC from 2008 to 2011.

Table 2.3: Matrics' performance (total achieved 30% and above) in physical science and mathematics both national and the Eastern Cape: 2008 to 2011

Physical Science	National %	Eastern Cape %	Mathematics	National %	Eastern Cape %
2008	54.9%	43.4%	2008	45.7%	37.3%
2009	36.8%	28.6%	2009	46.0%	37.5%
2010	47.8%	43.3%	2010	47.4%	37.3%
2011	53.4%	46.0%	2011	46.3%	33.5%

Source: DBE, 2010 and DBE, 2011

It is evident from table 2.3 that, although these subjects may be considered important for future success, they are, unfortunately, one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the majority of matriculants, both nationally and in the Eastern Cape particularly. The average pass rate for the national exams over the four years period is under 50% and that of the Eastern Cape is below 40% in both subjects. To complicate matters further, if the pass achievement is raised to 40% and above instead of 30% and above as indicated in the table, a significant drop in the percentages would be recorded. For example, in the Eastern Cape, the physical science matric percentage will be as follows: 13.8% in 2009, 23.5% in 2010 and 25.9% in 2011 whilst that of mathematics will be at 21.3% in 2009, 21.3% again in 2010 and 19.6% in 2011. This indicates that a big majority of those who even pass these subjects do so by obtaining percentage marks in the range of 30%-39%. These results indicate how problematic mathematics and physical science are in terms of learners' achievements.

2.7.3 Teachers' qualification in physical science and mathematics

The National Research Council's Committee on Teacher Preparation (CSMTP as cited in CSME, 2000) found that there is a strong correlation between learners' achievement in mathematics and science and the teaching quality, level knowledge and advanced degrees of these teachers.

EduSource in 1997 (as cited in DoE, 2001) published a report on teachers' qualifications and found out that most mathematics and science teachers were unqualified and under-qualified to teach these subjects. It was noticed that of those mathematics teachers who were professionally qualified, only 50% had specialised in mathematics in their training. Similarly, in science only 42% of the professional science teachers specialised in science. More recently, a research done by Parker (2009) reported that 36% of teachers have academic qualifications. Of these, 57% have mathematics subjects and 21% have physical science among other subjects. In short a report compiled by Teacher Education in South Africa (TESA, 2005), based on teacher supply, demand and qualification, states that, "Too few teachers are entering the teaching profession, too many teachers are leaving the profession, and

too many teachers are inappropriately deployed in the teaching profession to meet the human resource needs of the country.”

This section examined the interventions made in physical science and mathematics subjects under the new dispensation, the learners’ performances both internally and internationally, and the link between teachers’ qualifications and performance. The next section interrogates the theories which underpin teachers’ CASS practices.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theoretical lenses, constructivist theory and accountability theory, explain CASS and its practices in the schools.

2.8.1 Constructivist theory

Cognitive scientists see learning as a “much more interactive process” (Torrance & Pryor, 1998) since learners do not simply encounter and learn materials, moving from the simple to the complex, but rather “they engage actively” with and attempt to make sense of what they encounter before incorporating it into their “developing schematic understanding” (Gifford and O’Connor, 1992 as cited in Grosser & Lombard, nd). It is based on this logic of interaction that CASS is associated with social constructivist theory in cognitive psychology.

The theory takes into account the role of teacher-learner interaction and the uniqueness of the learner and his or her cultural background since they help to shape the knowledge and truth that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process (Wertsch, 1997). It is argued that the responsibility for learning should reside increasingly on the learners since they construct their own understanding and that they “do not simply mirror and reflect what they read” (Glaserfeld, 1989).

Therefore, constructivist theory opposes the behaviourist theory model that urges teachers to define their objectives and teach what counts with the assumption that complex knowledge can be broken down into various constituents so that learners mastering them should do so from simple facts and concepts to more complex ones. The emphasis here is that the teacher is the instructor with whom the responsibility

to teach rests and the learners play a passive and receptive role. Hence, the behaviourist theory is interpreted as a high stake and traditional approach that considers learners as objects.

In Brooks' (2002) arguments, she mentioned that constructivist theorists remind us that learning must be an active process because teachers cannot do their learners' learning for them and the same principles apply to assessment. The idea, however, that learners do their own learning as well as their assessment under this model as argued above, does not mean they (learners) need to engage in a "never-ending circus" of practical activities alone but to interact also with teachers and peers so that they will be able to help learners to make personal sense of new material, and to construct their own meaning in order to integrate the new information into their own minds (ibid).

Imperatively, constructivists believe that learners have prior learning and personal theories in mind when tackling new topics and an example might even be misconceptions. These proponents claim that we as human beings develop our understanding by relating new material to our existing mental schema (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1986; Piaget, 1950). This implies that each of us actively constructs a personal way of viewing the world around us by creating links between our own knowledge and understanding and the new information.

This process has been termed by Ausubel (1987 as cited in Brooks, 2002) as 'anchoring' new information. In learning, the efficacy of this process depends on the status of existing ideas about a new topic. Notably, learners inevitably bring with them their prior knowledge and personal theories when tackling new topics; therefore, it is dangerous to assume a simple, straightforward relationship between what teachers teach and what learners actually learn (Brooks, 2002).

The process, which includes interactions, questioning or systematic use of formative assessment in general, is believed to help dislodge any well-established but unsound ideas or negative misconceptions from learners' minds as they do their learning. The imperative point is that, if a teacher is not aware of learners' misconceptions, it is unlikely that cognitive conflict will take place at all which, in effect, will prevent learners from learning. Ideally, it is also true that not all the misconceptions the learners have resist what is to be learnt. There are learners who

already possess a high level of understanding of a topic or lesson and, in this case, the theory insists the teacher has to build on this understanding through baseline assessment.

Another issue tackled by the constructivist theory of learning with regard to learner misconception is that sometimes learning may go awry when a learner develops misconceptions during teaching. This might seem trivial but in a learning situation it can cause great confusion in learners' minds and if the teacher always just assumes that learners understand without probing and assessing, such confusions will not be uncovered. According to Brooks (2002), "misconceptions are easier to confront if they are identified promptly." Based on this, it is not difficult to see why constructivist theory of learning relates learning to formative assessment, due to its interactive characteristics, focused observation, self and peer assessment, probing questions, rapid feedback, and so on, which alerts teachers to what learners already know and places them in a better position to monitor their progress closely as well as their level of understanding during the teaching and learning process (Meyer, 2004; Torrance & Pryor, 2002; Brooks, 2002).

The argument derived from Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' and Bruner's (1985) 'scaffolding' places more emphasis on assessment feedback as a means towards more effective teaching, whereby teachers refine their practice in assisting the learners to understand and engage with new ideas and problems. Therefore, when teachers set appropriate tasks for their learners, they need to provide appropriate support with the purpose of assessment in mind to identify what learners can achieve next (Torrance & Pryor, 1998). The importance of the nature of the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable people such as adults, teachers, and peers is that they act as a learning environment; without them it is impossible to acquire social meaning and the support to challenge and develop their thinking abilities (Wertsch, 1997).

Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) refer to this process of sharing individual perspectives and interaction as 'collaborative elaboration' because it results in learners constructing understanding together that would not be possible alone. This does not mean learners are spoon-fed by those around them but are challenged to learn to discover principles, concepts and facts for themselves. While accepting the

validity of the above arguments, it could be stated that learners constantly need to be challenged with tasks that refer to skills and knowledge just beyond their current level of mastery to act as the distance between the actual developmental level and the level of potential development (Vygotsky, 1978). He claimed further that “instruction is good only when it proceeds ahead of development to awaken and arouse to life an entire set of functions in the stage of maturing... .” Shute (2008) in support of the above believes that constructivist theory “can effectively reduce the cognitive load of a learner who is struggling alone to become overwhelmed and perform better.” Therefore, in a constructivist classroom, learning is constructed, active, reflective, collaborative, inquiry-based and revolving, and its assessments include oral discussions, self and/or peer assessment, mind-mapping, hands on activities, pre-testing and testing, which are all basically characteristics of assessment for learning.

Despite the fulfilling highlights outlined above, critics are not hard to find on constructivist theory of learning. Several psychologists and teachers have questioned central claims of constructivism. Meyer (2004) argues that not all teaching techniques based on constructivism are efficient or effective for all learners. To him, many teachers misapply this theory by using teaching techniques that require learners to be behaviourally active.

Also, Kirschner *et al* (2006) even though they agree with the basic premise of the theory that learners construct knowledge, they are worried about the instructional designs that were recommended as the theoretical framework. They specifically lash out at the emphasis that teachers should use unguided instruction that relies on the learner to discover or construct essential information for themselves but rather supported Meyer’s (2004) recommendation which says that “in many ways, guided discovery appears to offer the best method for promoting constructivist learning.”

2.8.2 Accountability theory

The second theory which also relates well to CASS is the accountability theory model. Assessment has been associated with accountability as its ‘new role’ from the mid-1990s, even though educational accountability in general has been a much-

used phrase since the 1970s (Perie, 2007). The word 'accountability' has many roles and has taken on increasing importance in a variety of disciplines such as political science, accounting, engineering, and education (Dubnick, 2005) as well as having different understandings. Meanwhile, Romzek and Dubnick's (1987) definition of accountability has been widely known; they see it as "a relationship in which an individual or agency is held to answer for performance that involves some delegation of authority to act."

In the educational context nowadays assessment ensures the accountability of the curriculum, institutions and teachers (Isreal, 2005) and requires the institutions to achieve quality teaching and learning, and to be answerable for public funding (French, 1997 as cited in Cheng, 2010). To Perie (2007), the purpose of accountability is not simply to identify and punish ineffective or non-performing schools but to provide appropriate support to ensure that all schools are effective.

Based on the above, Stobart and Gipps (1997 as cited in Brooks, 2002) agree that assessment has currently become open to public use, as its data is relied upon to manage the performance of learners, their teachers and their schools, since individual performances are evaluated against internal, local and national data or standards so that targets for improvement may be set and published. Thus, the government sets national targets based on the national curriculum and monitors the schools which are required to contribute to the attainment of these national targets. In her study, Brooks (2002) noticed that this monitoring and comparing of performances usually takes place within "a target-setting hierarchy... whose requirements at each level are influenced by, and influence, those at the adjacent levels but all are subject to the national targets." This implies that all this interconnecting chain of accountability, from the government to the provincial and districts officials, principals and SMTs, HoDs, teachers and learners, at various levels, rests on the changes being made in the way teachers teach and learners learn. Thus, individual learner's learning targets that are developed through assessment tasks and practices become the cornerstone on which to base school improvement and the efficacy of the entire national standards.

This means, according to Perie's (2007) report, that the field of education has shifted attention to standards-based accountability systems which are based on inputs such

as assessment. From this it is clear that essential conditions such as time for teachers to collaborate, aligned curriculum, data systems that provide useful data, etc (Perie, 2007) must be in place to effect change in schools and especially in low-performing ones. Therefore, it has been argued that it is the assessments provided by the schools that could be used to determine whether sanctions and rewards could be allocated; to allow the public and stakeholders to understand how well the schools are working; to provide information to policy makers on the changes that are needed to make the schools more effective, and to continue to improve all learners' educational opportunities (Perie, 2007; Kim, 2005; Brooks 2002; Mulgan, 2000).

There have been several theories and accountability requirements examined and formulated by various researchers in the public sector (for example, Romzek & Dubnick, 1987; Radin & Romzek, 1996; Kim, 2005). Kim and Lee (2010) identified three types of accountability requirement models, namely, compliance, professional and political as suitable in non-profit agencies. Since South African public schools are deemed to be non-profit institutions, their accountability is based on organisational performance (Salamon, 2002), that is, the employees (in this case teachers and also learners) must be accountable in the fulfilment of the organisational mission to achieve set standards.

In their research findings, Kim and Lee (2010) reported on the relationships between these accountability requirements and the employee's perceived workload and job tension in their mission accomplishments (work performance). They found out that an emphasis on compliance accountability over professional and political accountability could have negative impact on accomplishing agency missions by increasing employee's perceived workload and job tension. To these researchers, many employees see documentation and reporting requirements as an essential part of their work and agree that they help them to keep track of their clients' (learners) learning situation or condition. But "...frequent changes to reporting formats, performance standards and demands make employees feel that documentation is disconnected from their mission and that they are catering more to compliance with state mandates" (Kim & Lee, 2010).

This is as a result of various committees monitoring and tracking teachers' productivity through the assessment performance of their learners, their obligations

and their adherence to policies and procedures. In effect, teachers are pressured with a variety of reporting which generates excessive paperwork, administration and documentation requirements. As argued by Johnston and Romzek (1999), paperwork and reporting requirements for compliance with conceptual obligations reduce staffs' commitment time which endangers the achievements of institutional missions.

The professional accountability requirements focus on the use of staffs' expertise and professional norms and standards, such as caring attitude, ethical awareness and honouring duties. It was established from Kim and Lee's (2010) study that this requirement relieves staffs' perceived job tensions but the challenge is that professional practices often collide or may not be consistent with administrative directives which could affect the institutional mission.

Unexpectedly, they notice that political accountability in itself does not seemingly affect the perceived job tension of employees but rather it even decreases their perceived workload. This is true when mutual agreements on performance standards are established firmly. But frequent changes in performance standards from political influence cause major job tensions and workload increases among staffs. This notion is supported by Mulgan (2000) and Kim (2005) that the perceived pressures for political accountability may aggravate staffs' perception of their work performance, especially when different bodies demand conflicting performance standards. Even the media and advocacy groups may distract staff from fulfilling their institutional missions.

Also, in the context of schools and teachers, it follows from the above accountability requirements that accountability operates at a number of levels. For teachers at the individual level, it is part of their self-evaluation and to schools it is part of internal evaluation. For a more positive impact, Harlen (2007) urged that accountability is best when based on information about a range of learner achievements and learning activities which are judged by reference to the context as well as the circumstances of a school and used positively to improve learners' opportunities for learning.

The battle to balance performances against accountability requirements is evident in school assessment practices. This has been a tool for the government to monitor and control teachers, schools, funds and resources distribution, and so on. Critics

have it that, since most assessment-based evaluations are carried out for accountability purposes, what usually happens is that they collect learner performance data as their primary data and use other data, such as teacher qualifications and school resourcing, to explain the patterns and profiles of learner performance, which focus on the output rather than the workings of the system (Khosa, 2010). In support of Khosa (2010), Harlen (2007) argued that when sanctions or rewards are attached to the results from the learners' performance, attention is inevitably focused on maximising the outcomes that are assessed, which in turn acquire 'high stakes'. The implication is that teaching and curriculum are directed to focus on what is assessed which, as a consequence, narrows learners' learning opportunities.

This section examined the constructivism and accountability theories, their relationships and implications for the teachers' CASS practices, and how those practices influence everyday teaching and learning.

2.9 CONCLUSION

In summary the chapter shed more light on assessment in general. It also discussed the CASS strands, their features, challenges and teachers' assessment practices. Further, assessment policies, their effect on classroom teachers, moderation and issues around physical science and mathematics have been examined. Finally, it looked at the constructivism and accountability theories since grade 12 teachers especially are to be interactive in the classroom through the use of CASS, as well as being aware that they are accountable for learners' learning.

The next chapter will look at the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research methods used for the study, the rationale behind choosing them and the limitations of the research designs. Further, it provides insights into the case study design, sampling, document analysis and research quality, as well as the ethical considerations employed as the blueprint for the data collection and its analysis in order to increase the validity and the achievement of the research objectives. The chapter starts by giving the research paradigms that orientate the study.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The concept 'paradigm' is defined by various writers according to their specific context since there is no single cut and dried definition of it. Terre Blanche, Durrhiem and Painter (2006) view 'paradigm' or 'world view' as the perspective that provides a rationale for the research and commits the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation.

3.1.1 Interpretive paradigm

Following from the nature of the research problem and research questions, the study was guided by the interpretive paradigm. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the interpretive paradigm aims to understand the subjective world of human experience as well as to retain the integrity of the phenomenon under investigation. Because interpretivism is based on the view that humans can only understand the world as it appears to them - not as it really is (Van Rensburg, 2001). In the light of this paradigm, Neuman (2006) stated that interpretive researchers believe that the answers that people give to research questions depend on the social situation they find themselves in.

In the case of this study, a group of teachers and Head of departments (HoDs) in a social environment who interact with each other, share common norms, values and rules have allowed me to enter into their everyday life-worlds to explore and deeply understand their 'lived experiences' (Brown & Schultze, 2001) in terms of how they achieve assessment of learning and assessment for learning in their CASS practices in their specific school situation. Also the teachers and HoDs involvement in this study were seen as individual people who interpret and practice events differently from others; therefore, I was interested in investigating the respondents within their own contexts in an attempt to make sense and meaning of their CASS practices in reality. In other words, I would investigate what the respondents think and see as meaningful and how they make sense of the world around them, since they are unique individuals in a specific context and would construct their own understanding of the events as they experience them (Van Rensburg, 2001). This makes the interpretive paradigm relevant to the study because assessment has become uniquely a human activity.

According to Van Rensburg (2001), the design or approach that underpins interpretivist research is the qualitative design, which is used to reflect an interest in contextual meaning-making rather than generalised rules; hence this study is located in this design. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) simply term qualitative research design as a study of things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense or interpret them according to the meaning the people themselves bring to them. It was imperative to employ qualitative approach for this study to achieve the aim of concentrating on specific issues of the teachers' CASS practices without any form of generalisations to and from other settings or schools.

The reason for using this design was informed by Babbie and Mouton (2005). They highlighted the advantages of qualitative approach as followed:

- qualitative research emphasises process rather than outcome;
- The actor's perspective (the 'insider' or 'emic' view) is emphasised;
- understanding social action in terms of its specific context (idiographic motive) is more important than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population;

- the primary aim is in-depth ('thick') descriptions and understanding of action events; and
- the researcher is seen as the 'main instrument' in the research process.

The above descriptions show how the qualitative approach differs from the quantitative approach in a number of ways. It is idiographic and holistic in nature which aims, mainly, to understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life rather than controlling measurement. It is concerned with the subjective exploration of reality from the insider perspective as opposed to the outsider perspective where the world is regarded in terms of observable and measurable facts that are predominant in the quantitative approach. It produces descriptive data in the respondent's own written or spoken words through the identification of beliefs and values that underlie the phenomena of the respondents and focuses on small samples rather than statistical methods (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

However, there are disadvantages of the qualitative approach. Despite its in-depth and comprehensive approach to data gathering, it is limited in scope. The issue of researcher bias is built in and can be unavoidable. Its reliance on subjectivity can easily lead to procedural problems and data influence. It is also very difficult in terms of replicability since it sees and portrays the world in reality, which is socially constructed, ever changing and complex (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006).

Therefore, coming to understand these challenges associated with the qualitative approach enabled me to take the respondents' subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them (ontology) as well as making sense of their experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they told me (epistemology) in order to make these respondents' interpretations genuine without any form of bias (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Case Study

Although a case study is not a methodological choice due to its usage in both quantitative and qualitative approaches in what is to be studied, its vitality on descriptions and interpretations of a particular case in depth (Stake, 2000), makes it more relevant to this qualitative study. In support of this, Cohen *et al* (2007), see a case study as “a process by which a researcher observes, describes, explains and views the operations and functionality of an individual person, an event, or social activity, or group of cases”. According to these authors, it is an approach that uses in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon. Hence, the use of case study design in this study was important as it enabled me to concentrate on and deal with a specific unit in an in-depth manner with a limited number of respondents to obtain detailed information about CASS practices and revealed current challenges faced by teachers on assessment practices exclusively with the two schools identified as cases.

In addition to the importance of using a case study, it also allowed me to systematically gather enough information about physical science and mathematics teachers and HoDs in their schools to understand effectively how they as a group operate when it comes to their CASS practices (Berg, 2001). Thus, the obtained data was much more detailed resulting in the production of extremely rich and highly valid information or data. In a case study, too, as argued by Mouton (2001), the researcher is able to establish rapport with the research subjects and this helped respondents to give more detailed information than they might have done in a more formal setting. Yin (2003) confirms that the case study design allows the researcher to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as individual life cycles, organisational processes, and neighbourhood change. Further, it catches unique features which hold the key to the understanding of the situation that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data-like surveys, as well as building in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables (Nisbet & Watt as cited in Cohen *et al*, 2007).

A case study design may be single-case or multiple-case approach (Yin, 2003). In a single-case approach a unique phenomenon is studied whereas in the latter

approach more than one case is studied. The multiple-case approach was preferred, based on the nature of this current phenomenon; hence two schools were involved in this study. The advantage of the multiple-case approach is that it allowed me to establish whether the findings of one case or school occur in the other case for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication) since each case may have similar results (a literal replication) or predict contrasting results (*ibid*).

The concerns associated with the use of multiple-case approaches, highlighted by Yin (2003), are that they require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single or independent researcher. Further, the evidence is often considered to be more compelling, and the overall study is regarded as more robust. In order to overcome these problems, I considered a multiple-case as a multiple experiments whereby replication logic was followed by means of asking about the same phenomenon across cases to ensure that every case served a specific purpose within the overall scope of the study.

Case studies in general do, however, have some measure of weakness areas. Case study is prone to problems of observer bias especially if it relies on an individual's memory since it is not easily open to cross-checking. Also, the results obtained from a case-study cannot be generalised except where other researchers see their application (Nisbet & Watt as cited in Cohen *et al*, 2007). To counteract these possibilities, I remained vigilant in terms of choosing knowledgeable respondents and appropriate instruments so as to obtain data which captures the meaning of what the study is all about.

3.2.5 Case selection

In their argument Cohen *et al* (2007) emphasised that the selection of cases in a case study is extremely important because researchers who do case studies focus on the “significant few rather than the insignificant many”. Hence, the identification of the two schools as cases for this study was based on my desk work at the district Department of Education's curriculum and assessment office. This is where schools' 25% CASS marks and their final examination marks for grade 12 from 2008 to 2010 in physical science and mathematics were obtained to identify their correlation, according to Sigh's (2004) postulates that CASS marks are 20% or more above the

final marks. Therefore, schools were selected as cases with the highest correlation in these two subjects in terms of percentage CASS marks versus percentage of final exams marks which fell within the research area.

3.2.6 Case descriptions

3.2.6.1 School A

School A is a rural school situated easterly about 10 kilometres away from East London. It has a modern school building at the centre of the rural town with an enclosed wall. The school population is 315 learners and 12 teaching staff. The teaching staff consists of 1 principal, 2 HoDs and 9 teachers. There is a total of 7 male and 4 female teaching staff.

The school operates from grade 8 to grade 12. There are 2 grade 8 classes, 2 grade 9 classes and 3 classes each for grades 10, 11 and 12. In the grade 12 classes, there are 9 learners in the physical science class, 20 learners in the commence class and 26 learners in the history class. This indicates that there are fewer learners offering physical science and mathematics as compared to the other two streams in this school. This school has been battling with regards to the matric pass rates in both physical science and mathematics over the past few years.

3.2.6.2 School B

The profile of school B is not that much different from school A. It is about 8 kilometres east of school A. It is situated on the outskirts of a rural area with old but un-dilapidated classroom blocks. It has a learner population of 291. There are 2 HoDs, 7 teachers and 1 principal. In terms of their gender there are only 3 males and the rest are females.

The school operates from grade 8 to grade 12 with 1 class each for grades 8 and 9 learners and 2 classes each for grades 10, 11 and 12. There are two streams in grade 12 with a total of 17 learners doing physical science and 22 learners taking mathematics. This shows that there are learners doing physical science but doing mathematical literacy rather than mathematics. The academic performances in terms of matric results of this school were not good in the past two years.

3.2.7 Sampling of respondents within each case study school

A sample is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons that together comprise the subject of one's study (Gray, 2004) since it is rarely possible to include all the population in the cases in the study. Respondents were sampled purposively within each case study school (Cohen *et al*, 2000). It consisted of the grade 12 teachers and HoDs who respectively teach and moderate physical science and mathematics subjects, which are regarded as 'killer subjects' due to their high number of failures (DBE, 2010; SM & L, 2010).

The choice of the grade 12 class was based on the fact that it is the exit point of the FET (Further Education and Training) band where learners' matriculation results determine their options for university entry, bursaries, career choice, and labour market prospects or they simply increase the unemployment numbers. The number of respondents is shown below.

Table 3.1: The schools and respondents included in the study

School A		School B		
Respondent	Number	Respondent	Number	Total
HoD	1	HoD	1	2
Physical science teacher	1	Physical science teacher	1	2
Mathematics teacher	1	Mathematics teacher	1	2
Total	3	Total	3	6

The table 3.1 above indicates that a total of six respondents who are currently teaching or moderating grade 12 classes were involved in this study. In each school, one physical science teacher, one mathematics teacher, and one HoD who moderates both physical science and mathematics took part in the study. The sample size was kept to a minimum because in this qualitative study I was looking more for quality rather than quantity and more for information-richness than information value.

Therefore, I chose these six respondents as sample units since they were in a position to give information that was vital in response to the questions posed by the research study on CASS practices. This notion of information-richness to guide my decision on respondents is supported by Yin (2003) when he writes that the logic and power of purposefully sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases and respondents from which one can learn a great deal of importance for the purpose of the study.

3.3 NEGOTIATION OF ENTRY

The process of gaining access as argued by Hornsby-Smith (1998), involves “continuous negotiation, bargaining, and establishing trustful relationships with the gate keepers and those being studied.” It is on this note that I had to negotiate access through the levels of bureaucracy of the school (that is, from the Principal, HoDs and SGB) and the Department of Education in order to make myself known through proper channels so as to obtain rich data.

Based on the above, a letter was sent to the District Education Department Office to explain my goals and intentions about the research study as well as the schools, the teachers and the HoDs’ involvement. In turn, the District Education Department approved my request in the form of a letter (Appendix E). Further, a written permission letter (Appendix A), outlining the purpose of the study, and an introductory letter from the University of Fort Hare via my supervisor, were forwarded to the principals who are the gate-keepers and accounting officers of the schools. These documents requested permission to use their schools as research sites, which they permitted in writing (Appendix B). The respondents, after site approval, were verbally approached initially, followed by a formal written approach (Appendix C). They were also sent consent forms (Appendix D) to request their participation in the study. The verbatim approach was to make sure that those respondents who may not read the letters may still know the content within whilst the consent forms, which explain their rights as participants, were to ensure their full knowledge and cooperation to avoid any possible tension, aggression, resistance or insecurity in the course of the study.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

In this study, I first engaged in a pilot study before embarking on the main study so that I could think well in advance about the procedures and processes, as well as the analysis of the results. A pilot study is viewed as a 'dress rehearsal' for the main investigation (Strydom, 1998). Through this, I was able to pre-test my research instrument in order to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the questions and to check their relevance and validity. Thus, irrelevant questions that made the interview too long were identified and eliminated and questions that were not worded properly were adjusted. Moreover, the rubric and checklist for document analysis were also pre-tested to see if some parts were not necessary or missing. According to Gray (2004), it is through a pilot study that research instruments, such as interview schedules, can be modified if certain questions appear to be ineffective. This became useful and allowed me to obtain relevant and focused instruments and checklists for the document analysis in the main study.

Also, it gave me the opportunity to test the working condition of the voice recorder I was going to use in the main research and how best to use it to minimise its influence on the respondents. I conducted this pilot study at a nearby school where I was able to correct all shortcomings, refine my instruments, iron out my own mistakes, sharpen my questioning, listening and observing skills and practice the transcriptions to increase the reliability and validity of the data from the main study.

3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

In this study, triangulation was used to cover the collection of materials in as many different ways and from many diverse sources as possible (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006). Cohen *et al* (2000) support this approach of triangulation as they argued that the more methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher's confidence in the findings confirmed by such methods. This led me to obtain data from the teachers and HoDs through semi-structured interviews and from document analysis, documents such as the teachers' and learners' portfolios and assessment policy documents. Although the study was about the teachers' CASS practices using data triangulation, I was able to approach the phenomenon from different angles for better

understanding. As a result, it enabled me to compare and contrast the responses from the teachers during the data analysis and the interpretations (see Chapter 4).

3.5.1 Semi-structured interview

An interview, as described by Cohen *et al* (2000), “involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interactions between individuals.” Although interview is verbal, its natural way of interaction with respondents whilst the researcher has a specific purpose and aim for the conversation which is relevant to the research objective in mind, made interview suitable to this study. In support of this, Kelly (2006) states that the interview conduction is a natural form of interacting with respondents and, as such, it gave me the opportunity to get to know my respondents quite intimately and to understand how they think and feel. According to Yin (2003), an interview is nevertheless the most vital source of case study information due to its achievement of rich data. Building from this, I conducted interviews as the main data collection method in an attempt to understand the world from the respondents’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (Patton, 2002).

The specific method of interviewing that was relevant and that I employed in this study was through face-to-face, semi-structured interview. I was free to intervene and seek “clarification or further explanation” (Yin, 2003) from the respondents for a better understanding of their CASS practices in the identified schools. During the process of interviews, I was able to ask probing questions as the conversation developed to ensure that all the areas of interest to the study were covered. According to Patton (2002), probes are used to deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and depth of responses, and give clues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired.

In a semi-structured interview, it is essential to develop in advance an ‘interview schedule’ (the instrument) which contains a list of key topics and perhaps subtopics framed in question form to ensure that the right questions are asked with regard to the study (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006).

In this study, the principles of a good interview schedule were followed closely as suggested by Neuman (2006). This enhanced the quality of my instrument (Appendix F) because I ensured that:

- the questions were clearly worded and unambiguous, so the teachers and the HoD's had no difficulty in understanding them;
- the questions were not double-barrelled, that is, no two or more questions were joined together to create confusion for the respondents;
- most of the questions were open-ended to allow for flexibility and probing in more depth; and
- the questions were not sensitive or personal and had no double negatives to restrict willingness and understanding from the respondents.

In line with the above principles, the respondents had the chance to formulate their own opinions, responses and insight individually and their flow of the conversation during the interview was encouraged as a result of the quality of the instrument (Section 3.7.1)

Despite the principles I followed, Patton (2002) made it clear that “No matter what style of interviewing is used, and no matter how carefully one words interview questions, it all comes to naught if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed.” Based on this I used a combination of voice recordings and note-taking (field notes) to record the data during the interviews. The use of a voice recorder was decided upon by the individual respondents. During the interview sessions, five respondents out of the six respondents (5 out of 6) agreed to the use of the voice recorder. This allowed me to capture all the interview proceedings. With the other un-recorded interview, I wrote very fast and prolonged the interview session in order to capture fully all the conversation.

Greenfield (2002) suggests that even though voice recorder use in interviews aids in making the documentation of data independent, it must be done after at least the first five minutes of the interview in order not to make respondents edgy, and to create a relaxed atmosphere. This advice was followed and the respondents who granted permission were more relaxed. As part of my note-taking, I made use of direct

observation while listening attentively as the interviews were unfolding, by looking for changes in body language including laughter, hand movements, eye contractions, gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, and so on. These observations were found necessary because they helped me to harness some of the contextual factors that were not verbalised. I understood that this strategy of note-taking must be done in a manner that would not obstruct the process of the interview hence this form of observation took place in a natural and normal way according to Henning's (2004) advice.

However, since in a qualitative study the researcher serves as a data collection instrument, I had to be aware of problems associated with the interview in general and the semi-structured interview in particular in order not to take them for granted. It has been argued that the construction of an interview schedule may be biased by the interviewer's view of the world (Henning, 2004) and that transcribing from words to text will inevitably lose data from the original live interview situation, hence there is a potential for distortion and the reduction of complexity (Cohen *et al*, 2000) .

To overcome these forms of bias and distortion, I followed the recommendation that the interview must not be analysed for content only but must also include some aspect of discourse analysis (act to show how certain discourse is deployed to achieve certain effects) so that possible hidden meanings created during the interview could be highlighted (Henning, 2004). Based on this, I made every effort in formulating the interview questions to keep them as objective as possible and I was careful in data analysing to limit bias which can influence the study.

Further, Terre Blanche *et al* (2006) warns that excessive use of probing questions makes the respondents feel intruded upon thereby diminishing the likelihood and the willingness to entering into a deeper exploration of the issues. This I understood and used probing questions when there was an indication that the respondent had become comfortable with the interview situation, thus not to threaten respondents with too many probing questions and thereby blocking the easy flow in answering questions.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Documents, such as the teacher's master portfolio containing records and planning of work, the learners' portfolios containing various assessment tasks, learners' work books and assessment policy documents like the subject assessment guidelines (SAGs) for physical science and mathematics, were obtained willingly from the teachers as the second data collection method. According to Terre Blanche *et al* (2006) documentary sources can include letters, newspaper articles, official documents, and books that can be suitable and useful in all forms of qualitative research. As explained by Gray (2004), in exploring organisational records, reliability can be improved as the data is compared with other sources. In line with this, the documents were used to verify interview impressions gained and serve as references to correlate the evidence received from the teachers and the HoDs for the purpose of validity. This gave me the chance to use a rubric and checklist (Appendix H) to look into teachers' assessment tasks given to the learners and how they led into CASS purposes as compared with assessment policies, interviews and literature.

It has been argued that the studying of existing documents has an advantage of being reviewable repeatedly and, therefore, it helps the researcher to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage (Gray, 2004). In support of the above notion, Yin (2003) posits that documents used in case studies are the most important because of their explicit role in any data collection to corroborate and augment evidence from other subjects.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

McNeil (2005) refers to data analysis as the familiarisation, immersing and linking together of data to make meaning that the researcher has derived from studying the phenomenon. To Yin (2003) it is a procedure of organising data into "more manageable categories". However, this is not just a mindless technical exercise. It is a description which is more than a mere copy of the original phenomenon being studied but aims, rather, to place real-life events and the phenomena into some kind

of perspective (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006). According to one anthropologist, Geertz, (1973 as cited in Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006), the purpose of interpretive data analysis is to provide 'thick description', which means a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions, and contexts that constitute the phenomenon under study. Thus, analysing qualitative data as seen by Bell and Opie (2002) is a "sophisticated and taxing process" which demands "hard, concentrated effort, a clear mind and an intuitive approach to the data."

By this I understand that I must prevent the dilemma of influencing the data based on my beliefs, values and perceptions in the production, analysis and interpretation of the data.

In this study, Terre Blanche *et al*'s (2006) five data analysis steps or procedures were strictly followed to analyse the data which emerged from the interviews and the document analysis.

3.6.1 Familiarisation and immersion

After I finished gathering the raw data from the interviews, those on voice recorder were listened to repeatedly to gain familiarity with the contents for successful transcription. Since transcription involves making a written record of an interview for data analysis (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011), it allowed me to turn each recorded interview into a verbatim transcript that captured both the words spoken by me and the respondents. This was necessary since I cannot interrogate and deal with the data in voice format. Hennik *et al* (2011) agreed that a verbatim transcript is essential since it captures information in the respondent's own words, phrases and expressions, and reflects his or her emphasis and emotions relating to the issues discussed. Although it was time-consuming, it was worthwhile since accuracy and completeness of each transcript were checked repeatedly to identify any errors, omissions or inaccuracies. This eventually led to rich and quality data.

After obtaining the texts (interview transcripts, field notes and documents), I read them on many occasions to immerse myself in their details, and to get a sense of the texts as a whole before breaking them into parts in order to become familiar with the data in intimate ways. Through this process, I was able to make notes and

brainstorm to know the data well enough in terms of what kinds of things can be found where and what kinds of interpretation are likely to be supported by the data or what are not (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006; Patton, 2002).

3.6.2 Inducing themes

Even though there are no hard-and-fast rules about what sort of themes or categories are best, I used the bottom-up approach in the data analysis. I considered the material or data at hand and tried to work out what the “organising principles are that ‘naturally’ underlie the material” (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006) instead of using ready-made themes and then simply trying to identify instances that fit them.

To realise this, I stuck to the use of themes or categories from the respondents’ own language or words rather than making use of labels which are theoretical but abstract. That is, I foremost identified responses with similar points from different interviews. As I understand it, themes should ideally come naturally from the data, but at the same time they should have a bearing on the research questions. Through this, I was able to identify as many themes as possible as core meanings or patterns to cover a broad array of issues. I played around with them to see what happens when different kinds of themes were used without losing focus on the objective of the study.

3.6.3 Coding

According to Terre Blanche *et al* (2006) during the activity of developing themes, coding of data must start. This includes marking different sections of the data in terms of their relevance to one or more of the themes. As a code means breaking up the data in analytically relevant ways, meaningful sentences, words, phrases or lines which revealed relevant information about the study were identified, broken down into units and assigned names with regards to their similarities and differences. I further revised, restructured and subdivided the data for easier interpretation and evaluation by highlighting them with various colours, ‘cut and paste’ them into pieces, regrouped them and assigned names based on the purpose of the study.

This helped me easily to change, move around or even replace some categories in relation to other clusters for their better understanding and relationship with each other. As supported by Cohen *et al* (2007), clustering the different codes helps to reduce or eliminate irrelevant data and organise the amount of data. To these authors, organising and ordering the data in such a way aids the researcher to be able to answer the research questions.

3.6.4 Elaboration

As per the above, sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3 helped to break up the sequences and brought close together remarks or events which were once far away, to allow fresh views into the data and to compare parts of the texts. This step or section, particularly, is aimed to further explore the themes more closely to capture their 'finer nuances' of meaning not captured initially. This served to offer an opportunity to revise the coding system in small or drastic ways and further allowed me to keep playing around with ways of structuring data until I felt I was able to render a good account of what was actually going on in the data. To McNiel (2005), thorough analysis is needed in a qualitative case study; hence this step was necessarily not to be regarded as sign of failure but a way of making sure no further significant new insights appear to emerge.

3.6.5 Interpretation and checking

This final step is where I then put together my interpretations as a written account of the phenomenon. I went through the interpretations gradually and tried to fix weak points and also to find out contradictions in some points. This provided me with a good opportunity to now reflect on my role in data collection and the creation of interpretations to see where I had just made summaries, where I have got carried away by my own prejudices, and instances where there were over-interpretation of trivial issues.

3.7 RESEARCH QUALITY

3.7.1 Credibility

In this study credibility was enhanced within the individual interview process by making sure that questions were reframed and expanded on different occasions and by making the use of the voice recorder (only one respondent refused permission) to document data for “referential adequacy” (Creswell, 2003). Since data must be interpreted in terms of its context, it is most important that adequate materials be collected to give a holistic view of the context.

In light of this, documents and field notes were used to provide a supportive background to the interview. Also, another strategy I employed to ensure that the study was credible was to spend an extended period of time in the research sites to overcome any distortions that were due to my impact on the contexts, my own biases as well as any unusual effects. This enabled me to understand daily events and relationships in these sites and how those events and relationships were most relevant to the study.

3.7.2 Confirmability

As the issue of trustworthiness is a key to qualitative research and perhaps a case study because of the reliance on data which is generated from either limited or particular samples (Gray, 2004), it was important to identify acceptable process of conducting the study so that the results become consistent with the data. Hence, I ensured confirmability of results through an audit trail (Cohen *et al*, 2007). This was to make sure that the means by which instruments were constructed and data was collected, as well as the entire process, can be tracked to their sources and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations to achieve structurally coherent results was made both explicit and implicit so that any external reviewer can make judgements about the products of this study.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability involves member checks (respondent validation), prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observations, reflective journals (Anfara *et al*, 2002 as cited in Cohen *et al*, 2007). By this, I understood that I must go back to the respondents more than once to check that their findings are dependable by allowing them to verify both the data and their interpretations. At the same time, I did that in a cautious manner so the respondents did not feel privileged as sole commentators on their actions. This made me certain that this study is truly dependable.

3.7.4 Transferability

Schofield (1990 as cited in Cohen *et al*, 2007) suggests that it is imperative to provide a clear, detailed and in-depth description in qualitative research so that others may decide whether the findings from one piece of research can be generalised to another situation. In agreement with the above, I made sure that the research instruments were first of all valid, reliable, fair and comprehensive through the pilot study. The piloting helped me to reframe and re-word some of the questions with a view towards reducing errors in the actual research and to offer the assurance that if the research is carried out again with the same or similar respondents, under the same or similar context or circumstances, its findings would be similar. Thus, this study meets the criterion of consistency but I will leave it with readers and other researchers to apply the findings to other relevant cases.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a researcher, I have the responsibility to consider, protect and recognise the ethical rights of human participants in the study so that no individual suffers any adverse consequences as a result of the study. According to Schwandt (1997), ethics comprises norms and values in our cultural society and further defined it as “moral dilemmas arising from issues of trust, confidentiality, harm, deception consent....” By understanding this, I endeavoured to exhibit a behaviour that was

professionally and academically acceptable throughout the research period and conducted myself honestly in all aspects, since ethical considerations have a particular resonance and need to be considered.

In this regard I was guided by the principles of ethical issues suggested by both Fowler (2002) and Van Rensburg (2001).

3.8.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is defined as a process that involves thoughtful, conscious, self-awareness and self-reflection on the part of the researcher to make explicit his or her potential influence on the research process (Finlay, 2002; Hennink *et al*, 2011). Through this I understand that I must reflect on my own subjectivity, on how my social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact the research process.

This became imperative in the study due to my dual identity of 'insider' as a teacher and 'outsider' as a researcher, since I have been a physical science and mathematics teacher over the past nine years and have been involved in many CASS moderations and other science and maths related activities (workshops, meetings, Science expos); as a result, I am familiar with many East London district schools and teachers. Since I knew my background and behaviour may affect the respondents' responses and influence the direction of the findings, I needed to play a neutral and perfect role and to distance myself as far as possible from any beliefs and values that I had until the end of the study. As I was the key 'instrument' in data gathering in this qualitative study, I put all preconceived ideas aside, constantly took notice of my actions and roles and reflected on them in the entire research process, including data analysis and presentation (see Chapter 4). Being aware of reflexivity enabled me to turn any subjectivity into opportunity (Finlay, 2002) and ensured rich findings in its natural form were obtained.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

I made sure that permission and consent letters (Section 3.3) reached the respondents and that they signed the consent letters. Through these letters, respondents were informed of all aspects of the research such as the brief description of the purpose. They were also informed that participation is voluntary and the information gathered from them would be a matter of concern between only the researcher and the supervisor. Further, the use of a voice recorder during interviews was made clear to all the respondents concerned and they were told that they had the right to allow or disallow it at any point in time.

3.8.3 Protection and welfare of respondents

In order to ensure that the study poses no risk to the respondents, I conducted the interviews in places that respondents identified as safe because I have the obligation to protect the respondents from physical or mental harm by enforcing confidentiality. As a result, five of the interviews took place at the research sites in the venues regarded by the respondents as convenient. However, one of the respondents preferred to be interviewed at home and I respected that.

According to Arksey and Knight (1999), confidentiality is about not disclosing the identity of respondents nor the research site, and not attributing comments to them which will allow their easy recognition. This required me to use pseudonyms for the purpose of data discussion to ensure privacy and strict anonymity of respondents and the research sites.

3.8.4 Rights to withdraw from investigation

Under no circumstances did I force the respondents to participate or continue unwillingly with the study. By adhering to this principle, I constantly urged respondents to quit at any point in time they feel like so doing without being subjected to any form of discrediting. They were not discriminated against nor unfairly treated on the basis of age, class, gender, ethnic group, or religion. Even though none of the respondents withdrew from the study, there were cases where

two respondents kept changing scheduled times over and over again and, since they were accommodated and respected as such, they finally and willingly agreed to be interviewed.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explained that this study was conducted in an interpretive paradigm as an attempt to capture the rich detail of the lived world of the physical science and mathematics teachers and their HoDs. As a qualitative study, the methods of collecting and analysing data have been discussed in depth. It has explained how the measures of trustworthiness were applied to ensure the quality of the study and how respondents were addressed prior to, during and after the study with regard to entry negotiations and ethical considerations.

The next chapter deals with data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It is divided into six sections. The first section highlights the demographic characteristics of the respondents based on the distribution of their schools, gender, teaching experience and years of teaching the subjects in the schools. The second section presents on the balance of assessment of learning and assessment for learning practices. The third and fourth sections deal with teachers' complimentary assessments practices. The last two sections present the challenges faced by the teachers and the support needed with regard to assessment of learning and assessment for learning practices in the two schools, followed by the conclusion of the chapter.

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The characteristics of respondents are divided into four categories which are gender, overall teaching experience, the years of teaching the present subjects in the case study schools, the highest academic qualification and the professional qualification.

4.1.1 Distribution of respondents by school and by gender

The study involved a total of six respondents. Their distribution by school and gender is shown in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 : Distribution of respondents by school and by gender

School	<u>Gender</u>		Total
	Male	Female	
A	2	1	3
B	1	2	3
Total	3	3	6

It can be seen from the table 4.1 above that two schools were used as the research sites. In school A there were three respondents, of which two were male teachers and one was a female teacher. In school B, there were also three respondents where one was a male teacher and the other two were female teachers. This shows that in the two schools gender equity is highly regarded with respect to the teaching of physical science and mathematics subjects. But in both schools the Heads of Department (HoDs) for these subjects were males. The assumption might be that the traditional belief that men are better in leadership than women is still popular.

4.1.2 Distribution of respondents by teaching experience and the years in teaching the subject in the schools

The table 4.2 below shows the distribution of respondents by teaching experience and the years of teaching physical science or mathematics in their respective schools. The respondents are assigned pseudonyms for the purpose of data presentation. In school A, the physical science teacher is referred to as **APE1**, the mathematics teacher is **AME2**, and the Head of Department (HoD) who moderates both subjects in school A is **AHD3**. The respondents in school B are known as follows: the physical science teacher is **BPE4**, the mathematics teacher is **BME5** and the Head of Department moderating both subjects in school B is **BHD6**.

Table 4.2: Distribution of respondents by teaching experience and the years in teaching the subject in the schools

Respondents	Teaching experience	Years in teaching the subject in the school
APE1	19 years	16 years
AME2	18 years	8 years
AHD3	24 years	13 years
BPE4	19 years	9 years
BME5	20 years	12 years
BHD6	19 years	19 years

Data in table 4.2 shows that all the six respondents are experienced teachers. The minimum years of teaching experience is 18 years and the most experienced respondent is 24 years. It could be assumed that the respondents have been assessing their learners for many years.

The above table further illustrates that in both schools the teachers and their HoDs have been involved in the teaching and moderating of the subjects in the same school for at least more than 7 years. This shows that all the respondents are very familiar with their schools and how continuous assessment practices unfold over the years. Also, the assumption is that the HoDs are aware of the teachers' assessment practices since they have been repeating the assessment cycle for a minimum of 8 years and a maximum of 19 years.

4.1.3 Distribution of respondents by highest academic qualification

The distributions of respondents by their highest academic qualification are tabulated below.

Table 4.3: Distribution of respondents by highest academic qualifications

Respondent	Highest academic qualification
APE1	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)
AME2	Teachers Diploma in Education
AHD3	Bachelor of Education (Honours)
BPE4	Bachelor of Education (Honours)
BME5	Bachelor of Science (BSc.)
BHD6	Bachelor of Science (BSc.)

As shown in table 4.3 above, two of the respondents had Bachelor of Sciences, two of the respondents had Bachelor of Education (Honours), one Bachelor of Education and only one respondent obtained only the Teachers Diploma in Education. This shows that the respondents were well educated enough to be knowledgeable on education assessment and its practices. However, four of the six respondents have no higher qualification in physical science or mathematics subjects so one can assume that they rely on their extensive experiences of teaching.

4.1.4 Distribution of respondents by professional qualification

The table 4.4 below displays the distribution of respondent by their professional qualification.

Table 4.4: Distribution of respondents by professional qualifications

Respondents	Professional qualification
APE1	National Diploma in Education
AME2	Advanced Certificate in Education (Maths Literacy)
AHD3	Advanced Certificate in Education (Leadership)
BPE4	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed)
BME5	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed)
BHD6	National Diploma in Education (NPE)

The table 4.4 above shows that two of the respondents have the National Diploma in Education, two other respondents have a Bachelor of Education, and the other two

respondents have an Advance Certificate in Education. The assumption is that all the respondents have acquired professional education certificates and, therefore, they have been taught the theory of assessment in education and can be expected to reflect that in their practice.

4.2 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING PRACTICES

It has been argued (c.f. Chapter 2, sections 2.3.1.3 and 2.3.2.2) that teachers struggle to strike a balance between assessing learners to fulfil accountability requirements, a practice termed ‘assessment of learning’, and assessing learners for diagnostic purposes to guide learning, a practice called ‘assessment for learning’. Respondents were asked about their assessment practices and the data shows that there were activities that are consistent with the two conceptualisations of assessment. However, evidence also shows a mixed picture. **AHD3** said,

a learner who fails CASS [PoA] has already failed in advance the final exams. It's clear so as a teacher you have to assist your learners to at least do well in CASS then little effort at the end of the year the learner can make it. This department want pass pass whether its rural school or town school so you have to help otherwise you'll all the time be seen as a bad teacher who doesn't know anything then they will keep on visiting visiting but with no direct help. (AHD3, Data set 1)

It can be seen from the above quotation that the teachers make sure their grade 12 learners acquire higher CASS marks for the programme of assessment (PoA) at the end of the year because they feel that, that is what the Department wants. There are two elements in **AHD3**'s response. One shows recognition that, in assessment, learners have to pass. Hence **AHD3** refers to ‘...assist your learner...’ However, the notion of *assist* can be interpreted in one or two ways. One is that the teacher assists the learner to learn. The other is that the teacher assists the learner to score higher marks by repeating the same test. This was evident in **APE1**'s statement when she said “...I do not do it like some teachers do it ... If they [learners] fail they give them the

same test again. When they pass... then they record the marks..." **APE1**'s response is close to the second aspect of **AHD3**'s second point which is that, while learners learn, there is also pressure to meet accountability requirements of CASS.

The balance between assessment of learning and assessment for learning is more clearly spelt out by **BPE4** when she says,

I don't focus strictly on CASS work [PoA]. They have to balance with other assessments. Because I must have the CASS requirements since I cannot go to moderation with empty files and my learners won't have their 25% marks needed to be given certificate...I can't ignore the other assessments like class work, home works, short test and all other forms of assessments work then it's means my learners cannot do well also in the CASS work and final exams (**BPE4, Data set 1**).

It is evident from **BPE4**'s response that assessment of learning is done in order for the learners to acquire their 25% PoA, and at the same instance assessment for learning is done based on two important reasons. On one hand, as argued by **BPE4**, it could be interpreted that 'assessment for learning' is practiced so that the learners will be well prepared to do 'assessment of learning' tasks since they will have opportunities of practising similar tasks before the main tasks which will be part of their PoA. For example, if a teacher wants to give a test as part of learners' PoA, he or she will initially administer other tests as a means of getting the learners ready for that PoA test. On the other hand, assessments for learning tasks are administered so that the learners will be able to do well in their final examination because, through these practices, they will be exposed to various kinds of questions, which they will learn how to tackle before the final examinations.

Another perspective on balancing assessment of learning and assessment for learning can be seen from the explanation given by **APE1** that,

...if you [teacher] jump without assessing for learning and now it's time for assessment of learning, they [learners] won't perform well because of lack of assessing them often with small small works. This can help and show [the

teacher] that they are not prepared for such big assessment for reporting. So the one thing that I do is, if I see that there are still need for assessment for learning, I continue with that as much as possible and make time for that until I see that at least they can do formal work (APE1, Data set 1).

For **APE1** the balance in assessment of learning and assessment for learning lies partly in making sure that the informal assessment is designed to prepare learners for the formal assessment of learning. This understanding does not appear to show that assessment for learning is carried out to help learners learn.

APE1 further states that,

It's not really to concentrate on this one or that one. It's just knowing that both play a role...{pulse for a while} they both play a role. If you don't give enough time to one, the other assessment will show that you're not doing well on the other. So in my class I try to have both assessments (APE1, Data set 1).

This citation further demonstrates that the teacher believed that practicing of CASS does not mean to lean towards one aspect at the expense of the other but the combination of both concepts in order to acquire information to report on learners' achievement and also to aid learning.

Even though the teachers depict a good picture and affirmed strongly that they practice both assessment of learning and assessment for learning in CASS, the argument put forward by the HoDs in the two schools contradicts their claim above. For example, **AHD3** revealed,

... [teachers] just focus on the formal ones. They ignore the informal ones. When you take the learners work books you find out that they ignore them. They give just few [informal assessment tasks] and also don't mark or check them... (AHD3, Data set 1).

This response demonstrates that despite the teachers' understanding of the need for both assessment concepts and practices, they are more interested in assessment of

learning than assessment for learning. Although **AHD3** did not say why, in assessment practices, the teachers only focus on assessment of learning, it was made clear by **BHD6** that *“it’s because the CASS work [assessment of learning tasks as PoA] is the one that will determine their [learner] final mark at the end of the year rather than other class works or home works... .”* as a result of which the teachers deem it extremely necessary. Further, from **AHD3’s** response, it shows that even if the teachers manage to give some assessment for learning tasks to learners, they fail to mark and check them. Hence, they do not use such assessment tasks to give constructive feedback to their learners and help establish strategies which could be used to improve learning.

In support of the HoDs’ argument, the documental analysis, such as the learners’ portfolios and workbooks, shows that practices which lead to assessment for learning in the two schools were almost negligible. It was found, in fact, that assessment for learning tasks were not only few in most cases but were haphazardly done. The teachers’ practices were more focused on the assessment of learning tasks which form learners’ programme of assessment (PoA) as well as teaching. Therefore, it could be argued that there is a lack of balance between the two CASS concepts.

4.3 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES COMPLIMENTARY TO ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Data presented above shows that some teachers’ assessment practices accommodate both assessment of learning and assessment for learning requirements. The set of data below shows evidence of a rather one-sided approach to assessment, however, one that is preoccupied with fulfilling accountability requirements at the expense of assessment that is deliberately designed to assist learning.

4.3.1 Practice 1: Consultation of policy documents

There were respondents who appeared to be preoccupied with meeting the demands in the official policy documents. In the words of **BPE4**,

Well, according to assessment policy document I can select the knowledge level; know the breakdown of topics in percentages or weighting as they appear in the final exams and also the number of tasks and type of tasks per term that are required for CASS are known. (BPE4, Data set 1)

This means that the teacher is aware of what is in the policy of the SAG and strives to implement it. When cross-referencing to Chapter two (sections 2.4.1 & 2.6), it can be seen that the SAG policy puts emphasis on assessment of learning and is silent on assessment for learning. **AME2** raises some concerns about the SAG policy, when he said,

...you see the policy documents of assessment for maths, I don't know about others but they are empty. They don't have much information about assessment tasks and questions but I make sure they are in my portfolio because department officials want to see them in. (AME2, Data set 1)

Although **AME2** did not elaborate on what extra information is required, it can be assumed that the emphasis is on assessment of learning. However, his response above displayed two-fold meanings. One is that the respondent seems to demonstrate that the teachers do not consult and interact with the policy documents supplied by the Department. Nor do they implement what is proposed by the policies because they lack certain assessments tasks and questions. On the other hand, the respondent proves that the teachers keep the policy documents in their portfolios to give the impression to the departmental officials that they do start their assessment practices from the documents but, in practice, they are not used as a guide.

Similarly, respondent **BHD6** also attested to the first argument put forward by **AME2** above by saying,

...a teacher fails to consult the assessment guidelines...so there is that tendency [of teachers' not using the policy documents] but ideally they are supposed to consult the guidelines and other policy documents. (BHD6, Data set 1)

Despite the fact that both respondents, **AME2** and **BHD6**, revealed that some teachers do not make use of the assessment policy documents, **BHD6**, who is HoD in school B, seems not convinced with the fact that the documents lack information concerning assessments and hence they cannot be used as a guide. Although respondent **BHD6** did not elaborate further, it can be assumed that he canvases for the teachers to draw from the policy documents in whatever they do concerning assessments.

4.3.2 Practice 2: Setting and planning of assessment tasks

Even though the documental analysis shows that SAGs for both mathematics and physical science do not provide samples of assessment tasks as mentioned by some of the respondents above, they contain brief discussions on how teachers should set or construct valid and reliable assessment tasks with the correct spread of learning outcomes (LOs), assessment standards (ASs) and cognitive abilities for their learners.

Interviews revealed that the respondents set assessment of learning tasks from past exam papers with no consideration given to the constructs and weighting of the learning outcomes and assessment standards. For example, respondent **APE1**, with undertones, explains that,

I don't set my own questions. I don't like setting; if I have to set I always leave it till last moment. So for me it's easier to just take whatever is there. Previous question papers and gets my guide from them. Sometimes I just take them and cut and paste them. (APE1, Data set 1)

In addition, respondent **BPE4** contends that,

When I'm to set for test, I first look for different question papers [past exams papers]. I collect different questions on the topic I have treated then I do cut and paste as my test. (BPE4, Data set 1)

The quotations above indicate that the respondents do not construct their own assessment tasks, from which it could be assumed that they lack the ability to develop their own questions relevant to their learners' situation but rather assemble the questions from the past examination papers. The responses further highlight that the teachers rely on the 'cut and paste' method of setting assessment tasks which may not give them time to consider the spread of learning outcomes, assessment standards and the cognitive balance that a particular assessment of learning task must meet, as demanded by literature and the assessment policy. If they do not set their own questions, it may mean that the assessment is not for diagnostic purposes as it may not be aligned to learner needs.

Interestingly, the practice of 'cut and paste' is highly endorsed by the HoDs as well. For instance, in school B, **BHD6** responded in defence of the teachers as follows,

...there is more tendency of cut and paste because partially it saves you time so that you have more time to do other thing that you are supposed to do giving the workload at hand. And also when you cut and paste questions it is really the question paper that have come in exams before and that is what you are expected to come in any case, just a bit of variation here and there. (BHD6, Data set 1)

This citation gives evidence that the teachers use the easiest and fastest way of setting assessment tasks and, as a result, it could be argued that they take for granted assessment planning which is necessary for them to produce valid, fair and reliable assessment tasks. This became evident in **AME2's** statement when he said,

...I look at the question papers and I select the questions I want then I photocopy, cut and paste then they are ready to be written by the learners (AME 2, Data set 1).

AME2's response confirms the above argument that in practice he does not consider planning to be an essential part of his assessment task setting since his explanation could mean that it takes a matter of a few minutes to finish setting assessment tasks. The second reason given by **BHD6** points to the fact that past question papers are viewed as the genuine and most standardised questions and hence there is no reason to worry about learning outcomes, assessment standards, cognitive abilities and planning when using them. This notion was also supported by **AHD3** by saying that "...so teachers need to use those questions [past exams papers] to prepare the learners. After all those papers are the standardised". This could be interpreted that the respondent has developed much trust for all the questions which appear in the past exam papers as a standard for realising assessment of learning tasks, even if those tasks may not fulfil validity and reliability criteria for their learners. Yet, cross-referencing to Chapter two (sections 2.1.4 & 2.4.2) show that assessment of learning tasks should be standard by satisfying constructs such as fairness and validity, as well as adequate planning (Killen, 2003).

However, the documental analysis, such as that of teachers' and learners' portfolios of work, revealed that due to the direct lifting of questions from past exam papers through the 'cut and paste' method, has rather misled some respondents from constructing relevant, valid and standard assessments of learning tasks for their learners. For instance, the projects, investigations and control tests were mostly lacking the weighting of learning outcomes and assessment standards, the constructs like validity and fairness and the cognitive balance for the entire group of learners. It appears that the teachers comb through various question papers to look for low pitched questions that require learners to use low level understanding and few applications, and they deliberately leave out the higher pitched level of questions, a practice which could lead learners to acquire higher marks to boost their PoA marks. Although respondents like **BPE4**, **BME5** and **APE1** did mention in the interviews that they use past questions in order not to set easy questions for their learners, in practice, as evident from an analysis of the documents that was not the case. It could be argued that this method of setting assessment tasks from previous exam papers may give an advantage to those learners who might have seen the past question papers and their memoranda. The teachers clearly do not see the

need for planning thoroughly and setting their own assessment task questions filled with all the necessary constructs that meet their learners' circumstances.

4.3.3 Practice 3: Selective marking of assessment tasks

The majority of the respondents were selective in their marking of assessment and learning tasks. They mark only the assessments tasks that become explicit as PoA. This was expressed by **AHD3** in school A when he explains that,

as for assessment of learning tasks, like formal works for CASS are strictly marked by the teachers themselves using memos or rubric for consistency and to avoid marking errors because those works go for external moderations.

(AHD3, Data set 1)

This respondent's point demonstrates that marking is done properly with the use of criteria only if the assessment of learning tasks would be used as PoA. This practice was made evident by **APE1** as well when she responded that "*only tasks that I mark myself thoroughly with memorandum or rubrics are the formal CASS works...*". Even though she did not elaborate further, it could mean that the rest of the assessments of learning tasks are either not marked at all or marked without any criteria. This could be interpreted that the learners do not have the opportunity to see how they fare in other assessment of learning tasks and also may not know if the teacher unfairly marked their tasks. It appears that, because the PoA tasks and their marking criteria per policy are to be sent for cluster moderation for further scrutiny, the teachers are much aware of that and, therefore, want to avoid the situation whereby their colleagues from other schools could discover their weaknesses and incompetences in their marking. Hence, they vividly mark those PoA tasks and with criteria. This similar notion corroborates **AME2's**, who mentioned that,

I have to make sure the marking of learners CASS work is standard so that when I go for cluster moderation, they don't find errors with my marking....I do this by sticking to the memo throughout and not ignore [the criteria] and rush.

(AME2, Data set 1)

However, the document analysis of portfolios supports respondents **AHD3**, **APE1** and **AME2**'s arguments above. It revealed that not just any assessment tasks given to learners are marked by the teachers except the PoA tasks. It could be assumed that this selective marking practice gives learners an indication of which assessment tasks are worth doing and which ones are considered unimportant.

Another reason for selective marking has been highlighted by respondent **BME5**. She argues that;

with marking I take my time so that I can mark fairly with memo because when you give learners their scripts they compare with their friends therefore one has to be careful when marking. You don't just mark anyhow and even for cluster moderation it can show if you mark reckless. (BME5, Data set 1)

Even though the later part of **BME5**'s rationale for consistently marking assessment of learning tasks is in agreement with that of respondents above, she disclosed that the learners' ability to identify inconsistent and unfair marking is the reason she considers taking so much time to mark assessment tasks with the criteria. This could be assumed that had it not been the learners' ability to compare marked tasks and the cluster moderations, the teachers would not mark the PoA tasks with such vigilance as they claimed.

Again, from the document analysis of teachers' and learners' portfolios, it was revealed that, although the control test marking was consistent in both subjects in both schools, the marked scripts for projects and investigations were inconsistently marked by all the teachers in the two schools. Hence, this contradicts the respondents' claim that they do mark all the PoA tasks thoroughly. However, it was observed that the reason the teachers were consistent in marking their control tests was that they took questions and memoranda directly from past exam papers and then strictly marked accordingly. But in the case of investigations, assignments and projects, the teachers use the general rubrics and memoranda from textbooks. As a result, those rubrics and memoranda do not match with the questions. They contained characteristics which were too broad and generic instead of being small enough to describe in detail what was expected and what marks were to be awarded

per activity. This misled the learners in the kind of answers they provided and further led teachers to award higher marks to some learners due to their failure to break down what is to be assessed into specifics in the marking rubrics and memoranda.

Cross-referencing to Chapter two (sections 2.4.2 & 2.4.3), it is envisaged that before any assessment task is used, an assessment criteria or procedure for scoring that focuses on the intended learning outcomes and assessment standards should be prepared to guide the process of judging the quality of learners' performances (DBE, 2011 and Vandeyar and Killen, 2007.c.f Chapter 2). This means that those criteria or tools - rubrics, memoranda or checklists - must be relevant and match the entire assessment task to ensure fair, common and consistent standards are applied in marking, yet the responses above and the portfolios of work reveal otherwise. The findings show that not only do teachers use irrelevant criteria but also do not give learners the chance of seeing their marks, beside the few PoA tasks, from all the tasks they have written, including where they have done right or wrong.

4.3.4 Practice 4: Recording and reporting on assessment

Each respondent has a unique way of recording and reporting on learners' achievements as PoA. The choosing of assessment tasks to form part of the reporting process comes from individual teachers' perspectives rather than per policy. For instance, **BPE4** said,

...I sometimes give them [learners] a second one [task] if I see that they lag behind and didn't do well just to see if they can learn better and do well then I take this best one as CASS since they need more marks at the end of the year to pass. (BPE4, Data set 1)

This quotation above recognises that the respondent in her assessment of learning practices does not administer all the 18 annual assessment tasks as the SAGs postulates and at the same time she does not stick to the minimum of seven (7) PoA tasks, but, rather, she allows the learners to re-write another task only when she felt that they have failed the previous tasks. This indicates that she will only stick to the minimum PoA tasks as soon as the learners pass their first assessments of learning tasks. Also, in terms of recording, she says "... I take this best one..." This notion

could have two meanings since she did not elaborate further on it. It may indicate that between those two tasks, she chooses the second task for recording and reporting irrespective of how individual learners fare, or that she selects the task in which individual learners have performed well.

More so, from another perspective, respondent **BME5** explains as follows,

...in a term, the department needs only one control test but if in a term I can give three control test then I use the good one, the one they have done well as the CASS marks...(BME5, Data set 1)

The above citation for **BME5** seems to stipulate that she does not depend on the learners' previous assessment task performance before administering another task but, rather, she gives learners as many tasks as she has time for before choosing the best performed tasks to be recorded for the learners' PoA. However, during follow-up questions, she added that "*some teachers are selecting what control tests or tasks that the individual learners have done well, but I take the one that all the learners have done well generally.*" This finding shows that the tasks that the majority of the learners have performed well in the term are taken to report on their competencies rather than choosing what individual learners have performed better as practised by other teachers as she disclosed.

Moreover, **APE1**'s method of recording and reporting has some elements akin to both **BPE4** and **BPE5**, except that she sticks to the second assessment tasks irrespective of the learners' performance in the first one. She argued;

The reason why I usually give them two [assessments tasks] is that when you see that they are not grasping yet you are giving them a chance to perform better then you know that the first one even if they don't do well then in the second one they'll probably do better. (APE1, Data set 1)

This citation may suggest that the respondent at all times gives two assessment tasks and then uses the second one to report on learners' achievements. By so doing she may endeavour to give her learners all the pointers and necessary

information they need after the first task in order to pass the second assessment task, or she may even opt to repeat the same tasks.

Interestingly, the account given by respondents **BPE4**, **BME5** and **APE1** above, all point to the fact that in assessment of learning practices the teachers are more concerned with learners attaining high marks than the outcomes, as argued in section 4.3.1 above. As a result, they manipulate the administering, recording and reporting process of assessment of learning tasks to favour their learners.

Nonetheless, respondent **AME2** places more emphasis on the minimum PoA requirements when it comes to recording and reporting and does not endorse the selection of assessment of learning tasks as mentioned by **BPE4**, **BPE5** and **APE1** above. He explains,

...I know when the tasks will be used as CASS requirement. If I am supposed to do let's say two assignments per time, I do them as my CASS so I don't have to be choosing or sorting them to decide which tasks goes for CASS. My CASS works are CASS works... (AME2, Data set 1)

This response from **AME2** indicates that in his assessment reporting, he pre-determined the assessment tasks which form the PoA and follows strictly the minimum of seven assessments of learning tasks. During probing, the respondent contended “...I only give one control test per term if that is what is required [by department]. I don't give more...so if it's control test I know its hundred marks and is for CASS.” This may be assumed that throughout the year, he only administers the seven assessments for PoA and disregards the other assessments of learning tasks. Hence, ‘high-stakes’ are attached to those tasks (Harlen, 2007. c.f. Chapter 2) since his learners have to make sure they pass or face the consequences of not passing because there are no second chances given to them in order to learn from the mistakes of the previous tasks.

Despite the above practices with regard to recording and reporting of assessment tasks, there are respondents who do not administer the assessment of learning tasks

to all the learners but still manage to have marks to record and report as PoA marks. This was observed by respondent **AHD3** by mentioning that,

...so teachers must add recording sheet so that at least I'm satisfied that the learners all have written the tasks and all their scripts are marked and recorded but not cooked marks given to them. (AHD3, Data set 1)

The statement from respondent **AHD3** highlights that even though, as HoD, he tries to prevent the situation whereby his teachers do not give learners tasks, or that they give the tasks but mark and record only a few of the learners' work, he also hinted that there are practices whereby the teachers, instead of giving all the learners assessment of learning tasks and then marking, recording and reporting on the learners' achievement, they rather opt for the easier option by 'cooking the marks'. This means that the respondent is aware that teachers manufacture or conjure the marks for learners even though the learners have not done any assessment tasks.

Surprisingly, documental analysis reveals that, in the teachers and learners portfolios, only one task per minimum PoA requirements is included. Therefore, teachers deliberately do not include one of those first or second chance assessments tasks they mentioned earlier. Thus it may be assumed that only one of those tasks is marked, recorded and placed in the portfolios as a PoA task whilst the other is simply discarded without marking. In defence of this selective marking and recording, **BHD6** said that "*some [assessment tasks] they [teachers] record others they don't. You won't have the time of marking all [tasks] and recording everything...*" This clearly shows that the use of only one task as evidence in the portfolios means that those teachers who repeated the same tasks avoid leaving traces. Furthermore, it transpires that not all the learners have a complete portfolio which contains all the tasks done as assessment of learning. This could imply that such deliberate omission of some learners' tasks and files was done to cover up certain assessment mal-practices.

The above findings prove that the way the teachers in the two schools, record and report on learners' 25% PoA marks, are marked with inconsistencies, teacher

subjectivity and, lack of common procedures. This, therefore, contradicts what DBE (2011.c.f. Chapter 2) proposes that all the 18 assessment of learning tasks must be administered, recorded and used to report on learners' termly report as well as the PoA. Amongst these 18 tasks, the seven minimum PoA tasks which are to be clearly pre-determined, planned and designed by the teacher or Department should be administered once.

Based on the above quotations and the document analysis, it can be seen that teachers have difficulty in terms of assessment of learning tasks management, such as setting, recording and reporting. This was witnessed by **AHD3** when he lamented that "...even the formal one [assessment of learning tasks] some teachers just focus on the CASS requirements [PoA] only, and others struggle to meet the minimum requirements..." This means that teachers are unable to manage even the minimum PoA tasks, let alone the rest of the assessment of learning tasks.

4.3.5 Practice 5: moderation of tasks

There are respondents who administer assessments tasks before sending them for moderation. This was disclosed by **AME2** when he said that;

I try to give him [HoD] before they [learners] write but not always. When I'm busy and getting behind I do let learners write then I mark and give him. It's the same thing. (AME2, Data set 1)

Similarly, respondent **APE1** exercised the same practice as **AME2** and said,

... sometimes I will just tell him that I am going to do test and I don't have enough time, so I will give you when they have finish writing but I do tell him that there will be a test. (APE1, Data set 1)

These quotations demonstrate two-fold meanings. The respondents here seemed to understand that moderating of assessment of learning tasks before or after administering does not make any difference. This could be interpreted in two ways. It can be assumed that their HoDs do not do their work as moderators by checking the standardisation of the tasks, the spread of learning outcomes and assessment

standards, and the alignment of tasks with the work schedules, as well as the criteria before the tasks are allowed to be administered as demanded by the assessment policy; they only check the marking of the tasks. From the above, it can be assumed that assessment tasks are not moderated twice, that is, before learners write them and after the teachers have marked and recorded the marks.

The other assumption could be that the HoDs lack the subject knowledge and expertise in influencing the assessment tasks that the teachers give them. This was evident by respondent **APE1** when she softly said that *“for the HoD, he doesn’t really know about physical science so I don’t get any feedback. What I give him is what I get out there”*. Moreover, it was highlighted in **AHD3**’s statement when he voiced that *“... the HoDs must be subject specialist because if I don’t know a subject I cannot comment much. If something is incorrect I will allow by thinking the teacher is right.”* Thus it can be imagined that the school-based assessment moderation does not serve its purpose of quality assurance, which is essential to reduce teacher subjectivity (UMALUSI 2010. c.f. Chapter 2), due to the lack of subject knowledge by some HoDs.

On the other note, **AME2** and **APE1s**’ responses do not only indicate that teachers fail to plan assessment of learning tasks and their moderation, but also that they do not consider internal or school-based assessments (SBA) moderations as important and useful, as witnessed by **BME5** who argued that *“CASS is good but teachers don’t do it well and properly...”*

In the study, however, there were respondents whose SBA moderations centred on the minimum PoA assessment of learning tasks. This was made evident by respondents such as **BME5**, **AME2** and **AHD6**. They argued as follows:

I give only the control test, investigation, project and assignment that are for CASS and common paper like June exams when I finish marking then I give them to my HoD for moderation. (BME5, Data set 1)

...I only give HoD formal tasks which are for CASS to moderate. (AME2, Data set 1)

No no, I deal with the formal tasks. They will go external; they will be the learners CASS marks. I won't have time to... (AHD3, Data set 1)

The above three citations from **BPE4**, **AME2** and **AHD3** respectively indicate that SBA moderation is restricted to the PoA tasks only. Thus it can be interpreted that besides the seven minimum assessments of learning tasks, the rest of other assessments tasks do not undergo a moderation process or that they are not deemed necessary. However, **AHD3's** response clearly pointed out that the reason for moderating the PoA tasks is that they are sent for cluster or external moderations. This could mean that, without the cluster meeting or moderation which takes place once a term, the SBA moderation for the PoA tasks would not be done as well.

It further transpired that not all the PoA tasks for all the learners are moderated. For instance, **AHD3** explains,

... I take top, bottom and the middle [learner's files according to their academic abilities], then I moderate, then I finally moderate the ten percent (10%) or five learners whose files are taking to cluster CASS moderation. In most schools only the five learners' are moderated and the other learners don't have the files or work or real marks... (AHD3, Data set 1)

The above respondent highlighted how he does his moderation to make sure that his teachers exercise the correct practice as per the policy by purposively selecting other learners' work to moderate as well as the learners whose work goes for cluster moderation. More so, he disclosed how SBA moderations are scaled down to only the five learners (usually 10% of the grade 12 learners per subject) whose portfolios of work accompany the teachers' for the cluster meetings. The later aspect of the response by **AHD3** above can be interpreted in various ways. It may indicate that, in some cases, the teachers only focus on those five learners they deliberately choose to do the assessment of learning tasks for PoA purposes whilst the rest of the learners do not participate in any assessment of learning tasks but still get 'free marks' for PoA through their teachers' marks 'manufacturing' ability, as mentioned earlier in 4.3.4.

In support of the argument above, **BME5** observed that;

...I know of the other teachers....that select only five learners on the day of moderation [cluster], give them tasks to complete, mark and give HoD to moderate the same day, put the tasks in the file, put school stamp and then take them for cluster moderation. All are done in one day... (BME5, Data set 1)

This proves that some teachers use a single day to accomplish the entire assessment tasks setting, moderation and administering process that could take a month, and also confirms the practice of awarding 'free' PoA marks for the learners with the help of HoDs. The documental analysis of portfolios revealed **BME5's** sentiments, since it was observed that the assessment tasks moderated and signed with a green pen (as per departmental requirement) by the HoDs were generally the five learners whom they had prioritised. Also, it was evident that some of the dates of moderated tasks fall on the exact day or a day before the cluster moderations. This indicates that the moderations, in some cases, are done when the teachers are due to attend cluster meetings.

4.4 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES COMPLIMENTARY TO ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Even though it has been argued above that the CASS practices are skewed towards assessment of learning, the set of data below reviews assessment for learning practices as claimed to be practiced by the respondents.

4.4.1 Practice 1: Oral questions in class

There were respondents who assessed their learners through verbal questioning as part of assessment for learning practices to make sure learners understood what was being taught in class. This was evident in respondent **BME5's** statement,

When I go to class..., I ask relevant questions sometimes from Grade 11 work to see how good they are. For example, if I'm teaching a topic like algebra, I go back to previous work through questioning to find out what they understand

and know. What can I do as a teacher? I have to introduce and ask questions otherwise I wouldn't know where to start. (BME5, Data set 1)

The above quotation shows that the respondent asks verbal questions to gather information on the learners' previous knowledge so that she could determine what the learners already know and understand. It further indicates that those verbal questions are aimed at finding out where the teacher can start the lesson. This could mean that the teacher receives feedback through verbal questions and, as a result, she uses it to decide on what to teach in class and also to concentrate on the appropriate part of the lesson or topic which needs more attention.

This form of teacher feedback through verbal questioning was highlighted further by **APE1** by saying that;

If I find out when through questioning that they don't understand, I have to re-start but then I have to change the way I was explaining because it won't help them [learners] doing the same thing again. You might be explaining the same way but may be using diagrams to make them understand what you're saying in another way to make sure they understood you. If you keep on repeating the same thing over and they still don't get it is ineffective teaching. (APE1, Data set 1)

This citation displays two meanings; one is the recognition of using questioning to make adjustment to classroom teaching and learning by changing teaching methods or strategies to enable learners to understand what is being taught; the other is that the teacher evaluates her teaching by avoiding repetitions but to teach and re-teach what matters for learners' understanding. The assumption might be that the teacher uses questioning to influence her teaching more than using it as assessment for learning practice to make sure learners learn. The entire focus is on learners acquiring what is being taught by the teacher.

This over-emphasis on learners' understanding was made evident by **BPE4** by saying that "if I see that they don't understand, ah, ah, ...I can't carry on I have to teach it so that they understand...and try anything for them to understand". Hence, the above responses seem to be beneficial and centred on the teachers and their teaching and do not account for learners' taking responsibility through such questioning to develop better measures in their learning.

Moreover, further probing on the use of questioning in the classroom reveals the following;

for learners its [questioning] helpful because in class now they cannot just sit down and sleep but to think and be attentive to whatever is going on in class. Because they know anytime you can ask them questions on what you are teaching, they concentrate, pay attention and write their own note whilst listening to me. (APE1, Data set 1)

However, the response indicates that the teacher expects learners to participate in class; therefore, one way to reinforce this learner participation is through verbal questioning. The respondent felt that it prevented learners from sleeping and increased their level of concentration. This may imply that the teacher does not give opportunities for learners' interactions but they are only to express their understanding through answering the teacher's questions. This practice contradicts Heritage's (2010) argument in Chapter two about the use of assessment for learning questioning. However, despite the fact that some teachers claim to use questioning to induce learners' understanding, respondent **AHD3** thinks otherwise by disclosing that "...some [teachers] don't care about understanding; they simply want to finish teaching what is in the work-schedule on time or earlier so they continue...". This may suggest that teachers are preoccupied with teaching to finish their syllabus and, as a result, they do not use enough and effective questions in the teaching and learning process.

Although the document analysis reveals no evidence of the above questioning practice due to its verbal nature, Boston (2002.c.f. Chapter 2) posits that the use of verbal questioning and classroom discussion serves as better opportunities for teachers to effect assessment for learning feedback but warned that teachers need to make sure that they ask their learners thoughtful, reflective questions rather than simple and factual ones.

4.4.2 Practice 2: Giving written assessment for learning tasks

Aside the verbal questioning, there are respondents who use written tasks during and after teaching as assessment for learning practice. For example, **BME5** mentioned that;

During teaching I give small small class work to assess who is doing well and who is not doing well. I give work within the period; go around them to see how they are working so I can mark some of their work as they are doing. What I normally do is that I give them examples first...(BME5, Data set 1)

The above response put forward by **BME5** indicates that she assesses by using written tasks, such as class work, to check learners' performance in the classroom. This can be interpreted in one or two ways. It could be deduced that knowing how well learners are performing in class work alone does not serve assessment for learning purposes unless measures are put in place to improve those performances. It could also mean that learners cooperate and take part in the learning process whilst the teacher is checking, monitoring and marking them whilst they are busy working. The assumption is that the teacher gets the chance to give individual learners immediate feedback and directions on what to do and how to improve their learning. This practice may aid individual learner's learning if the respondent's emphasis is not merely on ticking right or wrong answers by marking but that the teacher helps learners to construct their own learning, as the theory postulates in Chapter two (Section 2.8.1).

On the other hand, the response did not account for learners' engaging with one another in the classroom whilst doing assessment for learning tasks so as to discuss or dialogue, interact and share their knowledge amongst themselves as learners, rather than the teacher checking the way individuals do the tasks. It might be assumed that due to teachers' lack of establishing such opportunities for learner engagement, for example, by allowing learners to do the written tasks as a group or peers to have the chance of discussing ideas together, they may not be able to understand everything that their teacher teaches them, and hence, they may find it difficult to apply it to do assessment tasks during teaching. Evidently, **AME2** admitted the above notion and said that "*I do give them [class works] but I stop them if they are taking too much time to finish so that we can move on [teaching]...*". It can be seen that even if the learners struggle to do assessment for learning tasks given during lessons, their teacher does not rely on such feedback to offer them assistance needed but continue to teach instead. This could mean that those tasks are considered to be time-wasting tasks which delay teaching. Moreover, teachers dealing with learners all the time when it comes to written tasks may stir unhealthy

competition amongst learners. Hence, one can assume that the practice of giving class work and other tasks during lessons does not serve assessment for learning purposes, as claimed by some respondents.

Additionally, the other form of written tasks was mentioned by **AME2** when he said that,

...I summarise the whole thing of the day, followed by homework. So that the next day I can start from the homework If I find out that the next day they could not do it then I'm to start again [to re-teach]. It's difficult but what can I do?

(AME2, Data set 1)

Drawing from the above means that giving homework is meant to ensure that learners practice what they have been taught previously so that the teacher can determine how much they have understood the previous topics. This highlights the fact that the teacher gets an indication of whether to continue teaching or to re-teach the previous topic. It may also mean that the teachers mark those tasks in order to know how learners have performed so as to give the needed intervention to aid their learning, yet section 4.2 revealed that marking of assessment for learning tasks was not common practice.

Although, the above assessment for learning tasks such as class works and home works have been argued by some teachers that they give them during the lessons and after lessons to acquire learner related feedback, there are respondents whose purpose of assessing learners for learning is explicitly about mere learner engagement with work. This form of engagement was revealed by **BHD6** by reporting that;

...like mathematics for instance the works [assessment tasks] which are informal are given just to keep the learners busy because if you don't occupy them they turn to be mischievous and do all those silly things in school or after school...(BHD6, Data set 1).

This HoD's statement depicts various meanings and contradicts the above teachers' claims. It points out that teachers simply give assessment for learning tasks, like class work or home work to learners, not because they want to aid their learning and solicit feedback, but as a means of giving learners something to do, regardless of its

purpose and implications. This could indicate that whether learners learn through the assessment tasks or not, is not the primary goal. Further, it could mean that those assessments for learning tasks are given to learners more as a form of establishing class discipline than learning because the teachers know that learners will create a disturbance in class if they are left alone by their teachers. The assumption might be that when a teacher does not feel like doing anything during the day, or when he or she does not want the learners to indulge in any form of misbehaviour at home, he or she simply gives an assessment for a learning task. This may indicate that assessment for learning tasks administration has become a routine practice which Stiggins (2002. c.f. Chapter 2) warned against and, therefore, they are not used to build learners' confidence, produce independent learners, and to support their progress.

4.4.3 Practice 3: Giving of marks and written comments as feedback to learners

There were respondents who mentioned that awarding marks for assessment tasks and also putting comments on marked scripts serve as feedback to learners. As observed by **AHD3**, *“firstly, they [teachers] give marks as feedback then also if they see that a learner obtains 80% you give comments on the scripts just to encourage him or her... .”*

This quotation seems to highlight that teachers believed that allocation of marks for correct answers and no marks for wrong answers or responses instantly indicates to the learners what efforts or responses are accepted and which ones are not. This notion was supported by **BHD6** by saying

the marks that the learners have got...{pulse for a while} serve that purpose. With marks, you can say to a learner, look the highest is so much and you are so much down here... (BHD6, Data set 1)

This gives an indication that whenever a learner's test or task is marked and the total mark of the learner is known, the mark in itself gives the learner the necessary feedback needed in that test or task from which he or she can learn since from the marks they quickly know how they fared in that particular task. The issue of whether

the learners learn from the marks given by their teachers, showing what part of the tasks they got right or wrong, is debatable since they may not know the supposed correct answers as teachers mark without writing down alternate correct answers on the learners' scripts. The implication here could be that some learners would be more interested in the acquisition of marks than focussing on the learning outcomes, as argued by Yorke (2005. c.f. Chapter 2).

Moreover, the second point of **AHD3**'s response above seems to mean that comments are only written for the learners who have scored higher marks. It could be argued, then, that those learners who obtain low marks do not receive any comment and, therefore, they are not encouraged to learn as the other fellow learners. This was made evident by **AHD3** when he further elaborated that "...for weak learners you just have to keep your comment. Because you can't give negative comments. It demoralised..." It could be deduced that teachers' written comments are reserved for good learners whilst the weaker learners receive marks without comments since their teachers are extra careful when it comes to their morale than their poor performances. This issue of not giving negative comments by teachers agrees with what Black and Williams (1998) highlighted in Chapter two (Section 2.3.2.3).

Some of the positive comments that the respondents give when they finish marking their learners' scripts were noted by **BHD6** when he made the following comment,

...you need to put in more effort, pull up your socks, you need to improve for the final exams, you need to put in more effort in order to prepare for external exams etcetera, are given in written... so they [teachers] put in comments as feedback. (BHD6, Data set 1)

Even though the respondent above did highlight some of the written comments presumed to be given by teachers, the documents analysis of learners' marked scripts proves that the practice of commenting on learners' marked scripts is rare. It was evident that only one teacher, **BPE4**, out of the four teachers proved to be consistent in writing comments on almost all the PoA tasks and some tasks in the learners' workbooks. It was found that the comments written by this teacher were mostly single words such as 'satisfactory'; 'average'; 'good' and 'incomplete work'.

More so, those written comments were selective since she only focused on those five learners whose portfolios went for external moderation. This may indicate that the teacher was aware of what the assessment policy guidelines expects and strived to act accordingly. However, the remaining teachers do not write any comments on even the PoA tasks as well as the learners' workbooks which contain class work, home work and short tests, as they claimed during the interviews.

Interestingly, the workbooks of learners have tasks which have not been marked nor commented on by any teacher except **BPE4** who, in few instances, has one word comments. This was witnessed by both HoDs in school A and school B. For instance, **BHD6** answered *"no, no, when I say they put comment I mean I am saying where they are able to find the time, so it's not on everything or every tasks but sometimes"*. This acknowledges that teachers write comments as they wish. Additionally, **AHD3** responded that *"not really comments [given by teachers] but signatures to show some acknowledgement of work [done] but just few teachers do this. Majority don't have time for that"*. Surprisingly, the document analysis of learners' work books shows no evidence of any of the teachers signing learners' assessment for learning tasks as receipts of acknowledgement, as argued by **AHD3**, but rather the signatures of both teachers and their HoDs appear on only the five PoA learners' tasks. The assumption may be that the respondents above were aware of the importance of the combination of marks and written comments on learners' feedback as stipulated in the policy and hence during the interviews they responded as such but in their assessment practices they did otherwise. Also, it can be seen that learners do not benefit from assessment for learning, especially when it comes to written comments and mark allocation as feedback to enhance their learning.

4.4.4 Giving verbal comments and corrections of tasks as feedbacks to learners.

The data shows that there were respondents who depended on verbal comments as a useful means of giving learners feedback. For example, **AME2** made mention that,

...I do give verbal feedback as well as possible. Sometimes some of the learners do surprise you then you need to acknowledge by motivating them.

Most especially when they are improving and you motivate them in class they like it and try to do more... (AME2, Data set 1)

Based on the above response, it could be seen that the teacher praises the learners who improve in assessment tasks in front of their classmates as a means of motivating and encouraging them to perform exceptionally well in the next assessment tasks. He further admitted that such practice is well appreciated by the learners and, as a result, they in turn work harder to earn more of this praise. Even though it was difficult for me as a researcher to trace this form of feedback and the respondents did not elaborate on it, the assumption could be that the respondents may not offer these verbal comments often and that they may be directed at the very few good learners in class. Hence, many of the learners who do not have the capability of improving may not benefit from the comments since the respondent does not provide the whole class with other strategies and measures to influence their learning and improvements.

Moreover, respondent **BME5** in school B seems to use verbal comments to devise strategies and measures for her learners by saying that “...I reprimand those that have done some silly mistakes. Also I talk to them about ways they can improve...” Although the above statement is a bit sketchy, it may be interpreted in two ways. It points out, on the one hand, that the respondent does not condone learning mistakes and therefore warns learners verbally when they do not provide the answers she was expecting. It may be imagined that this practice makes the learners scared and creates a lack of confidence in their learning process since they cannot afford to get questions wrong. Hence, they may adopt the recall of facts or rote learning method.

The other point of **BME5**'s statement could also mean that despite reprimanding learners, she offers advice on how they can do better in their learning by speaking about the step by step directions learners should follow in order to perform better. The practice made evident by respondent **APE1** seems to corroborate with that of **BME5** when she said that,

...I do during break time call them especially the struggling learners...So in such cases, I speak to them to focus on their school work and it is then that I chip in whatever topic or comment I want to clarify in... (APE1, Data set 1)

This quotation shows that the verbal comments for weak learners are done outside the class. This could mean that the teacher wants to devote special time to assist them. Also, the response points out that the teacher motivates the weak learners generally and also gives them specific topics with indications of how they can tackle them. Aside from this good picture, further probing revealed that not only do the teachers give once-off verbal feedback to their learners but that they do not regard them as effective as compared to mark allocations. This notion was disclosed by **APE1** by saying that “...you can’t comment on all their mistakes that is why their works are assigned marks to show wrong or right but I try to say comments anyway”. It transpires that even if verbal comments are used by the respondent, they are casual with no intention or purpose attached as a means of helping learners to make changes in their learning.

There are respondents who do corrections or remedial work so that learners get appropriate feedback. This was confirmed by respondent **AHD3** by saying that,

...the corrections are also done as a means of feedback because, you mark, you give script then where they have gone wrong you bring out the correct answer, this they [learners] now become focus and know what to do when the same or similar questions re-surface. (AHD3, Data set 1)

The citation here shows that after marked scripts are given back to the learners, the teacher further goes through the tasks with the learners to identify all the correct responses. This could be interpreted that the teacher discusses the questions and answers with the learners as explained by **AME2** when he responded that,

yes, when they get questions wrong I have to go through the questions with them so that they know where they went wrong and therefore write the right answers. (AME2, Data set 1)

The second aspect of **AHD3**'s argument states that by so doing, the learners become capable of applying the known answers to similar questions. The assumption might be that the practice is not about helping learners know their mistakes and correct them but it is a means of programming the learners on what kind of answers fit what type of questions. Hence, it could be argued that this form of correction is about training learners to be able to recall answers for examination purposes.

The document analysis, such as learners' portfolios, reveals that some of the learners have copies of the marking memoranda or answers of some of the assessment tasks in their files. This could mean that the teachers do not revise and discuss learners' mistakes with them in class as claimed during the interviews but rather give some of the learners photocopied memoranda for external moderation purposes because DBE (2011) urges teachers to provide evidence of remedial or corrections of tasks in the learners' portfolios. However, in the workbooks of learners, it was noted that corrections on assessment for learning tasks were not done by the respondents since there were no traces of written corrections of tasks in any of the ten learners whose workbooks were looked into per subject.

4.4.5 Marking of assessment tasks by learners

It was established during the interviews that there are respondents whose assessment for learning tasks are marked by learners in their presence in class. Respondent **AME2** said that "...we [teachers] do marking of class works and home works in class with the learners...so learners are taught how to mark their work...". This implies that the teachers have trained their learners so that they are able to mark their assessment for learning tasks. Although the reasons for this were not disclosed by **AME2**, it was made evident by **BME5** that

...if I should mark forty or forty-five books a day, ah, I think I will die and I cannot have the strength to teach the topics I have to teach daily. I have taught my learners how to mark themselves... (BME5, Data set 1)

This may be interpreted that the teachers use learners to mark assessment tasks not as a means of establishing learners' self-assessment as envisaged in Chapter two

(Section 2.3.2.2) by Heritage (2010) and Harlen (2007), in order to help them to think and have deeper understanding about their own learning and identify their strengths and weaknesses to know how to improve their learning, but rather to make the teacher's job easier. Moreover, it was observed from the learners' workbooks that the teachers do not encourage self-assessment since there are very few instances where tasks have been marked by the learners, and the rest of the tasks are just done any way without any form of marking.

There were respondents who used marked assessment for learning tasks for reporting purposes. This practice was highlighted by **APE1** by explaining that;

... I take all their work that they have done and find average. The class works, the class tests, all the control test and all those marks for their termly report instead of just taking CASS work for that particular term only... (APE1, Data set 1)

The quotation above has a two-fold meaning. It foremost emphasises that the respondent includes the marked assessment for learning tasks as part of learners' termly report. It could thus be argued that her assessment for learning tasks serve two purposes. One is for giving learners feedbacks and the other is to report on learners' performance. Further, it could also mean that she uses all her assessment tasks for learners' termly reports only rather than for learning feedback and hence she does not consider whether a particular task is meant for assessment of learning or assessment for learning. Secondly, the above response is contradictory to what was revealed by the documental analysis that the respondent does not mark and record those assessments for learning tasks. It is also in disagreement with her HoD, **AHD3**, who disclosed that *"...the teachers use the CASS requirements [PoA] per term as their termly report...no home works, class works or even short tests are used."*

On a different note, some of the respondents claimed that they mark and record assessment for learning tasks, not as a termly report but to show as evidence if demanded by departmental officials. As explained by **BPE4** below,

Those marks don't form part of CASS and also don't form part of report. When I do report I use the CASS requirements marks for that particular term. Like for

me, I have two recording sheets. One recording sheet is for the daily work and short tests that the learners do and for CASS I only use the formal sheet given by the department for CASS. So the other recording sheet is for the informal as a proof that I have done them. (BPE4, Data set 1)

Although part of the above quotation is a Departmental assessment policy requirement, which requires teachers to show evidence of assessment for learning tasks, it seems the respondent associates such practice with a means to guard against being policed by departmental officials. This was supported by respondent **BME5** when she added that,

I do use the other tasks that do not form CASS. I record all the marks and keep them as evidence although they are not part of CASS. The department comes here a lot and when they ask I have to show them...they think it's because we are not giving enough work to learners so I keep them...these form informal work. (BME5, Data set 1)

This highlights that assessment for learning tasks are done by teachers with the intention of having something to show the departmental officials in case they asked for them, instead of doing them as assessment policy requirements for obtaining feedback from their learners. Yet, according to the DoE (2003.c.f. Chapter 2) those assessment tasks must enable teachers to do remedial work and provide interventions to help learners improve their learning. However, the document analysis shows no evidence of marking and recording of assessment for learning tasks in the teachers' master portfolios, as claimed by the above two respondents.

4.5 CHALLENGES FACED IN ASSESSMENTS PRACTICES

Drawing from the accounts above on teachers' assessment practices, it can be seen that there were many lapses with their practices. The set of data below reveals some of the challenges.

4.5.1 Lack of teachers' content knowledge

It emanated from the interviews that some respondents' lack of content knowledge affected their assessment practices. As expressed by **APE1**,

...but you know with most of us [teachers], the information I have as a diploma teacher will not be the same as a teacher or somebody who went to do the subject in a Bachelor's or honours level. For me to be at the same level, I only have to take the textbooks and get those information to be given to the learners. And sometimes when you take the books, there are certain topics or things that I find out that still I can't understand them myself...if you [teacher] don't know content, you don't know assessment also. Because you only depend on previous questions and their memorandum. You can't come out with your own stuff. (APE1, Data set 1)

The citation above firstly points out that the diploma academic qualifications serve as a barrier and prevent teachers from having full control over the contents of physical science and mathematics. This was supported by respondent **BHD6** who added that “...you'll find out that some teachers are teaching subjects that they are not trained to teach, yeah...So you may find out that they are just using their experience sometimes... .” This indicates that there are teachers who are teaching these subjects merely based on the number of years of teaching them. Hence, it could be imagined that they may only teach the easiest content and ignore the more challenging one.

Based on this, the second point as argued by **APE1** above clearly shows that some teachers do not understand some topics and, therefore, they cannot effectively assess their learners on such topics. As a result, they depend on the readily available past questions and their memoranda as the main source for constructing assessment tasks instead of setting their own questions based on the taught topics. It may be interpreted that their assessment tasks lack the validity, an inference argued by Killen (2003. c.f. Chapter 2) since the dependence on past questions may not cater for their learners' special characteristics and circumstances.

However, due to their lack of content and assessment knowledge, the teachers who teach the same subjects do not share assessment information with their colleagues. As highlighted below, **APE1**, out of frustration, complained that,

we [teachers teaching the same subject in various schools] don't work together to improve. You'll find that if I have a problem for instance in setting research project questions, which I know when I am setting it, I am just giving

my learners an assignment. But then if I ask other teachers they will also say they don't also know how it is done is frustrating. So there are those challenges when you ask around and get tired and you just leave it and do it as you please... (APE1, Data set 1)

The above citation shows that some teachers find it difficult to distinguish between the nature of questions and assessment requirements appropriate for various assessment tasks as well as their intended purposes. To this effect, teachers prefer to work alone rather than to expose their content and assessment difficulties to one another. This notion was made evident during probing when **APE1** added that “...there is attitude in the teachers. They don't want you to know that they also don't know certain topics so they end up not sharing information at all”

Furthermore, it can be interpreted from the above responses that some teachers have come to understand the situation whereby no teacher helps another and, as a result, they may have decided not to seek help from colleagues. This may mean that their learners would be highly disadvantaged in terms of the quality, standard and the appropriateness of the assessment tasks they receive from their teachers. However, cross-referring to Chapter two (sections 2.5.1; 2.5.2 & 2.5.3) highlights that there is a need for teachers to benefit from observing and consulting other teachers about effective practices in order to make changes they would like to make (Boston 2002) despite their lack of knowledge in the subjects.

4.5.2 Excessive workload of the teachers.

AHD3 explains the reality of the above challenge by saying,

the problem here is the work overload from teachers. Because as a teacher you first have to teach which is your core business whether you know the subject or not, you have to prepare, you have to look for questions, send them for internal moderation, photocopy, give test, mark, record go for moderation [external] and so on. So they do very little informal works...there is no time because at the end of the day you have to teach your content and they are too much... (AHD3, Data set 1)

What has been classified as teacher workload includes too many content subjects to teach, excessive protocol to follow in setting assessment tasks and doing moderation, and paper work. Therefore, on one part, the teachers do not compound their workload by practising assessments as required in their daily grade 12 teaching and learning processes. On the other hand, the teachers do not integrate assessment, teaching and learning.

Additionally, **AHD3** mentioned that

... there are too many learners per class especially in other grades... You have other classes not only grade 12 so you can imagine how stressful it is...so it becomes difficult to do those feedbacks or corrections... the teachers don't like paper work. So they see this assessment thing as problematic.

(AHD3, Data set 1)

This quotation points out that the teachers see themselves teaching many overcrowded classes coupled with the accompanying paper work so they occupy themselves with teaching to finish their syllabus and nothing else matters to them. Thus it could be assumed that their learners learn through passive assimilation of knowledge from their teachers who focus solely on content teaching. Therefore, the teaching and learning as it unfolds in their classrooms may be one-directional and purely teacher-centred which contradicts the NCS's learner-centred discourse (DoE, 2000.c.f. Chapter 2).

Further in support of teacher workload, respondent **BHD6** explained that *"this days the teachers are having a big workload and that has impacted on their ability to do things as required..."* This reveals that the HoDs feel for their teachers. They understand their circumstances and sympathise with them concerning their workload. As a result, they give their teachers the freedom to do assessment as they wish even though, according to the literature in Chapter two, both Black and Wiliam (1998) and Heritage (2010) point out that, through assessment, teachers can implement strategies during their teaching instruction to track, inform and adjust instructions to help their learners to learn. Hence, as argued, this is lacking in these respondents' classroom situations due to the teachers' workloads.

4.5.3 Learner absenteeism

This challenge surfaced poignantly in the interviews. For instance, respondent **BME5** mentioned that,

... it's just absenteeism, where you give work and a learner is not in school and you have to give him or her a chance to write so that that learner can get marks for report or CASS delays me sometimes. (BME5, Data set 1)

This quotation could be interpreted that, when a learner stays away from school and misses assessment of learning tasks aimed for the PoA, the teacher endeavours to offer such a learner an opportunity to participate in the missed assessment tasks because of the importance of the PoA marks for the learner. It could be argued that teachers may not bother if a learner absents himself or herself without missing any of the PoA tasks. More so, respondent **AHD3** added that “...even for control test, some learners absent themselves. You have to let them write later which is not fair to the others who came to write those tests...”. This indicates that the teachers give learners the same assessment tasks written by those learners who were present. Hence, it could mean that the learners deliberately absented themselves in order to get extra information from their classmates so that they may be able to perform better.

However, the latter part of **BME5's** response above points out that the practice of giving absentees chances to write previously written tasks whenever they come back to school, delays the teachers' progress and thwarts their assessment schedules. Thus it may be assumed that the teacher spends most of the teaching and assessment time repeating this circle since most learners remain absent.

In turn, some respondents felt that the timetables for the trial (preparatory) examinations and sometimes the optional mid-year (June) exams are too extensive and lead to more learner absenteeism. This was witnessed and explained by respondent **BPE4** as follows,

...another problem is that when learners start writing common papers and they get their timetable you cannot get them again to teach or assess...their long time table take out the time for finishing the syllabus. We always rush and do not have much time for learner assessments and other important things...

(BPE4, Data set 1)

This quotation above proves that the long timetable designed by the department to make sure that all schools administer those common papers at the same time contributes to the teachers' inability to finish their syllabus and to complete the assessment of learning tasks meant for PoA, as well as administering enough assessment for learning tasks. The learners often stay at home and only come to school when they are due to write an examination. During probing, respondent **BPE4** further said that

...because you have to make sure that you cover everything that is required for that paper...and the department will not understand you as a teacher when you say you cannot write this paper because you couldn't finish the work schedule so you have to rush to finish and the learners suffer. (BPE4, Data set 1)

The above argument could be interpreted that teachers rush to finish their syllabus with the little time they have since they know their learners will start to be absent prior to common examinations and hence they may not completely follow the scheduled PoA assessments of learning tasks as stipulated in the SAG documents. This notion was made evident when respondent **APE1** explains that,

...so what I usually do is like during this June examination, I find out that control test I haven't done it and its already time for the exams, so I talked to my learners and during the June exams even if after they've written paper one, I let them write the test also. It means that whilst they are preparing for the exams, they are preparing for my test also. So you just put the assessment in-between there. (APE1, Data set 1)

This shows that the respondent administered assessment of learning tasks meant for PoA during examination time rather than earlier. This does not only indicate that the

teachers do not plan when to administer assessment tasks but that they procrastinate until they are needed by the department. This practice shows that assessments, including the PoA tasks, are not accommodated during the normal teaching time as demanded by assessment policies due to learners' absenteeism.

4.5.4 The learners' attitude towards assessment

There were respondents who claimed that the learners display negative attitudes such as failure to do tasks, copying of work and lack of feedback application towards assessments. These attitudes were made evident by the respondents below;

one problem here with most learners is that they don't do work. Others don't do work on time. Like today, I just find out that one learner did not do his practical investigation for last term. Could you imagine that?... they don't see the reason of doing their informal work... (APE1, Data set 1)

And similarly as highlighted by HoD,

the problem of late work submission of CASS work and even informal is real. I think it will be better if all CASS are control test because assignment, investigation, project etcetera they copy, others simply don't do them. (AHD3, Data set 1)

The above quotations give indications that learners do not do the assessment tasks given by their teachers. Even with those who do them, one can assume that they copy answers directly from their classmates, textbooks, past question memoranda or from the internet. This means that the learners do not benefit from assessment tasks since they do not use them to practice what they have been taught and learnt. This suggests that the learners are not motivated intrinsically when it comes to the use of assessments.

However, this has directed some respondents to adapt the practice of giving a fewer number of assessment tasks. This was mentioned by respondent **BME5** that "*if you give more work they are not going to do it. So you have to know how much work you will give them...*". This may mean that the learners take control and determine what assessments tasks they want to do and their teachers deliberately comply in order to

work peacefully with them. This notion was observed by **BHD6** by lamenting that “...the learners think they are doing you [teacher] a favour by working hard...”.

More so, due to learners’ attitudinal problems, they do not apply assessment feedback to improve their learning. Respondent **BHD6** argues in his explanation that,

...you see you give them feedback, they write down, they write down, but whether they use it to better their results is something else. Because sometimes you might after the feedback give them similar tests but still they might not do well. So the learners do not....So they don’t normally go as feedback is expected. Few minorities do apply them but many majorities don’t care about comments or advice. (BHD6, Data set 1)

The above respondent claims that feedback, such as written comments and advice, are given to learners but the majority of the learners themselves refuse to apply them accordingly to improve their results. However, it can be interpreted from the above response that the given feedback may not concentrate on the specific problems with the learners’ work as well as not giving them both a clear understanding of what is wrong and not describing achievable targets for putting it right, as mentioned in section 4.4.3. Also, feedback may not be sufficient and may be issued at the wrong time in an awkward manner; as a result learners still perform abysmally despite being given similar tasks. Moreover, from the above citation, the respondent claimed that only the good learners apply their feedback, which contradicts what Black and William (2001.c.f. Chapter 2 section 2.3.2.2) argued that giving of feedback gives particularly good results with low achievers or weak learners.

Additionally, **BME5** said that

most of time despite the feedback they still repeat the same mistakes. You know learners are children so it’s like that. You just sometimes also have to leave them otherwise you will stress yourself. I know they are not perfect but some little changes you want from them they simply can’t do it and you can’t force them to some extent. (BME5, Data set 1)

This comment indicates that some of the teachers do not make an attempt to offer assessment feedback to their learners since they believe the learners would not

apply it anyway to make changes in their learning. Based on these attitudinal challenges, the teachers stick to fewer assessments and avoid giving feedback in order to avoid being stressful.

4.6 SUPPORT NEEDED IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICES.

The set of data below highlights the respondents' views on the appropriate measures needed to improve their assessment practices.

4.6.1 Visits by subject advisors

There are respondents who suggest that the departmental officials, and more especially the subject advisors, need to be more proactive in the teachers' teaching and assessments during their schools visit. For instance, **AHD3** mentioned that,

...the department come... when it is non-performing schools then they are putting more pressure on teachers to try and get results. I think especially the subject advisors must come to schools regularly not only bad schools and when they come they must be available to give assistance like direct teaching and assessment solutions to teachers... (AHD3, Data set 1)

The above quotation has two elements. It first recognises that the departmental officials, including subject advisors, are very interested in the learners' final examination results and, therefore, force teachers whose schools obtain poor matric results to ensure such achievements. Even though the respondent did not elaborate on the kind of pressure the departmental officials use, it could take the form of their selective visits where non-performing schools' teachers are visited often and monitored whilst the other schools are not visited at all. Therefore, the teachers in the embattled schools feel pressured and undermined.

On the other hand, it highlights that even when the subject advisors visit such teachers they do not offer any assistance. Thus it could be argued that their visits do not impact positively on the teachers and influence their teaching and assessing,

since a struggling teacher may still continue to struggle despite being visited often by experts. This was clearly spelt out in **APE1**'s explanation when she said;

...with subject advisors, really and truly they don't really sit with you and see where you have a problem and try and help you with that. With them, even though they were teachers, if you say to them, I have a problem with this topic or on assessment tasks, for them; you must just go and get...others to help you. And sometimes you know as experience teachers themselves they could just give you pointers that will make you at least break whatever barrier is there for you... (APE1, Data set 1)

This means that subject advisors do not support their teachers even if they approach them with content or assessment challenges. They simply refer the teachers to their other colleagues in other schools instead of instantly providing relevant indications or suggestions based on their experience and deep knowledge in the subjects. It can be assumed that they also face content and assessment challenges.

Based on the above argument, respondent **APE1** further expressed her anger by saying;

...nothing on how we teachers should go about our assessments and the teaching of topics properly...so sometimes I just get mad with them [Subject advisors], truly, I just get mad with them...{pulse for a while} their focus is just on the result at the end of the year. If a school is not performing, o.k. then the teacher is not good and they don't care why the teacher is not good if they say is the teacher. (APE1, Data set 1)

It can be seen from the response here that, even though the teachers are not assisted by their subject advisors, they are, in turn, blamed for being the cause of learners' poor academic performances. The respondent's argument can be interpreted that if they are responsible for learners' failure due to their lack of assessment and content knowledge, then their superiors, such as subject advisors, should offer direct assistance in these regard, rather than simply visiting and blaming them.

4.6.2 Establishment of meaningful workshops on assessments

There were respondents who wanted workshops that could help them to effectively and efficiently improve on their continuous assessment practices and content teaching. This was evident in respondent **BPE4**'s statement below;

...they [department] should organise better workshops to educate teachers not assuming that we are fine. I think it's time the department focus on having physical science assessment and content training. I mean better one not the one that somebody will be called to show us things on computer screen only but to teach us like teaching learners so that we become more confident on all the topics then we won't have problems with the CASS and it's moderations.
(BPE4, Data set 1)

The argument made here shows that the respondent is not happy about other forms of workshops which do not have a real impact on their content teaching or assessment. This was supported by respondent **APE1** who disclosed that

...if the department was to stop doing lip service with the workshops or moderations, because these are just for the sake of doing them. Just for the saying that we've done workshops or we've done assessments or moderation meetings... (APE1, Data set 1)

The above quotation also reveals that the external moderations which are supposed be a form of workshop for teacher assessment development are just organised in order for the district department to have something to report on. A similar view was made evident by **AME2** when he cited in anger that,

I think they [department] could do away with CASS [moderation] thing because it's just time consuming. We spend two or three weeks preparing for CASS moderation meetings. We waste a lot of time in the process...its better if we give them [department officials] marks at the end of the year... (AME2, Data set 1)

This respondent felt that the external or cluster moderation which takes place once a term, where all the teachers of a particular subject in the district assemble at a centre

and are divided into six schools per cluster to moderate each other's assessments tasks done in that particular term, must be discontinued. He argued that such practices wasted their time. Even though the respondent failed to elaborate further on how time is wasted, it was made evident by **BPE4** in details that;

...the time and preparation you have to do for cluster moderation like organising your files and that of the learners, marking, recording, conversion of marks to the required task and all that... It's not easy this CASS thing you know...{pulse for a while} we have to obey. (BPE4, Data set 1)

It can be seen that when teachers spend time preparing for such moderations they have little or no time to teach during this preparation period. However, one would anticipate that the quality and standard of those tasks for external moderations would be top notch. Yet, as witnessed by **BME5**, such is not always the case. To her, "...you know during CASS moderation teachers don't have time, others give sub-standard questions and give more marks to their learners and no one raise issues". This indicates that, despite some respondents' claim of extensive time allocation on assessment tasks; they still cannot meet the required standards. On the other hand, **BME5's** statement points out that those teachers who have to ensure that a colleague's assessment tasks are submitted and meet all the needed requirements during this moderation period, do not have the time for that either. This may suggest that those teachers who spend time in preparation may not be noted and hence become disappointed. It also seems that some teachers, who have become aware over the years of a lack of proper scrutiny of their work by colleagues, may ignore those preparations and submit tasks as they please, since no one checks the authenticity of the work or gives necessary comments to effect any needed changes.

In addition, with regard to the external moderation as workshops, it is clear that teachers avoid commenting negatively on their colleagues' assessment practices as revealed in the submitted tasks. This was witnessed by **APE1** when she mentioned that

... if you try [to share a good assessment practice] other teachers may think you are there to show off. Each one comes there to do re-marking of the tasks

and go. Even re-marking if marks are wrong they don't take the pain and time to correct you. It's about put in pink pen [preferred colour for moderation] and go. (APE1, Data set 1)

From this quotation it can be seen that during the external moderations, re-marking of assessment tasks is done by teachers who are mere auditors of the tasks. Thus it may be assumed that there is no form of feedback gained by the teachers despite attending such a meeting. This means a teacher may continue assessment mal-practices over and over again. even though they disadvantage the learners and fail to boost the learners' CASS marks, since the teachers act cautiously and do not want to be classified as a 'too know' teacher who knows better than the colleagues.

In addition, **AHD3** observed that

... you see in these meetings [CASS moderations] when you are strict the other teachers don't like you so mostly each on ignore or keep quit on others work and leave things as they are. You just tick when you are to give comment you write satisfactory to cut long issues short... (AHD3, Data set 1)

This response indicates that teachers give positive comments even though the tasks do not deserve such comments. **AHD3** further echoed **AME2**'s sentiments above by arguing that,

...the cluster moderation is time wasting as it is done now if you consider how things are rush and no better moderations take place. It must be refined or stopped and marks must be submitted by the principals at the end of the year. (AHD3, Data set 1)

This suggests that the respondents do not see the reason for attending those external moderations and, therefore, they want to do assessment tasks to realise their grade 12 learners' 25% PoA marks without these meetings. Also, as argued above, they expect separate content and assessment workshops which would be meaningful from the department.

4.6.3 Parental support

There were respondents who saw the lack of active parental involvement in the learners' academic life, especially with regards to assessment, as a means of fuelling learners' attitudinal problems. Respondent **BPE4** explains,

we encourage parents to come for their learners' report and query anything about the learners but they don't come... They don't come; they don't ask why their children fail a particular subject or something. It is very rare that you get parent complaining about the learners marks or reports maybe it's because they are illiterates. (BPE4, Data set 1)

The above response illustrates that teachers acknowledge the need for parental involvement in tracking learners' performances. The concerns of the respondent seem to be that when a learner fails to do tasks, fails to submit tasks on time, copies work, stays absent during control tests or fails the subject entirely, the best way to deal with these circumstances is to inform the parents or guardians and let them be aware, so that in collaboration with the teachers they can come up with the best way of assisting such a learner to be co-operative in this regard. Hence, if the parents simply ignore or show no interest in the plight of the learner then it further encourages such a learner to keep on missing assessment tasks and stay absent. To the above effect, respondent **AHD3**, who appeared to be fed up with this parental problem, lashed out that

...the other challenge with parents, I don't know the best way to deal with because they simply don't care. Those who care are very few so nothing work out. (AHD3, Data set 1)

This demonstrates that some of the learners have no one to guide, encourage and assist them to do their assessment tasks. Moreover, cross-reference to Chapter two, Stiggins (2002) points out in agreement with the respondents that teachers have to actively involve learners in communication with their families about their achievement status and improvement.

4.6.4 Resolution of micro-politics on assessments

There are respondents who believe that there is the existence of micro-politics between the teachers and their HoDs. As a result, assessment practices on the ground do not resemble what has been reported. For instance, **AHD3** explained that

...If I find a problem [during internal moderation], I give comments for them [teachers] to change things if not done properly...but some teachers don't want to be corrected and it's sad. I mean, an HoD at the same time must play this vital role... (AHD3, Data set 1)

BHD6 continued,

...but you find out that teachers especially grade 12 teachers, don't want to open up". (BHD6, Data set 1)

These findings show that the HoDs have noticed that the teachers are not cooperative when they give comments and corrections during internal moderations and also do not give them the chance to assist them in their assessment practices. It may be assumed that, due to the above resistance, the HoDs withhold such feedback and check work blindly and the teachers also become comfortable with that effect without complaining about the HoDs' lack of thorough moderation.

This was observed by **APE1** as follows;

... the honest is on you as a teacher to do your work and then HoDs should make sure that their work is done properly not just brush through. The principal must also assist HoDs that it's not a matter of going through checklists blindly...so it's left to the teachers, their HoDs and the principals to be honest and dedicated enough (APE1, Data set 1).

This finding highlights that the HoDs as well as principals acknowledge that a task or work is done and submitted as per requirements whilst in reality such a teacher actually did not fulfil all the requirements. This creates the perception that in the schools they view assessment as part of the teacher and schools' accountability (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007. c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.2.2) and therefore they

concentrate on giving good reports to the external authorities rather than exposing one another's short-comings.

Moreover, this mode of safeguarding and protecting each other was explained further by respondent **APE1** where she answered

...it [assessments checklist] will just be window dressing, you know they will just fill and say oh just make sure those things are ticked even if it's not done and HoDs don't care and worry about that as far as it doesn't give bad report to a teacher... (APE1, Data set 1)

This gives indication that forms such as checklists and templates given to monitor assessments are filled in to lure the department and give a good impression about the teachers' assessment performance and adherence to the required procedures, whilst in reality it is completely the opposite. Yet, it appears that the Department assumes that whatever is given to them is a true reflection. This notion was observed by **BME5** by commenting that the “...department must really get involved in the CASS business and not sit down and leave everything to the teachers and HoDs...”

Based on the above politics, respondent **AHD3** lamented “...but the department also must hold some HoDs and teachers accountable if proper things are not done when it comes to assessment practices”. This indicates that the respondent expects the department to put in measures to stop such assessment concerns. This seems to suggest that the teachers and their HoDs favour quasi-formative assessment practices (c.f. Chapter 2) since they know they would not be called to answer for assessment mal-practices by the department despite what they do.

4.6.5 Provision of common textbooks

There was a respondent who mentioned that the issue of lack of common textbooks in the schools is a problem. This was highlighted by respondent **BHD6**, who explains that,

the department must ensure that there is uniformity in textbooks because different textbooks that are used by different teachers cause problems. A

teacher takes assessment task from a textbook which lacks the requirements and standard but the teacher will say he or she got it from so so and so textbooks and there is nothing you as HoD or other teacher [from other school in the case of cluster moderation] can do... (BHD6, Data set 1)

Although this might seem trivial, the respondent's argument can be interpreted in various ways. It foremost shows that, due to the existence of numerous textbooks, teachers choose whatever textbooks they prefer or are available and use them to teach as well as to take some assessment tasks, such as projects and investigations, from them which may lack the departmental standard and requirements. This means that sub-standard or irrelevant tasks may be given to the learners.

Further, it makes moderation of assessment tasks too difficult for both teachers and HoDs since the teachers trust whatever assessment tasks they have picked up from their chosen textbooks and, therefore, would not like to be corrected on errors from those textbooks. This contributes to inefficient moderation. As a result of this, **BHD6** added in suggestion that "...so there must be consistency in textbooks by coming out with one common approved textbook that can help teachers with more information on assessments... ."

This indicates that the district department needs to ensure that there is one approved textbook that has more information on the curriculum and assessments tasks compatible with departmental requirements and standards.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented and analysed data from this study. It presented the respondents' assessment practices, their challenges and the support they required with regard to the assessment of learning and assessment for learning.

The next chapter will focus on the discussion of the main findings of this study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study. It is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with the issue of continuous assessment as part of teaching and learning. The second focuses on teachers' capacity building. The third section proposes a framework for balanced CASS practices, followed by the conclusion.

5.1 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AS PART OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

One of the key findings was that teachers did not see assessment in general and CASS in particular as part of the teaching and learning process. They mainly saw it as fulfilling accountability requirements. In other words, their assessment practices tended to be skewed towards 'assessment of learning' at the expense of 'assessment for learning'. This is a problematic perspective as literature shows that assessment is part and parcel of learning (cf. Chapter 2, section 2.2) and that, indeed, assessment must be seen as learning. The data findings as seen in chapter 4, revealed that there are gaps in the teaching and learning and assessment in the two case study schools.

5.1.1 Assessment as learning

Assessment as learning is defined as assessment skills that are recognised to inform learning (Tan 2011). It serves as a guide and provides opportunities for each learner to monitor and reflect on his or her learning in order to identify what next step is needed. Teachers use assessment as learning as a form of motivating and encouraging learners' learning by relying on sufficient scaffolding to enhance learners' understanding in a way that learners may not substitute scaffolding with learning (Sadler, 2007 as cited in Tan, 2011; c.f. Chapter 2).

This form of assessment encourages learner's self-reflection, self-monitoring and self-adjustment, since the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) urges teachers to assist and support their learners to reach their full potential and become life-long learners (DoE 2001). This can be established through continuous assessment practices where learners are equipped also to assess their own learning. When learners develop the skills and ability to assess themselves and that of others, it enables both teachers and learners to discuss learning alternatives and build the independent learning habit. The importance of this is based on the conviction that learners are capable of becoming adaptable, flexible role players and independent in their learning and decision-making (DoE, 2003).

Moreover, these assessment skills and attitudes when developed, allow learners to keep records of their learning, which includes reflections and insights as they occur. So, therefore, assessment as learning completes the circle where teachers assess learners. They are able to use the assessment to make changes necessary to be able to achieve the curriculum outcomes as shown in figure 5.1 below.

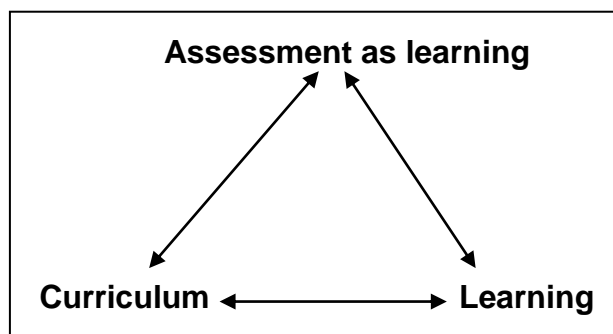


Figure 5.1: Assessment as learning triangle.

It can be seen from the above figure 5.1 that assessment as learning forms part of the curriculum, and teaching and learning. That is, whilst teachers assess their learners during pedagogy, the learners, in turn, develop assessment habits or skills and use them to make some learning gains so as to be competent towards the realisation of the curriculum goals intended in the subject contents. Thus, it highlights what assessment does for learners and their learning. Drawing on the appropriate scaffolding and encouragement provision from their teachers, they are able to start from the curriculum objectives and assess themselves to improve their learning and vice versa. This means they can independently make meaningful adjustments, build

up confidence and develop the skills, habits and attitudes of wishing to learn through assessment, even to some extent without the teacher.

Yet the findings (c.f. Chapter 4, sections 4.4.5; 4.5.4) revealed the opposite with regard to the above. It shows that the learners in the two case study schools simply did not see the reason for being assessed and displayed a whole lot of attitudinal problems towards assessments. They were de-motivated, discouraged and lacked interest in doing assessment tasks (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.5.4). There was also evidence of a lack of dialogue and engagement in the classrooms between learner and learner, and learner and teacher. (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.4.2.2). These may be attributed to consequences as a result of lack of assessment as learning and may lead to learner absenteeism and lack of co-operation and participation in the classroom.

The learners do not see their classroom as a lively place where they can share their ideas and information freely when in difficulty. This creates a very tense classroom situation where only the teacher is heard whilst learners just sit still to listen to the teacher. The main point of emphasis is that if the teachers do not establish learner interactions and a collaborative classroom through group work and peer or individual assessments, their learners become bored in the classroom, only pretending to be understanding what is being taught. The imperative here is that the teachers need to open up and create opportunities to enhance learners' self-assessment and self-reflection in their assessment practices. If teachers failed to monitor and provide the platform for learners to efficiently mark their assessment tasks, reflect on them, share and make the needed changes to rectify what has been done wrong and learn from those mistakes, they tend to see themselves as incapable and, therefore, develop a hatred for learning and assessment in general.

The finding (c.f. Chapter 4, sections 4.4.2 & 4.5.3) reveals further that teachers do not stimulate learners with assessment tasks in their classroom teaching or support learners on how to learn properly through assessment tasks; instead, they just give them tasks to do and it ends there. The teachers' attention on assessment was merely geared towards accumulation of marks, as part of the final results, and content acquisition, rather than on learning and the holistic development of learners (Tan, 2011). In turn, teachers have tuned and directed learners to focus on doing

assessment tasks which count. Hence, their learners see assessment as a means of getting high marks towards their final results rather than to use it to become independent, self-motivated and self-reflective learners who, through assessment, can take the responsibility to learn better to achieve and overcome the subject challenges. This undermines the fact that learners are to be prepared to learn through assessment (DoE, 2001). The assessments as practised by their teachers do not sustain their enjoyment in learning or make them feel like wanting to learn more.

As it was evident from the findings, the teachers are the only assessors in the entire CASS process. They continuously scaffold the learners instead of using scaffolding as a temporary measure, as argued by Sadler (2007) above. As a result, the learners have become dependent on the teachers. They wait on their teachers to give them directions in everything they do. They have developed a dependency syndrome and act and learn only if a teacher says so. If the teachers fail to mark or write corrections on assessment tasks, they also leave them as such. This situation totally defeats the idea that learners can learn through assessment as learning since they do not take part in the assessment process and are not given feedback.

5.1.2 The importance of feedback

Feedback is information communicated to a learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning (Shute, 2008). This information is presented to a learner in response to some action on his or her part. Feedback as a main feature of assessment for learning as examined in Chapter two (section 2.3.2.2), aims to increase learners' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject content and general skills, in order to improve the quality of the learners' learning in the classroom. It, therefore, links and completes the gap between assessment and learning since the learners are the main feedback recipients and, in the same instance, teachers receive learner-related information which can be used to alter instruction for a smooth teaching and learning progress. This is illustrated in figure 5.2 below.

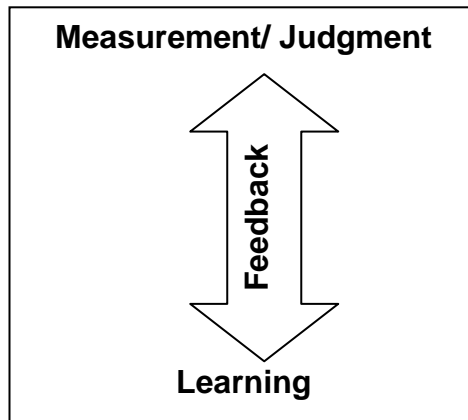


Figure 5.2: Feedback as a link between assessment and learning

The figure 5.2 above depicts that feedback relays assessment and learning; without it there is a dichotomy between the two. As a teacher measures the attainment of a learner, he or she does so by providing specific, timely and supportive information or guidelines about a particular response to a problem. This was supported by Petty (2004) that provision of informative feedback to learners whilst learning makes CASS have a more positive effect on learners than any other factor. The emphasis is that the teachers are able to identify learning gaps and quickly help to close them by the use of feedback. It is the feedback that could be used to bridge, inform, gauge and establish the learners' learning.

Alongside this optimistic outlook and the fact that feedback helps learners to improve their learning (c.f. Chapter 2), the findings in this research show otherwise and reveal, instead, a wide range of problems and pitfalls in the teachers' practices of CASS, especially with regard to feedback (c.f. Chapter 4, sections 4.4.3; 4.4.4). The emphasis of the respondents has been to teach to finish the work schedule or syllabus considered to be extensive and, therefore, they did not compromise it with feedback. As a result, they deliberately and completely ignored giving any meaningful feedback to their learners. It appeared from the interviews that those teachers were very aware of the importance of giving feedback to learners but, at the same time, they did not see it to be useful for their own learners.

The emphasis here is that, if teachers do not incorporate feedback in their teaching and learning, then there is a missing link in their entire CASS process. Their learners

will, then, only learn through memorisation of what is considered as facts and then recall them when assessment tasks are given, without actually understanding what is being taught and learned. Those learners who may not be able to learn through this process will be left behind and be seen by their teachers as weak learners who are incapable of doing a particular subject. Meanwhile, the NCS postulates that all learners, regardless of their ability, race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, can learn and must be assisted (DoE, 2000). Cognisance was taken of the learners who are slow in learning, since the Department rejects the idea that few can succeed. The problem that emanated from the data is that the learners do not receive feedback or strategies for learning improvement, apart from being given an assessment task repeatedly and, as a result, they keep on repeating the same mistakes over and over again in most cases (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.4.4).

Moreover, the findings show another assessment dilemma at the heart of some teachers' written comments, especially with regard to negative criticisms. A teacher who sometimes wrote comments on some learners' scripts felt uncomfortable about giving negative messages since he/she was anxious to avoid anything which could undermine learners. The implication is that written comments as feedback are unduly positive and fail to offer constructive criticism. Further, such feedback gives the impression that attainment is much better than it is and this is a major weakness in giving feedback. However, it means that learners generally are not well-supported in developing the skills for understanding the reasons for giving feedback since teachers fail to report frank judgements concerning the quality of their work. Hence, the teachers' feedback is not as objective and as reliable as possible and does not strike a balance between attention to learning and comments on other attributes. On top of this, Brooks (2002) identified ineffectual reporting to learners which is preoccupied with behaviour, attitude and effort but lacks a focus on full academic progress and attainment.

Also, since written comments as well as corrections of work were completely undermined by most teachers in both schools, they failed to use the assessment tasks given to learners as benchmarks to identify barriers to teaching and learning so as to devise supportive plans to address day-to-day classroom challenges demanded by department (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.4.3). Assessment task-level feedback addresses and verifies the accuracy of a learner's response to a problem

or task and may touch on particular errors and misconceptions (Shute, 2008) so that an explanation of the correct or possible answers and hints could be administered. The lack of this clearly points to the fact that feedback as well as the other four features of assessment for learning (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.4.2.2) do not form part of the respondents' classroom teaching and everyday assessment practices.

Since in assessment learners' learning is enhanced only through effective feedback, it has been argued by Tan (2009 as cited in Tan, 2011) that it is not possible in the absence of assessment standards.

5.1.3 The importance of learning outcomes and assessment standards

A learning outcome (LO) is a description of what knowledge, skills and values learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of a given period in a particular aspect of a subject (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.4.2). A set of learning outcomes should ensure integration and progression in the development of concepts, skills and values through assessment standards. Assessment standards describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome(s) and the ways in which they do this in terms of depth and breadth of demonstrating their achievement (DoE, 2000a).

The findings (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.3.2) revealed many pertinent questions. I tried to explore how teachers incorporated learning outcomes and assessment standards into their assessment tasks. It was evident that the respondents do not set their own questions but rather depend on whatever available questions they come across in any past examination papers. The problem here is that the teachers cannot link these learning outcomes and assessment standards to the various assessment tasks they give to learners. This implies that learners have no clear picture of the learning objectives and the teacher cannot achieve them without having outcomes which are clearly defined so as to produce observable demonstrations of learners' learning, since the measureable outcomes and standards that were adopted in the assessment tasks do not prepare learners to demonstrate their competence at the end of the learning process.

The importance of an assessment standard is that it shows how conceptual progression will occur in a subject and embodies the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve learning outcomes. The three main purposes for assessment standards, as highlighted in the NCS assessment guidelines (DoE, 2000a), are as follows: to help teachers to know when learners have achieved a learning outcome, to show the minimum levels which learners should achieve, and to show the learners' level of achievement and progress in a specific period.

Hence, teachers are expected to use the Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAGs) on what should be taught from grade to grade and in particular subjects since they contain and specify the required outcomes or what is expected of learners and the standards used to assess whether the learners have achieved these outcomes. This is to ensure that, learners would be compared to a standard that all can reach instead of ranking or comparing them to other learners. They, as learners, must be assessed to see if they meet these standards of what every learner must know and be able to do.

Yet, the teachers compromised those learning outcomes and assessment standards which are essential and serve as the reason for administering a particular task. Without clearly and correctly stated outcomes and relevant assessment standards, it can be extremely difficult for a teacher to determine what outcome(s) have been achieved by a learner in a task. As teachers do not consider whether the questions have the correct learning outcomes and the assessment standard aimed to be achieved at that point in time, the qualities of their assessment tasks and their marking criteria do not reflect the subject expectations and learners' abilities, due to a gross mismatch and lack of alignment regarding assessment tasks, learning outcomes and assessment standards (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.3.2). The implication is that learners may be subjected to inappropriate tasks which lack the cognitive levels to assess fully their competence at that time.

Another finding with regard to teachers' complete disregard of learning outcomes and assessment standards in their assessment tasks was that they lacked assessment planning and failed to find the time to consult, follow and use the policy documents provided by the department (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.3.2). For example, if in a term, a teacher comes to know that there is one investigation tasks due for

PoA, he or she quickly makes something up, regardless of what learning outcomes and assessment standards matter in that task at that particular instance. This practice leads learners to write relatively rushed and unreliable assessment tasks since their teachers do not unpack in those tasks the required questions which correspond with the content outcomes.

The key roles played by teachers in their CASS practices cannot be under-estimated since their lack of, will directly affect their learners' learning. They need to give learners the chance to assess themselves and learn through assessment as learning, to give constructive feedback, and to set assessment tasks which are rich in learning outcomes and assessment standards for effective teaching and learning. These can be achieved through teachers' capacity building.

5.2 CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TEACHERS

Teachers need to be competent and be able to perform their key professional activities effectively and efficiently. In the study (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.5), it was revealed that most teachers' lack of content knowledge, lack of moderation consultation, and lack of common textbooks had contributed to their inability to demonstrate competency in teaching and assessing. These, amongst others, are major challenges in the two case study schools that limit the teachers from providing valid assessment tasks and useful assessment practices in their classrooms. It is to this effect that teachers need capacity building to strengthen their knowledge in understanding and addressing content and assessment challenges.

5.2.1 Content knowledge of teachers

Teachers' assessment is based on what has been taught and it can be practically impossible to assess what one does not know or understand. They are supposed to have the core competences in terms of being knowledgeable of the subject contents and the skills to deliver and unpack them. Yet, this does not apply to the teachers in the schools studied (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.5.1). This has resulted in a lack of confidence in what is being taught and how to assess and has led to the

development of some teachers' perception that CASS is generally irrelevant to their work and that of their learners (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.4.2). This places the learners in a very awkward situation since they really depend on their teachers for assessment direction and content understanding. If their teachers lack the understanding of the subjects themselves, they may receive irrelevant information as well as being assessed on what may not be meaningful and useful in terms of the curricula outcomes.

In the report issued by UMALUSI (2010), it was indicated that much effort is needed to guide, support and inform teachers on the implementation of the current National Senior Certificate (NSC) subject assessment guidelines through workshops and training. This report emphasises that teachers do not understand what the SAG demands and hence fail to implement what is therein and thus they need to be capacitated.

Training and professional development in the area of subject content is essential in order to provide individual teachers with time and support necessary to make changes in their subject capacity, since it will spill over into effective assessment delivery. Twigg (2010) argues that even if those workshops or training were done at all, they were once-off and not sufficient to train teachers on how to completely manage CASS. This was also raised by the Task Team Committee of 2009 (DBE, 2009) that teachers' development policies to support them were often too generic, rare and superficial and did not provide the needed support.

The data finding in this study shows that workshops organised by the department for teachers are often tailored to fit all, as a result of which they become ineffective (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.6.2). All teachers are seen to have the same problems or challenges. Hence, the uniqueness of individual teachers and school situations are ignored. This makes it impossible to address specific incompetencies of various teachers, in terms of the identification of their specific areas of difficulty in subject and assessment so as to provide suitable remedies. Considerations in terms of proper analysis on the needs of particular teachers and their schools ought to be done so that specific training and workshops can be offered to address content and assessment problems.

5.2.2 Failure to do CASS moderation according to policy

Boston (2002) reported that teachers need time to reflect upon their assessment practices and benefit from observing and consulting others through moderation about effective practices and about changes they would like to make. Even though this can improve the situation by allowing teachers to share content and assessment information to help even those teachers with subject difficulty, the findings show that this is not the case (c.f. Chapter 4, sections 4.3.5 and 4.6.2). The teachers in nearby schools, for instance, can share ideas on how to set a valid and reliable assessment task and its criteria for their learners even if they cannot do so individually. But it appears the teachers do not trust and confide in each other; they work individually and keep information and views on content and assessment secret. They end up not benefiting from each other even though they teach the same subjects and this is pertinent when the same teachers meet at cluster moderations.

Moderation has the potential to eliminate teacher bias and serves as a platform for teachers to be helped in terms of assessment task construction and best methodological practices by both HoDs and experienced teachers (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.5.2). Yet, the finding shows (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.3.5) that both school-based and cluster-based assessment moderations are marked with various contextual challenges. Despite the fact that teachers should interact, assess, scrutinise and support each other during moderation processes as envisaged by the assessment policies to ease curriculum difficulties and implementation, the lack of teachers' commitment and participation towards moderations makes it unbeneficial to them.

The implications for the learners who are the supposed beneficiaries of the moderation processes cannot be ignored. For instance, a learner may be awarded a mark lower than the actual mark for PoA due to marking, recording or assessment task inconsistencies. If the moderations are not functional to detect such an error, then it might contribute to the learner's failure at the end of year. UMALUSI (2010) reported that there was incorrect capturing and transfer of marks in some schools where learners were awarded more marks than they actually received. This was only noted during UMALUSI's external moderation at the national level and since this kind of moderation selects very few samples of schools, it cements the fact that both

school-based and cluster-based assessment moderations are not properly done and as a result some learners either benefit or are disadvantaged. Teachers have to acknowledge the need to work together with HoDs and other teachers in the moderation process, to discuss the best practices and share meaningful resources, like textbooks, for the benefit of their learners.

5.2.3 Failure by department to provide common textbooks

The use of textbooks and other teaching and learning support materials (LTSM) are very crucial in teaching and learning. Well written textbooks are most effective tools through which to deliver the curriculum and support assessment. They do not only ensure curriculum content and assessment coverage, but they can offer appropriate pacing and weighting of content and assist teachers with lessons and samples of relevant assessment tasks for enhancing effective teaching and learning.

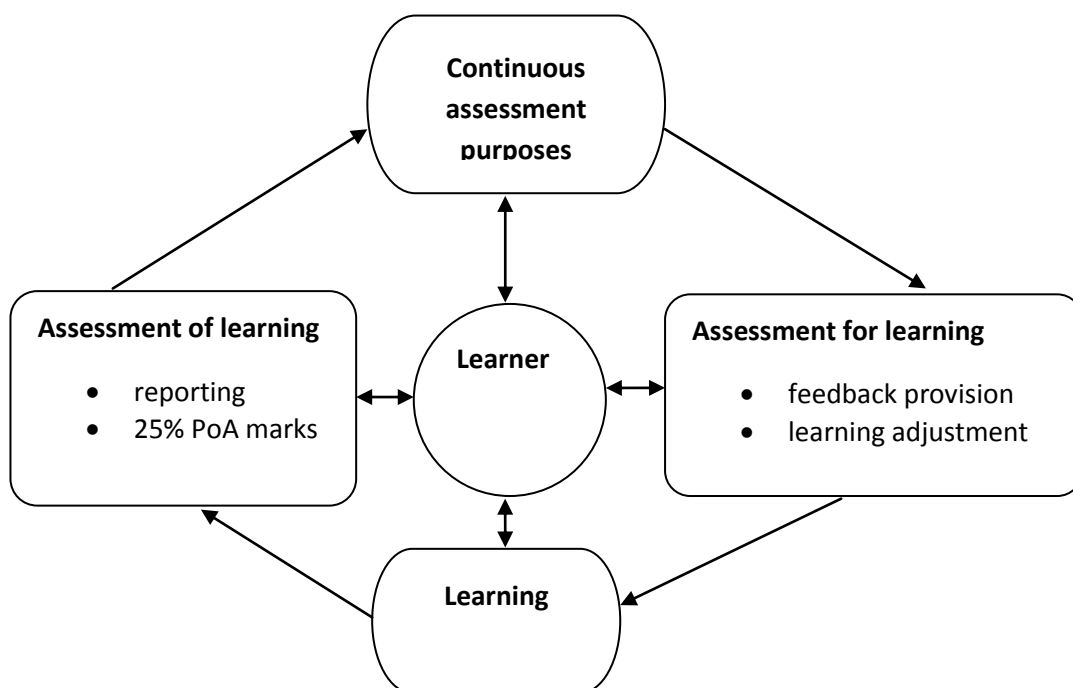
One can argue that there are different textbooks and numerous authors per particular subject; therefore, for teachers to choose from a range of textbooks to suit their context and needs is problematic. This was evident in the findings (c.f. Chapter 4, section 4.5.5) since the lack of common approved textbooks for all schools did not only hinder commonalities in content teaching but directed teachers in using sub-standard assessment tasks and rubrics, and prevented HoDs from questioning the authenticity of those tasks. This eventually led to learners being given irrelevant and general rubrics for some assessments tasks which, in turn, gave inappropriate answers to those tasks.

Based on the above, teachers need to expand their practices through what Peak (2008) refers to as 'focussed interaction', whereby they can communicate with others and form a team to share good practices and resources. This initiative could be encouraged by the district officials and monitor to some extent in order to bring about instructional and assessment consistency in the various schools.

5.3 FRAMEWORK FOR BALANCED CASS PRACTICES

There is a need to strike a balance between assessment of learning and assessment for learning (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.2.3) in CASS practices. Teachers' practices are supposed to ensure that there is room for each assessment purpose in their classroom activities. The Department of Basic Education (DBE 2011) trusts that both assessment purposes, formal and informal, will elevate teachers from the traditional way of teaching and assessing and place the learners in a better position to demonstrate competence at the end of their learning process under the NCS. This is shown in figure 5.3 as follows:

Figure 5.3: Framework for balanced CASS practices



The above figure 5.3 indicates the assessment cycle where the learners are at the centre of the entire process. They are assessed by their teachers, themselves and peers using both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. The single-headed arrows show the link and the flow of these assessments and how they lead to learners' learning to achieve the entire CASS goals. The double-headed arrows link the learners to the various assessment parts of the cycle indicating that they

become fully competent and take control of their learning by receiving information on the two CASS strands.

The issue raised from the research findings concerning the establishment of CASS balance by teachers is that even though the department documents placed strong emphasis on integration of both assessment purposes, very weak attention was documented on how to establish this coherence, especially with regard to the assessment for learning since very little information was available as compared to assessment of learning or formal assessment. The documents reference to 'assessment for learning' as 'informal' assessment has led to the perception that it is not important as part of CASS. This, from the findings, made teachers place little and, in most cases, no effort into the establishment of practices that lead to assessment for learning. The implication is that since the main focus of CASS was towards the achievement of what matters as formal, learners were grossly disadvantaged in their classroom teaching and learning experiences since teachers did not assess whilst teaching and did not teach whilst assessing.

Meanwhile, there have been numerous policy documents, many changes, additions and omissions and approaches in terms of policies, curricula in general and implementation. It can be argued that the documents on their own are meaningless unless teachers are able to unpack them through engagement and training (Pudi, 2006). According to this author, teachers as an integral part of the process of implementing the curriculum and fostering educational changes need to be part of the process to know and understand the processes of implementation. He further argued that because assessment policy is linked with the curriculum, and cannot be divorced from it, what the policy says about assessment will determine how teachers should use their mandatory powers to engage with assessment tasks in the classroom to influence the progress of learners to achieve the curriculum goals.

In the light of many policy documents and their implementation challenges under the NCS (c.f. Chapter 2, section 2.6), it appeared from the findings, both during the interviews and the document analysis, that each document contains requirements and information slightly different from each other with regard to the assessment of learning and assessment for learning, since they come from various sources, national, provincial and district departments. It appeared some teachers found it very

difficult to consolidate the documents and others completely ignored them and used their own description rather than what the policies say and demand. The recommendations made by the Task Team Committee (DBE, 2009) have resulted in CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements) developing one curriculum and assessment policy document for every subject (by phase). This will be the definitive support for all teachers and help address the complexities and confusion created by curriculum and assessment policy vagueness and lack of specification, and document proliferation and misinterpretation (DBE, 2011).

Moreover, the kind of preference given to programme of assessment (PoA) tasks by assessment documents directed teachers to spend too much time on managing and administering assessments for PoA purposes with no time for other assessments, specifically assessment for learning. CASS has come to mean PoA and as such, all practices are streamlined towards its realisation even though the documents as well as departmental officials expect teachers to fully achieve and show evidence of all the features of formal and informal assessments in their entire CASS practices.

There are a number of discrepancies observed concerning teachers' grade 12 PoA acquisition (c.f. Chapter 4, sections 4.2 and 4.6.1) including the subject advisors. Their attention could have been focused on monitoring assessments and its moderation process and supporting teachers on the policy documents rather than on final results and departmental expectations. This led to a general lack of clarity on how and when to establish balance in CASS practices to fully develop the learners' competency through the assessments demanded by the various tertiary institutions as well as the workplaces.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter situated continuous assessment as part of teaching and learning. It then moved on to interrogate teachers' capacity building. The chapter ended by proposing a framework for balanced CASS practices.

The next final chapter will summarise the main findings, the conclusions and recommendations based on the data from this study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations. It starts by capturing the main ideas of each chapter. This is followed by a summary of findings, then the conclusions. It ends by making recommendations for policy and for further research.

6.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN IDEAS OF THE STUDY

The first chapter gave the introduction and background of the study. This was followed by the conceptual framework and the highlights on researchers on CASS practices. It further gave the statement of the problem, the research questions, the significance of the study, the key definitions and the chapter demarcations.

Chapter two discussed the literature review. It looked at assessment in context and the principles of effective assessment. It further examined continuous assessment in South Africa, its meaning, teachers' conceptions and the purposes of CASS. It also covered teachers' assessment practices, moderation, assessment policies, and physical science and mathematics issues under the NCS. It finally explained the theoretical framework used for the study.

Chapter three presented the research methodology. It covered the interpretive paradigm, and the case study design appropriate for the study. These were followed by negotiation of the entry, methods of collecting data, data analysis, research quality and the ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter focused on data presentation and analysis. It covered the characteristics of the respondents. This was followed by the presentation of data based on themes arising from the research questions of the study.

Chapter five discussed the findings of the study under themes such as CASS as part of teaching and learning, the importance of feedback, the importance of learning outcomes and assessment standards, capacity building for teachers and a framework for a balanced CASS.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

6.2.1 CASS assessment practices were skewed towards fulfilling accountability requirements of the Department of Education. Teachers focussed on the Programme of Assessment (PoA) tasks and ignored other forms of assessment.

6.2.2 Teachers use the same assessment tasks several times in order to enable learners to eventually get higher marks as a result of familiarity with the tasks. This raises questions about what the 25% CASS mark reflects in terms of learner achievement from different schools.

6.2.3 It appears the use of the term 'informal' in the Department policy documents, with regard to 'assessment for learning' leads to teachers treating it as unimportant, not to be marked and recorded. In some cases assessment tasks were used to 'occupy' learners, when teachers did not feel like teaching, so that learners were not idle and disruptive in class.

6.2.4 Some teachers did not set their own assessment tasks; they took previous papers and did cut and paste. Such a practice seemed to preclude assessment tasks that are tailor-made for particular learners. This practice also may undermine the alignment of learning outcomes and assessment standards.

6.2.5 Some teachers did not consult the relevant policy documents (SAG and CASS guidelines) which contain the assessment standards and learning outcomes. This was seen to lead to a mismatch between the assessment criteria and the assessment tasks.

6.2.6 Some educators practised selective marking of assessment tasks, concentrating on only those assessment tasks which become explicit as PoA. This practice meant that in some cases learners did not get to know how they had performed in certain tasks.

6.2.7 Moderation of CASS tasks was sometimes ignored and at other times done not strictly according to guidelines. These findings cast doubt on the validity and reliability of CASS marks. This could explain the lack of correlation between CASS marks and the final mark (c.f. Chapter 2).

6.2.8 In most assessment for learning tasks learners were not given feedback by teachers. This appears to undermine one of the most fundamental uses of assessment, which is feedback on performance that guides learning.

6.2.9 Teachers faced a myriad of challenges that appeared to militate against their ability to carry out CASS tasks according to expectations.

6.3 CONCLUSION

From the above findings, it can be concluded that the CASS assessment practices did not reflect a balance between assessment of learning and assessment for learning. This state of affairs seemed to be encouraged by the fact that district departmental support systems were too technician and appeared to encourage teachers to do assessment to fulfil accountability purposes rather than for student learning.

6.4 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Assessment in education is one of the most important aspects of teaching and learning and has received a number of guidelines in the form of policy documents. Bridging the gap between theory and practice has been identified as a challenge in many spheres of life, including assessment. By focusing on teachers' assessment

practices, this study provides data that can be used to understand and explain the schism between theory and practice on matters of assessment in schools.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions the following recommendations for further research and for CASS practices can be made.

6.5.1 for further research

Survey research on assessment practices based on probability sampling for which results can be generalised to the target population should be carried out.

6.4.2 for CASS practice

Refresher courses on assessment should be run for teachers in order to renew and/or give them assessment skills that will enable them to achieve a balance between assessment for learning and assessment of learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO SCHOOLS AND PRINCIPALS

4 Berkeley Square
30 St. Peters road
Southernwood

THE PRINCIPAL
SCHOOL A and B
Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN YOUR SCHOOL

I herewith request permission to conduct a research study in your school as part fulfilment of my Masters degree in education. I am a student at University of Fort Hare. The title of my research study is **Achievement of 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' in Physical Science and Mathematics Continuous Assessment (CASS) practices: A case study of two East London district high schools in the Eastern Cape.**

The purpose of the study is to conduct an in-depth investigation to ascertain how 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' are achieved in Physical science and mathematics CASS practices. Also, to find out about the complimentary and conflicting purposes of CASS as well as the challenges faced by teachers in carrying out 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'.

The study will involve two teachers and a HoD in this school who will be interviewed to solicit responses on the topic. The findings from the respondents will be between me as the researcher and my supervisor. Under no circumstance any of the responses from this school will be disclosed.

I am counting on your cooperation and for any further information you can contact my supervisor, Professor G. Moyo on 082 408 3269.

Yours faithfully,
Charles Cobbinah.

.....
Student Number: 200703677

APPENDIX B

REPLY LETTER FROM SCHOOL



Mr Charles Cobbinah

4 Berkeley Square

30 St Peters Road

EAST LONDON

5201

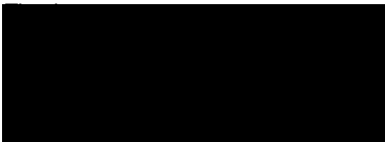
18 July 2012

Dear Sir

REPLY ON REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN OUR SCHOOL

It is with great pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research for master's degree at our school through the University of Fort Hare has been approved.

We wish you success in your studies.



APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

4 Berkeley square

30 St. Peters road

Southernwood

East London

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A MASTERS RESEARCH STUDY

I am a student at University of Fort Hare. I am required to conduct a research study as part fulfilment of my Masters degree in education. The title of my study is **Achievement of 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' in Physical Science and Mathematics Continuous Assessment (CASS) practices: A case study of two East London district high schools in the Eastern Cape.**

The purpose of the study is to conduct an in-depth investigation to ascertain how 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' are achieved in Physical science and mathematics CASS practices. Also, to find out about the complimentary and conflicting purposes of CASS as well as the challenges faced by teachers in carrying out 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning'.

The study will require you to be interviewed to solicit your responses on the above research title and also your master portfolio and a learner's portfolio would be analysed to help answer research questions. The findings of this study will strictly be between me and my supervisor and under no circumstance any of your responses will be disclosed to any other person(s). It is anticipated that the involved teachers will benefit by obtaining an increased understanding of CASS and its related challenges during the course of the study.

For further information you can contact me or my Supervisor Professor G. Moyo on the following numbers: 082 391 6911 and 082 408 3269 respectively.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Charles Cobbinah

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT FORM A



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Ethics Research Confidentiality and Consent Form

Please note:

This form is to be completed by the researcher(s) as well as by the interviewee before the commencement of the research. Copies of the signed form must be filed and kept on record.

As a Master in education (Med) student at the University of Fort Hare, conducting research regarding ...CASS practices..... I am interested in finding out more about ...*achievement of assessment strands*..... I am carrying out this research to help*me to obtain data to complete my dissertation*..

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, I would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with me. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the interview and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only my Supervisor will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around (55) minutes. I will be asking you questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. I know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but I ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When I ask questions about the future I am not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen.

If possible, I would like to come back to this school once I have completed my study to inform you and your school of what the results are and discuss the findings and proposals around the research and what this means for teachers in this school.

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regardingCASS..... I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

..... Signature of participant	Date:
I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study	
..... Signature of participant	Date:

CONSENT FORM B

RE: OFFICIAL CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TITLE

Achievement of ‘assessment of learning’ and ‘assessment for learning’ in Physical Science and Mathematics Continuous Assessment (CASS) practices: A case study of two East London district high schools in the Eastern Cape.

I, the undersigned, do hereby indicate that I have received letter to partake in the above study and that I will be interviewed by Charles Cobbinah, a student at University of Fort Hare.

The following conditions will be adhered to by the researcher and by me.

1. Participant has the right to withdraw at any time without apology or consequence.
2. That participant is free not to answer any question that he/she is not happy about.
3. Participation is not compulsory but voluntarily.
4. That respondent's anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed.
5. No form of discrimination will be levelled against me during the course of the study
6. That response will not be forwarded to any other person except to the Supervisor.
7. That the interview would be tape recorded (for researcher to capture all the interview conversation).....or no tape recorded (the researcher has to write faster to capture the interview conversation)..... (Please tick).

I therefore grant consent..... or not consent..... (Please tick) to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX E- APPROVAL LETTER-DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES
Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape
Private Bag X0032 • Bhisho • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (0)43 702 7428 • Fax: +27 (0)43 702 7427/38 • Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Dr Heckroodt

Email: bernetia@iafrica.com

04 September 2012

Mr. Charles Cobbinah
4 Berkeley Square
30 St Peters Road
Southernwood
East London
5201

Dear Mr Cobbinah

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A MASTERS THESIS: ACHIEVEMENT OF 'ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING' AND 'ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING' IN PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.
2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research at Bhongoletu and Jongilanga Secondary Schools under the jurisdiction of East London District in the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education (ECDBE) is hereby approved on condition that:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education (ECDBE) to the District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
 - d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;



- e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as educators' programmes should not be interrupted;
 - f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretarial Services;
 - g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;
 - h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Director – Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretariat Services;
 - i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis. This must also be in an electronic format.
 - j. you are requested to provide the above to the Director: The Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretariat Services upon completion of your research.
 - k. you comply to all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDBE document duly completed by you.
 - l. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).
 - m. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Director: Strategic Planning Policy Research and Secretariat Services.
3. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDBE.
 4. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
 5. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Dr. Annetia Heckroodt on 043 702 7428 or mobile number 083 275 0715 and email: annetia.heckroodt@edu.ecprov.gov.za should you need any assistance.

DR AS HECKROODT


DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES



APPENDIX F

INSTRUMENT

Achievement of 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' in Physical Science and Mathematics Continuous Assessment (CASS) practices: A case study of two East London district high schools in the Eastern Cape.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Instrument 1

EDUCATORS (Mathematics)

July 2012

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the interview

To conduct in-depth investigation to ascertain how 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' are achieved in CASS practices.

2. Guaranteed Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your responses will be strictly confidential and will not be forwarded to any other

Person (s) except my Supervisor

3. Permission to Tape

The interview will be tape recorded if only you agree. This will only allow me to

capture all the conversation. The recorded conversation will be deleted or discarded

immediately they have been transcribed into text.

4. Any questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SECTION A: EDUCATOR'S BIOGRAPHY

1. Can you tell me about yourself as a teacher?

2. How long have you been in teaching?

a) less than five years _____

b) between 6-10 years _____

c) 11-15 years _____

d) 16 years upwards _____

3. How long have you been teaching Mathematics in this school?

a) less than five years _____

b) between 6-10 years _____

c) 11-15 years _____

d) 16 years upwards _____

4. What is your highest academic qualification?

a) Bachelor of science (BSc) _____

b) Bachelor of education (BEd) _____

c) Diploma in engineering _____

d) Masters of Science (MSc) _____

e) Other (Specify) _____

5. What is your highest Professional qualification?

a) National Diploma in education _____

b) Advance certificate in education _____

c) Bachelor of education (Honours) _____

d) Masters of education _____

e) Other (Specify) _____

6. Gender _____

SECTION B: COMPLIMENTARY AND CONFLICTING PRACTICES OF ASSESSMENT

OF LEARNING

1. What guides you in setting assessment tasks? (Probe)

2. How do the Mathematics policy documents guide you in setting assessment tasks? (Probe)

3. How do you set assessment tasks for your grade 12 class? (Probe)

4. What assessment task(s) have you given to your learners in the past two terms? (Probe)

5. How many assessment tasks will you give in this term? (Probe)

6. How do you choose assessment components to form part of the Programme of Assessment (PoA)? (Probe)

7. How do you use those assessments which do not form part of the PoA? (Probe)

8. How do you make your learners aware of the assessment criteria? (Probe)

9. How do you mark your learners work? (Probe)

10. How does the moderation of your assessments take place? (Probe)

**SECTION C: COMPLIMENTARY AND CONFLICTING PRACTICES OF ASSESSMENT
FOR LEARNING**

11. How do you determine where your learners are in learning before assessing? (Probe)

12. During teaching and learning, how do you assess your learners? (Probe)

13. When you have taught them, how do you know they have understood? (Probe)

14. How do you give feedback to your learners? (Probe)

15. How useful is the feedback you get from moderation? (Probe)

SECTION D: CHALLENGES FACED IN ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

16. What problems do you face in fulfilling what is expected of you in terms of assessment of learning? (Probe)

17. How do you deal with problem(s) you encounter when assessing your learners for reporting purposes? (Probe)

SECTION E: CHALLENGES FACED IN ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

18. Can you tell me about the factors which draw you back in assessing learners for learning? (Probe)

19. In learners' assessment feedback, what do you consider as problematic? (Probe)

SECTION F: SUPPORT NEEDED IN ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

20. How useful do you find the support systems in place to boost your assessment of learning practices? (Probe)

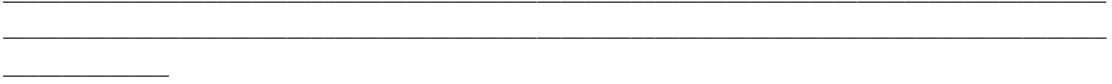
SECTION G: SUPPORT NEEDED IN ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

21. How has the assistance (by department) concerning assessment for learning improved your assessment practices? (Probe)

SECTION H: BALANCE IN 'ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING' AND 'ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

22. In your assessment practices, how do you determine that there is a place for assessment of learning and assessment for learning? (Probe)

23. What other comments will you like to give in conclusion of all what you have outlined on assessments?



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX G

RAW DATA (Data set 1)

SECTION B

SECTION B: *COMPLIMENTARY AND CONFLICTING PRACTICES OF ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING*

1. What guides you in setting assessment tasks?

APE1-I consult the work schedule, previous past questions, Subject Assessment guides (SAGs) as assessment documents.

AME2- Mostly, I always use past previous question papers, then also I check through the textbooks to find relevant questions from the textbooks. Mainly it's the past question papers. I do use the assessment the subject assessment guidelines sometimes but they don't have questions inside, its just the number and type of assessment tasks per time of which I know them already.

AHD3-They use the subject assessment guidelines which are official documents and the previous past questions. Some teachers also use the textbooks they have and they have to follow the work schedule too.

BPE4-I use previous question papers, different textbooks and also the Subject assessment guide for my subject.

BME5- Mmm, I use the policy documents such as the assignment guidelines, work schedules and also consult the past questions and other textbooks.

BHD6- You see there are documents from the departments which have been supplied, there are examination guidelines, the pace setters which are the syllabus and subject assessment guides. So they guide them (teachers) and also they indicate the components and requirements that a teacher must cover by a certain quarter.

Probe Question: Why do you use previous past questions as a guide?

APE1-Previous question papers help you instead of just giving learners questions that are easy where you see them passing all the time, then you are able to know what content that they are not able yet to do. You know in Physical science they (learners) have to be able to interpret. They don't always do yes or no or multiple choice type of question always. So they are able to read these papers and take out information and interpret them since the questions are standard.

AME2- I think they are relevant in terms of the questioning standard and format. At least I know I have not deviated from what is expected at the end. They are standard and give correct guidelines.

AHD3- The previous past questions are used because they have to be familiar and the format of the final exams must be known in advance. You see the learners also need to be familiar with the way and type of questions they should prepare for at the end. For example, in maths paper two final exams, always the question one is data handling, then analytical geometry, then trigonometry. So you see using past questions, the learners will know how the final exams taste and look like so that they don't get shock at the end of the year. So teachers need to use those questions to prepare the learners. After all those papers are the standardised.

BPE4-I use past questions to see how questions are set and the level of the questions so that I don't set easy questions all the times whilst the final exams is difficult.

BME5- To see the similar type of questions that they use for the final examination, because you have to be aware of the format therefore I do use past questions which are already standardised.

Probe question: Why do they consult past questions?

BHD6- They look at past questions, but first you must know in the first term what is supposed to have been covered by that time because you can't just start from past questions from the beginning you must know what is expected during the first term and second term. Ok then during the tasks time then they can do that. So referring to the question papers they do use them because they give them an idea of what is expected in the final examination yeah and the standard they are expected to prepare learners to do.

2. How do the Physical science and mathematics policy documents guide you in setting assessment tasks?

APE1-Policy documents like SAGs help me to know weighting. How much of this you should assess. And also the marks should not be too much for certain topics and questions as compare to others. Otherwise you end up giving them easier questions even though it shouldn't be like that.

AME2- I get the weighting from SAGs since it guides considering the amount of marks required per topic, and sometimes I get the subject learning outcomes (LO) and assessment standards (AS). You see the policy documents of assessment for maths, I don't know about others but they are empty. They don't have much information about assessment tasks and questions but I make sure they are in my portfolio because department officials want to see them in.

AHD3- For instance, the work schedule helps them to know the weight of the topics. So they know the topics that they should teach and how deep they should teach each of those topics. In the policy documents, teachers get to know the number of tasks required per term. It also stipulates that at the same time they must do informal tasks like classwork, short tests to prepare the learners for them to cope with the final exams.

BPE4- To know which topics I should set or ask more questions. I also know the types and numbers of assessment tasks whether one investigation task and two control tests per term are required.

BME5- Well, according to assessment policy document I can select the knowledge level; know the breakdown of topics in percentages or weighting as they appear in the final exams. Also the number of tasks and type of tasks per term that are required for CASS are known.

BHD6- Yeah, you see the guidelines they tell you the weighting like for instance you know every topic what percentage of the paper is required, each topic you are supposed to know in advance how much it weigh in the final paper (exam). But also, you know when it comes to exams in fact that is where past questions are very important to know the format so they set the questions according to the format that will eventually be in the final exams to train the learners what is expected at the end of the year. So they use both.

Probe question: Do teachers consult policy documents often?

BHD6- They try to do, but the problem is that this days the teachers are having a big workload and that has impacted on their ability to do things as required. You'll find out that some teachers are teaching subjects that they not trained to teach, yeah and it gives them very little time to do justice to the work that is at hand. So you may find out that they are just using their experience sometimes, and that is where the previous questions papers come in because where a teacher fails to consult the assessment guidelines and all that, the question papers now will guide them. You know sometimes its examination kind of teaching where they say let me just teach this because it's always coming in the examination. So there is that tendency but ideally they are supposed to consult the guidelines regularly and other policy documents.

3. How do you set assessment tasks for your grade 12 class?

APE1- I don't set my own questions. I don't like setting; if I have to set I always leave it till the last moment. So for me it's easier to just take whatever is there. Previous question papers and get guide from them. Sometimes I just take them and cut and paste them. Most of the time I just do cut and paste. I take a question and change it to give to my learners.

AME2- I teach the topic then I give classworks to prepare the learners before I give them the control test. In most cases when I'm setting test for example, I always refer to the previous question papers.

Probe question: Do you do cut and paste?

AME2- Yes, I look at the question papers and I select the questions I want, then I photocopy, cut and paste then they are ready to be written by the learners.

Probe question: Do you change context or format of past questions?

AME2- You see in maths if you can notice, the question format of previous question papers are not really different from one another. But sometimes I try to change the values, other times I reframe the questions but not all the time. I give it like that in most cases.

AHD3- The teachers do take different past questions and consolidate them. Others use different textbooks and study guides questions and memorandums. They then cut and paste whilst some choose to re-type those questions for neatness sake.

Probe question: Do they change context of the questions to suit learners?

AHD3- For maths I don't think much is done because there are few words so they take the questions directly and just change the numbering even physical science it's the same thing. But sometimes others change few values here and there especially those teachers who re-type but just a very few occasions.

BPE4- When I'm to set for test, I first look for different question papers. I collect different questions on the topic I have treated then I do cut and paste as my test. For project or investigations I look for right ones in the different textbooks which are relevant to the topic I have covered for my kids (learners). And as for class works and homeworks, I use both past questions and textbooks questions.

BME5- I usually use the past question papers to set my questions. If it's a control test I select the questions from various past questions that are related to the topic I have taught them but I don't do cut and paste, I do write with my handwriting and then sometimes I type them. For mathematics it is easier to change the values to make it look a bit different from the original questions so that the learners wouldn't know it's the same question they know if they have seen that question paper before. June and Trial exam papers are common (set by the department) so I don't set them but the rest I use the same method to set them.

BHD6- Yeah, initially before the coming of photocopying machines and computers in the schools, it was setting of own questions but now there is more tendency of cut and paste because partially it saves you time so that you have more time to do other thing that you are supposed to do giving the workload at hand. And also when you cut and paste questions it is really the question paper that have come in exams before and that is what you are expected to come in any case, just a bit of variation

here and there. So they are adopted that cut and paste a lot but you know the whole question paper cannot be cut and paste just some of the questions based on the topic that they have taught at a time.

Probe question. Do you perhaps change the past questions?

APE1-I do. I change the format not the values. I mean the context. Sometimes you know that your learners may not understand the questions as they are. So you can change the wording by reframing and also blend it with test book questions. As long as you know you are not giving them more marks than they are supposed to get.

BPE4- When I choose questions, I look for the topics I have covered. I look at the level of that question whether my learners can do it then I give them. I do change the numbering and also sometimes the marks. Another thing is that learners sometimes have seen previous questions before so I do change the values in the question so that they don't memorise answers for me.

BME5- Yes, I do. As explained I do change some of the values for example if a question is $5x + 2y = 7$ I can make it $7x + 3y = 9$ so that it looks a bit different.

Probe question: Do you think they change the context based on the learners situation may be language?

BHD6- They try to change but, ah, in our school communicating in English is the problem because they have also realised that even if they try to adjust to do according to the ability and level of the learners they must have at the same time try to make sure learners can cope with the final exams. So they are compared to use the questions as they are because that is what will come at the end of day or year. But language communication in English is a problem and it contribute to some of the learner not answering properly because they don't understand the questions and it negatively impact on them.

Probe question: Don't they reframe questions sometimes?

BHD6- In fact it's not easy reframing the questions. There is very little you can do in reframing the questions because at the end of the day what the question paper also gives is also the English the learners must know. So they stick to the questions as they are and do more revision to tune the learners to be used to how questions are and the language used.

Probe question: Some of the teachers say they change context, the values, figures to suite the learners for those who have seen the papers before may not get advantage?

BHD6- Yeah, it is done but in few times. You see the learners we have these days are not all that capable of reproducing or recalling even if they have seen the questions before so even changing the questions a bit may do the trick when giving them test. So even when teachers change the numbering and values they are not changing the context or influencing the question still the ability that they have as learners will show from the result they have.

4. What assessment task(s) have you given to your learners in the past two terms?

APE1-Term 1: I have given one class test, one practical investigation, a class work and and about five Home works. Term 2: It was one class test, one practical investigation, the June exams and classworks.

AME2- Term 1: I have given one control test and one investigation. Term 2: An assignment and June examination.

AHD3- For term one its was one control test, one assignment and either a project or investigation. Term two they did one assignment and the June exams.

BPE4- Term 1, one project, a short test, practical investigation, control test one. For term two, one control test, one practical investigation and mid-year exams.

BME5- Term1: I gave one investigation, a project, an assignment and control test. I usually give projects earlier even if though it is needed in the fourth term. Term 2: I gave two control tests, one assignment and also the June exams. For control test I gave two but the department need only one.

BHD6- You see plenty of class works, home works are given but when it comes to CASS they stick to the minimum requirement because CASS you need to minimise the workload, so when the department wants one task, they give one, when they want two they do two also. But on top of that there are informal tasks that are done. Not all of them are marked by teachers some are marked by the learners whilst the teachers are doing some corrections. The only thing that these teachers are good at is giving feedback to the learners because they know how to give the learners work and then give correction for learners to mark themselves especially that lady I can mention her name_____.Actually I have even tried to learn from her she is very good at feedback because some of us if we try to do that the learners just tick tick everything correct correct even when there are things that are wrong but she has a way of doing it well but that is just her the others try to do it their own way which do not improve learners learning. Sometimes the learners you see they just want to give tick even if its wrong so afterwards the teacher has to look at the work just an overview to see that they have not just given themselves marks. If you want to record the marks then you have to go through all the work properly to re-check their work.

Probe question: Are there any other assessments tasks given?

APE1-Class works but it depends from topic to topics. There are topics for example organic chemistry which need a lot of practices so every second day you give classwork where some topics you just give one per work especially small topics like Doppler Effect I just gave them two classwork and that was it.

AME2- These are the formal tasks that I have given that are for CASS purposes. Otherwise I did give informal works like tests, classwork and homework.

AHD3- The rest are the informal tasks aside those formal ones.

BPE4- I give a lot of classwork, homework and weekly test.

BME5- Every day I give a homework and when I have time in most of the cases I give classwork also. I try to give a lot of classwork but time is the factor. Sometimes I don't get enough time to give homework and classwork so it depends because sometimes there is not enough time to even cover up the topic how much more the time for classwork. The learners take too much time to finish the work, they are not like the model C learners our school is a rural school. But if I have time I give as many classworks and homeworks and short test. When I am teaching a topic and I didn't finish I can't give classwork. I have to finish first then classwork will follow.

5. How many assessment tasks will you give in this term?

APE1-This term I've already given them two classwork and I will give project also.

Probe question: What other assessment tasks you intend to give them?

APE1-I suppose to give them practical investigation from last term and a project and classwork.

AME2- For term 3 there are two stipulated tasks for CASS. The trial exam and one control test. But now I am yet to give the formal control test. Every day they go home with either assignment or homework, and also every day they do classworks.

AHD3- Term 3 its one control test and they are yet to write the trial exams plus the informal tasks.

Probe question: Do teachers do more of the tasks than expected by policy?

AHD3- Some teachers do more others do the minimum but for the informal tasks because there are so many topics they do as much as they have time for.

BPE4-I have to give one project, a test before they write the trial examination.

BME5- Term three I have also given one control test already. I want to give another control test next week then the trial will begin.

BHD6- For mathematics informal assessments must be done daily but for physical science we agree that the teacher should do at least two per week. It can be classwork or homework. That is not the guidelines but we saw that these are reasonable to make way for teaching also. Sometimes the teachers may just not give but that is what they should do. For formal or CASS requirements the teachers go according to the basic requirement. That one you give it anytime, sometimes you can give it in the middle of the term and or the end of the term. Because like control test you have to cover some topics before. For practical investigation you look for what time is right and you give.

Probe question: Some say they do many of the control tests and select?

BHD6- Yeah, some give short tests or more tests and select one for CASS. I also do it myself, but depending on the marks of the task and standard but they take one for CASS that is a choice for a teacher.

6. How do you choose assessment components to form part of the Programme of assessment?

APE1-Usually, Class tests, classworks do not go to CASS because they got less marks. So they can't be taken to CASS. But if we manage to do two control test in a term, then I take the one where they have perform well. Even if I give them two control test I don't do it like some teachers do it where they will give learners this test and if they fail they give them the same test again so when they pass they say they have passed the second test. When I give them a second test I will give them the same content but change questions. To see if they've understood when we were doing the correction from the first test. Because if you give them the same question you're just teaching them to memorise.

Probe question: Why do you give them two test and choose the one they have done well as part of CASS?

APE1-The reason why I usually give them two is that when you see that they are not grasping yet you are giving them a chance to perform better then you know that the first one even if they don't do well then in the second one they'll probably do better.

Probe question: Doesn't it increase the learners CASS marks?

APE1-It does. It does. That is the reason why we're giving them now another chance to go back and learn again and see if they can improve. But with some learners, their marks remain the same. The CASS marks you know, is very important in their final year marks.

AME2- In most cases, I know when the tasks will be used as CASS requirement. If I am suppose to do let say two assignments per time, I do them as my CASS so I don't have to be choosing or sorting them to decide which tasks goes for CASS. My CASS works are CASS works and those informal works are separate. I don't mix them.

Probe question: Why do you stick to the minimum tests required?

AME2- Ah, our children in Grade 12 have a problem of doing work or bringing work. If it's a test there is no problem because if they are in school then they will write but other assessment tasks you have to battle to get from them.

Probe question: Do you sometimes repeat tests or give more than one test and select?

AME2- No, I only give one control test per term if that is what is required. I don't give more. I do give some short tests but not for CASS. So if its control test I know its hundred marks and is for CASS.

AHD3- Usually in this school teachers do more of the CASS requirements and they select the tasks that the learners did better. If now a teacher has two or three tasks like control test then they choose the ones with best marks for CASS marks.

Probe question: Why do they use the better task's marks as CASS marks?

AHD3- They do selection because the CASS marks contribute to the learners' final year marks. Look, its 25% you know its a lot so if a learner fails it, it can affect him or her.

Probe question: What does a teacher got to lose if a learner fails CASS work?

AHD3- A learner who fails CASS has already failed in advance the final exams. Its clear so as a teacher you have to assist your learners to at least do well in CASS then little effort at the end of the year the learner can make it. This department want pass pass whether its rural school or town school so you have to help otherwise you'll all the time be seen as a bad teacher who doesn't know anything then they will keep on visiting visiting but with no direct help.

BPE4- I don't choose them. CASS work is stipulated and is formal so I inform the learners ahead then I give. So CASS work are always different from informal tasks. Its only control test that I sometimes give them a second one if I see that they lack behind and didn't do well just to see if they can learn better and do well then I take this best one as CASS since they need more marks at the end of the year to pass.

BME5- If am giving a control test for CASS I set the question and I give it to the HoD to moderate the paper. The moderated marks become CASS and non-moderated works are not used for CASS purpose. I tell learners when the work is for CASS because they have to prepare very well for it unlike the others. I also give short test but not for CASS because its about ten or fifteen marks. In a term, the department needs only one control test but if in a term I can give three control test then I use the good one, the one they have done well as the CASS marks. The others I keep them as evidence of extra work done. In a control test I make sure I have taught a lot of topics but if I teach only one topic and I give a test that test does not form part of the CASS tasks. So I pre-determine what become CASS and I let learners know.

Probe question: When you give two test, how do you choose?

BME5- Some teachers are selecting what control tests or tasks that the individual learners have done well, but I take the one that all the learners have done well generally.

BHD6- After given plenty of classwork. They normally specify to learners that on such of such a date you are going to write a control test for CASS because that one has to be specifically a hundred marks and the standard and format have to be as required. They just set a date and give, but if they find out that the marks of learners are too low then they may decide to give another one. Sometimes the marks are too low they may consider giving another test just to assist the learners but I can tell you that sometimes you can give another test but they may get even lower than the first one so some teachers choose to give the learners the same test.

Probe question: Why do they give another task whilst still learners know it's their CASS tasks?

BHD6- I think it's the pressure sometimes from the department and elsewhere. Because, if they fail it's always the teacher, you know here it's not like model C school. You balance between the conditions that you are working in and the fact that you have to give the learners the fighting chance to be able to get into tertiary as well, just like other learners. So you try to get them to perform to their best of their ability because sometimes they don't put in the effort that they are supposed to, so you tell them, you see you fail this test or task, you must go back and read and I am going to give you another chance. I want you to try and perform better so that you boost your marks so that you can have the chance of passing at the end of the year. Because at their home some of them don't have parents, others no electricity, some of them are absent because they have to care or assist their grandparents or something therefore teachers have to assist them to some extent.

Probe question: Why is the assistance directed to the CASS work only?

BHD6- It's because the CASS work is the one that will determine their final mark at the end of the year rather than other class-marks or homework. So if you want to help learners you must focus on the CASS tasks and make sure they get the marks. But the trial examination which comes from the department you as the teacher don't have the opportunity to repeat or give another time.

7. How do you use those assessments which do not form part of the PoA?

APE1-For their report marks. I take all their work that they have done and find average. The classworks, the class tests, all the control test and all those marks form their termly report instead of just taking their CASS work for that particular term only. The

project and practical investigations really boost their marks because they copy from each other and also from internets and books.

Probe question: Do you record classworks and homeworks?

APE1- I only record few. I mark but I don't record all. I just give a tick sometimes and the rest we mark in class together. I ask a question and we do correction on the board and I mark with learners.

AME2- I do record the marks of some short tests just to add when I'm compiling their marks for the termly report. If I give them let's say three tests for... how do I explain..., If I give them three tests for first term then I add those three tests for their reports. I only use short test and any other CASS control test in that term.

Probe question: Do you use classmarks, project, investigations as per of report?

AME2- No, I don't use the assignment, project, classwork and assignments and even investigations. I simply use the test. I don't stick to the CASS components only as the report but I do my short test, I add it to CASS control test I find average and that form report not the other tasks.

Probe question: Why don't you use those tasks as part of their report?

AME2- It was explained to us as Grade 12 teachers to simply add the test marks for termly report. Let's say term two, I simply use June exams one control test and any other short test that I have done as their report. The other assessment tasks these learners they copy from themselves, internet, books without even using their own ideas and understanding.

AHD3- The other control tests that are not selected are also recorded but they are not used as CASS marks, only the chosen best tasks.

Probe question: Do they become part of the learners report?

AHD3- No, no, they don't form part of the report also. The teachers use the CASS requirements per term as their termly report. They include Assignment, investigation or project plus the control test as the learners report. No homework, classworks or even short tests are used.

BPE4- If somebody will come from the office requiring where is your recording sheet, then they will know that I've covered this much then I did a short test and here are the marks for those tests. Like now they can see if for instance a learner is not attending school, then they (office) can see that they (learners) were given test but the learner was not there. So I keep the marks for short tests and informal work but I do not use them for their CASS marks.

Probe question: Do the marks of short test, classwork and homework become the report?

BPE4- Those marks don't form part of CASS and also don't form part of their report. When I do report I use the CASS requirements marks for that particular term. Like for me, I have two recording sheets. One recording sheet is for the daily work and common short tests that the learners do and for the CASS I only use the formal sheet given by the department for CASS. So the other recording sheet is for the informal as a proof that I have done them.

BME5- I do use the other tasks that do not form CASS. I record all the marks and keep them as evidence although they are not part of CASS. The department comes here a lot and when they do ask I have to show them because in this school last year our matric results were not good and they think its because we are not giving enough work to learners so I keep them at the back of the portfolios. These form extra work or informal work.

Probe question: Do those marks become part of reports?

BME5- Yes, all the tasks marked are added to make their termly reports. But I don't take the marks of investigations and projects. They get a lot of marks. Also classwork marks and homework don't form part of their report because they copy from friends or take them from books so I always use the control tests and any other test of the term as report. When I add investigation and project marks they won't learn because they may think they are good so they don't need to learn.

BHD6- Those assessments which are not part of the CASS components, we normally tell them to put them at back of their portfolios for revision purposes. We tell them that those are based on what must come at the end of the year so you need to revise them, master them and the more you mark them the more you increase your chance of letting the learners pass examination.

Probe question: Do they record them?

BHD6- Some they record others they don't. You won't even have the time of marking all and recording everything. Like mathematics for instance the works which are informal are given just to keep the learners busy because if you don't occupy them they turn to be mischievous and do all those silly things in school or after school. So when they have work with them all the time they get into that academic mentality which is very important at the end of the day for their success.

8. How do you make your learners aware of the assessment criteria?

APE1-For project and practical investigation, I give a rubric if I have and make sure that whatever it is that I am going to give marks for is clearly indicated in the rubric. With control tests, what I do is that I tell them we have done this and that topics so read them for the test or exams. When I teach I give note so they learn those note for the test.

AME2- Yeah, I explained the assessment criteria of that particular task like projects, assignments, investigations, then I add the copy of the rubric so that they can follow and see how I will mark it. So they know what is expected. But for tests I can't give them memorandum, I simply try to explain and revise with them the topics they should focus for the test especially the CASS test.

AHD3- What I do and also encourage teachers to do is for example, I make the parents especially grade 12 learners to make them aware of the importance of continuous assessment. So that they also help to encourage the learners to do all their work and not do like their grade 11 and 10 times. We tell them that in grade 12, the CASS form 25% and if they don't do all the tasks, their results will be pending because NCS says all the tasks must be done.

Probe question: Do teachers give assessment criteria like rubrics in project?

AHD3- Oh, yes, yes, for project work the rubric is given in advance for the learners to know their left and right otherwise they may miss the point and may not get the required marks. For test they give the scope to learners pointing to the areas of relevance and importance. Other teachers do revisions especially a day or two before the control test or exams.

BPE4- Like we do revision and in that revision I summarise the whole work so that in the test they are expected to know those topics.

Probe question: For projects and investigations what do you do?

BPE4- From the work that we have done, then I tell them that we will have project or investigation so they must know exactly what will be required, the topics and the amount of marks I'm expected. They must know the rubric for them to know how I will mark them .For tests I give them memos after marking them.

BME5- I use rubric for investigation and projects and memorandums for tests. The memo is written as soon as I set my test so that I don't have to mark learners without memo that will not be fair for all the learners. For tests I discuss the topics with them before they write and also the rubric is given with the questions so that they can cover all what I need to give marks for. In order to ensure consistency I always stick to my memo and rubric.

BHD6- Yeah, especially in project they get the criteria for them to go and do their work knowing what is expected. To some extent practical investigations are given with some rubric. For test they give learners the scope and areas they have to stick to and prepare for the test. Other teachers do revision with learners the day before the test. It depends on teacher's time.

Probe question: Does giving learners scope help?

BHD6- These learners get scope because even in tertiary that is what they do, why don't we do it here. It helps them because they don't have the capacity to read a lot, so when you give them the areas it makes a difference.

9. How are your learners work marked?

APE1-Only tasks that I mark myself thoroughly with memorandum or rubrics are the formal CASS works. The rest I mark together with learners.

Probe question: Why do you mark class works, homeworks and non-CASS work with learners?

APE1-This is to train and guide learners on how they should study and how to give appropriate answers. But, when it comes to CASS work or short-tests, maybe I don't trust them. I know that some of them will change what they have written. I know that if I give them to mark the work some of them will not mark as I tell them is the correct answer. Even if we correct it together in class, so I mark myself to avoid all that and I come back and do corrections together with them.

Probe question: How do you ensure consistency in marking the whole class?

APE1-I think by using one memorandum or rubric for all of the learners their marked work will be consistent.

AME2- I have to make sure the marking of learners work is standard so that when I go for cluster moderation, they don't find errors with my marking. I make sure that the marking of different learners is fair so that there will be consistency. I do this by sticking to the memo throughout and not ignore and rush.

Probe question: Do you mark all tasks you give to learners?

AME2- That could be difficult really. You know marking takes time and you as a teacher have to teach also. Not only Grade 12 but other grades as well so you have to make a plan. But for CASS work I can't play with it. I have to find the time to mark them properly. We do marking of classworks and homework in class with the learners and I append my signature in their books. So learners are taught how to mark their work and those of their friends.

AHD3- As for assessment of learning tasks, like formal works are strictly marked by the teachers themselves using memos or rubric for consistency and to avoid marking errors because those works go for external moderations. As for the informal works

the learners mark themselves or peer even though they can cheat whilst the teachers do corrections. Then the teachers have to re-check or re-mark and append signature in the learners books.

BPE4- When I set the test, I also have a memorandum because if you don't have a memo it takes time, so immediately they finish I mark them so that I can record their script and give them feedback. Because of the number of learners in the other classes I have. It's not easy to give them tasks today and mark them. I try to mark them within that week so that the memo will have a meaning. If it takes too much time they forget the questions and how they answered the questions.

How do Probe question: you ensure consistency in marking?

BPE4- As a teacher if a learner doesn't give you exactly your memo, but if you can see that what is written is logic especially when they have to explain something then you have to give him or her marks because a child doesn't have to write exactly like your memo so by doing that it helps in achieving consistency.

BME5- With marking I take my time so that I can mark fairly with memo because when you give learners their marked scripts they compare with that of their friends therefore one has to be careful when marking. You don't just mark anyhow and even for cluster moderation it can show if you mark reckless.

BHD6- Because the teacher has the memo, rubric or whatever, as soon as they finish writing he can go about marking. You mark them, and then you record their marks and give back the scripts to learners to do remedial or correction and then collect back the paper for the purposes of CASS. You as the teacher have to keep those works because the learners have the tendency of losing their work.

Probe question: Do teachers mark all tasks given to learners?

BHD6- No, the teachers cannot mark all of them because the informal tasks can be too many so the learners mark their classwork, homework and even some short tests through peer assessment, and you the teacher sign.

Probe question: Are informal tasks given as per requirements?

BHD6- Yeah, yeah, yeah. the policy says we must assess the learners all the time. It can be formal or informal. But within those testing, the control tests go for CASS because you cannot give control test all the time. So there is this informal like class work or homework you can give as many as you have time for. Some you can mark and record or just leave them. You just do corrections.

Probe question: Do they use the informal tasks they recorded?

BHD6- On the report. Because for the report it does not limit you to the CASS, you get everything that has been done throughout the term. You see you get your continuous assessment, some class work or homework, project whatever all put together. So the report... is a reflection of the whole terms work. Both formal and informal.

10. How does the moderation of your assessment tasks take place? (Probe)
APE1-I give my work to the HoD. He do re-marking, check marks also.

Probe question: Do you give tasks prior to administering?

APE1-Sometimes prior, sometimes I will just tell him that I am going to do test and I don't have enough time, so I will give you when they have finish writing but I do tell him that there will be a test.

Probe question: What are the tasks that go for moderation?

APE1-The tasks that go for moderation are the formal assessment; I mean the CASS requirement tasks.

Probe question: What about those other tasks which are not part of PoA?

APE1-Those are informal ones. The HoD will only see those when he is checking learners class work or homework book for topic coverage.

Probe question: How often does HoD check learners work?

APE1-Not often, sometimes I give him even if he doesn't ask.

AME2- I give all my work to HoD to moderate. So the question papers and memos are given.

Probe question: Do you also give him classwork, homework and short tests to moderate?

AME2- No, they are classworks and other informal tasks, I only give HoD formal tasks which are for CASS to moderate.

Probe question: Why are informal tasks not moderated?

AME2- It will be time consuming, because they are given every day so you see it cannot be possible.

Probe question: Do you give tasks to HoD to moderate before or after you give learners?

AME2- I try to give him before they write but not always. When I'm busy and getting behind I do let learners write then I mark and give him. It's the same thing.

AHD3- Yeah, as an HoD, I must have a plan and date for internal moderations. Here, three days before learners write control test, the teacher must finish setting the questions, have memos and then submit to me for moderation. There must be findings which are highlighted during moderation. If changes are to be made then he or she must do so then photocopy for learners to write. After the scripts are marked, they must come back for moderating the sincerity of their marking.

Probe question: Do you moderate all the formal tasks and informal tasks?

AHD3- No, no, I deal with the formal tasks. They will go external; they will be the learners CASS marks. I won't have time to officially moderate informal but I can randomly sometimes check from the learners' books whether those tasks are also done. An HoD must visit classroom to check whether teachers pay attention to teaching and assessing as expected. So I have to check them in class also at least once a year or many times to check their learners' books. Then I can see if there are content gaps and help them.

When I moderate I take all the learners in the class' marked and recorded tasks, then I take top, bottom and the middle, then I moderate, then I finally moderate the ten percent (10%) or five learners whose files are taking to cluster CASS moderation. In most schools only the five learners' files are moderated and the other learners don't have the files or work or real marks and it's discriminately. So teachers must add recording sheet so that at least I'm satisfied that the learners all have written the tasks and all their scripts are marked and recorded but not cooked marks given to them.

Probe question: What are the specific aspects that you look at when moderating?

AHD3- Firstly, I check the standard of the test. It must be of standard in the first place. And also checking that the questions are not deviated from the work-schedule but go according to the topics are taught. Also, I check the assessment standards and learning outcomes if they are followed. Also, the awarding of marks whether they correspond with questions themselves. And also, is the memo correct to answer the questions properly. If I find a problem, I give comments for them to change things if not done properly.

Probe question: Do teachers apply your comments as expected?

AHD3- It is the policy which says so, so definitely they have to comply otherwise then they are not following what is stipulated in the policy. I moderate because I'm checking its authenticity. But some teachers don't want to be corrected and its sad. I mean, an HoD at the same time must play this vital role. I have to assist them and even speak to the learners also to come on board and do the expectations.

Probe question: Do you apply the same principles to all the subject you moderate?

AHD3- Yes, I have to treat all the teachers the same so I use the same way of moderating their work. I depend on the department checking tools then a moderate.

BPE4- When I set the test, I have to take it to my HOD so that he moderates it. I have to give him three days before they write the test. It must be the test and the memo so that he checks them.

Probe question: What does he do in moderating?

BPE4- He checks the standard of the question and the level of weighting and then addition of marks within one day or two and returns the work back to me. He was teaching this subject so he knows it; he checks and gives me for me to do the test.

Probe question: Do you also give him classwork or others?

BPE4- The class work, home works and some short tests I don't give him. He comes anytime that he wants and asks for them. We have days like wednesdays when he comes and checks learners books or my file to check the amount of work that has been done in order to see evidence that those informal works are also done.

BME5- I give only the control test, investigation, project and assignment that are for CASS and common paper like June when I finish marking then I give them to my HoD for moderation.

Probe question: Do you give any other tasks as well?

BME5- Ah, what is the point of moderating short tests and other informal works that are not for CASS purposes. There is no need. For the past years I have been marking Grade 12 final exams papers so I can't make errors or mistakes in short tests and other works. The HoD also need time to teach his classes and do his work.

Probe question: Does HoD check informal work?

BME5- He checks once in a quarter from the learners books whether those informal or extra works are done or not. But after marking the scripts the CASS works I give the scripts to HoD to remark to see if marks are added up properly. For the CASS purposes work, all the teachers in this school do internal moderation in advance. You give your work to HoD earlier within the last week of the month if your task is ready. You don't wait till its cluster moderation day then you want work to be moderated. I know of other teachers in other schools that select only five learners on the day of moderation, give them tasks to complete,

mark and give HoD to moderate the same day, put the tasks in the file, put school stamp and then take them for cluster moderation. All are done in one day but they do it.

BHD6- We have a certain date at the end of every month for moderation. From the 20th or 23rd till the end of the month is the week for moderation. So it is done on a monthly basis and there are tools for recording and checking.

Probe question: What do teachers do on that period?

BHD6- They bring their master portfolios and five learners portfolios. In fact with grade 12 internal moderation once a month is just an arrangement we have made to make sure that teachers are up to date in time and are well prepared ahead for the cluster moderation. This is to discourage a situation where teachers bring their work the day before they go for moderation, that causes a lot of problems. What about when as HOD I'm not at school or something happen. By the time there is CASS the teachers are ready and they have done everything right.

Probe question: Do teachers have no problem with that arrangement?

BHD6- Sometimes I have to remind them. Then they come and say I am busy with other classes that is why, then I tell them to try and bring their work because we don't want the last minute rush. Yeah, you remind them, it's not like some of them don't want to bring their work for internal moderation but just that some of them are teaching so many subjects and classes so it's the workload that create those problems of delay sometimes. But also you get those ones who always bring work on time. It also depends on the personality of the teacher. Some are disciplined so it's prompting prompting now and again to get the task moderated on time.

Probe question: Do they also include classwork, short tests?

BHD6- Oh yeah, because the moderation tool will ask how many class work have you given so far. So if we expect two per week and it's four weeks then we expect already eight per month. So if they are less then I put comment to say you know you need to pace up so that you stick to the minimum at least needed.

Probe question: Do they stick to the marked and recorded work only?

BHD6- Yeah, they bring the recorded ones but also bring the other ones like classwork books to show that there is evidence of those work also.

SECTION C: COMPLIMENTARY AND CONFLICTING PRACTICES OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

11. How do you determine where your learners are in learning before teaching?

APE1-So if I am going to do a certain topic in grade 12, I start with the previous grade 11 work and ask questions on that. Most of the time I tell learners to go and learn this and that topic for the next topic. I then ask questions to know what they have learnt on their own and how much they remember. It's usually verbal questions. It's only in the beginning of the year that I give classwork from the previous years to see.

Probe question: What are the advantages of checking their previous knowledge?

APE1-It help you as a teacher to know how much they understood the previous work when you were teaching the other time and also to know whether to start from the basics or move on especially when it's a continuation of a topic. Because you have to see whether you can move on or to start afresh when they don't remember.

AME2- The thing is that I also teach grade 11 class so that is my advantage. I start by giving verbal questions followed by written work based on their previous years' work. But when I find out that they've forgotten all of that I have to start afresh.

Probe question: Don't you have a problem with time in this case?

AME2- Yes, it does affect the period time because it's just 45 minutes but also it has to be done despite time for the benefit of the learners because I can keep teaching and they keep on forgetting then the basics or foundation will be missing then they won't understand anything I'm busy teaching.

AHD3- A teacher must apply question and answers method to know whether they are to start from the basis or what. I think they do that in order for learners to be recalling or be attentive to the new concepts. Others give pre-test or classwork to see what to do next whilst other teachers introduce the lesson through verbal questioning.

BPE4- You have to check their pre-knowledge what they've done before. You ask questions verbally about previous topics. I can also give them class work for them to do themselves then I mark or quickly look to see what they're doing then I can see whether I have to repeat myself or start somewhere. I sometimes correct them and then move on.

BME5- When I go for class and it's a new topic, I ask relevant questions sometimes from Grade 11 work to see how good they are. For example, if I'm teaching topic like algebra, I go back to previous work through questioning to find out what they understand and know. What can I do as a teacher, I have to introduce and ask questions otherwise I wouldn't know where to start.

BHD6- When they reach a class especially Grade 12, they may say yesterday we did this topic and then give brief questioning so that they can assess to see whether the learners are following the topics as they are taught. Sometimes its brief introduction when it's a new topic.

Probe question: Do you sometimes observe them teaching?

BHD6- Come on, you see, teachers are grown-ups. They are experienced teachers so I cannot be monitoring them as HoD to such extent. If its for IQMS purposes fine that I can but for CASS I don't see its relevance.

12. During teaching and learning, what do you do to assess your learners?

APE1-What I usually do. I will ask questions on whatever topic I've been doing. What I like to do is just ask them to summarise what I've said. It must be just a sentence or tell me what I was talking about. Then I can see how much they have grasped or if they are just sitting down and watching me.

Probe question: How do you pick learners to answer or summarise in class?

APE1-I pick them individually, everyone get chance to say something or elaborate on what is been said.

Probe question: How helpful are questioning during teaching to learners?

APE1-For learners its helpful because in class now they cannot just sit down and sleep but to think and be attentive to whatever is going on in class. Because they know anytime you can ask them questions on what you are teaching, they concentrate, pay attention and write their own note whilst listening to me.

Probe question: Do you also give them work whilst teaching?

APE1-Not when I am teaching. If I give them work when I'm teaching I use to write a question or two on the chalkboard mostly. Because, I wanted the work to be something that they can quickly do and they can refer to it as we continue on the topic. I always make sure that when I've done one example, then I want to see if they understand, then I write another similar example on the chalkboard and ask them to complete it and do it themselves then we see if we are together.

AME2- I start by asking questions and also give examples to make it easier for them and then I give work. Sometimes I ask them to group themselves just to speed up things. Good learners sit with weaker ones and assist them.

Probe question: Do you do classwork when you are teaching?

AME2- I do give them but I stop them if they are taking too much time to finish so that we can move on. When I am to give classwork then I know that I'm done with the topic then they write the classmark for me to see how much they understand.

AHD3- During teaching, and also learning for Maths, they give examples on the board then they give further examples to see whether they've got it or not. In some days classwork is given to check learners ability of mastering. It could be verbal questions as well especially when there is no time.

BPE4- After I have taught them I give them examples of what I'm teaching, then I take their textbooks that they use and take more examples for them. I take some questions and ask them how can you do this or that, then they participate and if they have a problem then I can see and explain. Then after doing that together then I give them class work which could be continued as home work if they don't finish it on time then I add more questions if they're doing it at home.

Probe question: Do you mark your class works?

BPE4- Since this year grade 12 are few, I try to mark them sometimes but usually I do corrections with them then I sign to check if the work is done. Then they swap their books and mark themselves whilst we are doing corrections in class and it is easy to see whether they have done their work or not. You know, when you're teaching, you teach first by explaining, you explain, you explain, you explain then you give them an example, then you give them something to do during that same period. Then you can see that they are progressing, then if you see that they have a problem whilst going around then you have to correct them. Sometimes you don't have to do corrections on the chalkboard whilst you move around you can correct them instantly.

Probe question: If the majority don't understand what do you do?

BPE4- No, no if I can see they don't understand whilst I'm going around them, then we have to stop, then I ask where exactly they have a problem, then I explain again.

Probe question: Do you have conflict with time?

BPE4- I do have time friction because the period is short, when you see that most of the class don't understand you have to stop and re-teach. I can't just move on because I have to complete my syllabus. Then I do extra classes to catch up. But when its one or two learners who don't understand I give them other work, then I explain to such individuals, of cause time will be against you. I do these extra classes so that I can assess, finish the topics but still allow them to do more examples and class work and homeworks.

BME5- During teaching I give small small classwork to assess who is doing well and who is not doing well. I give work within the period, go around them to see how they are working so I can mark some of their work as they are doing. What I normally do is that I give them examples first. I am active in class you see but the class is big so I can't mark them all, but if it were a small class I will mark all so I sometimes ask them to mark with pencil whilst I'm doing corrections on the board. If I should mark forty or forty-five books a day, ah, I think I will die and I cannot have the strength to teach the topics I have to teach daily. I have taught my learners how to mark themselves and I trust them also. After the classwork or whatever I put a line and sign their books so they can't put anything in between when marking is done.

BHD6- Sometimes they can ask learners to do work on the board to do this work and that kind of thing. You see there is a set time for classwork usually so I don't think classwork can be done every time during teaching as you have a topic to teach. But different teachers have different methods. Some give work whilst teaching and just go around to see and mark as they work. Sometimes, you can teach and they can show that they understand but when it comes to writing they don't reproduce what you taught. So when you give work and go around its also helpful.

13. When you have taught them, how do you know they have understood?

APE1-Most of the time I summarise what I have done to see what the key points are for that particular topic that we were doing on that particular day. Then I will tell them that tomorrow when we come, each one should tell me something about the key point in what we have done. Sometimes before we start class I don't say anything they are the ones who tell me what we've done previously.

Probe question: Do you at the end of teaching give learners tasks?

APE1-Not always, really, not always because most of the times you have not even finish the topic as you have to. So you can't give classwork immediately.

Probe question: Is time a problem?

APE1-Yes, it's a big one. That's why sometimes I give only one classwork a week or two. There are other subjects and those teachers also need the learners so you have to give them also chance.

Probe question: If the learners do not understand, do you continue teaching to finish the topic on time?

APE1-If I find out when through questioning that they don't especially majority don't understand, I have to re-start but then I have to change the way I was explaining because it won't help them doing the same thing again. You might be explaining the same way but may be using diagrams to make them understand what you're saying in another way to make sure they have understood you. If you keep on repeating the same thing over and they still don't get it is ineffective teaching.

AME2- I ask questions, then I summarise the whole thing of the day, followed by homework. So that the next day I can start from the homework. If I find out the next day that they could not do it then I'm to start again. It's difficult but what can I do.

AHD3- They do recapping by given homework or classwork where they can track the learners and know their minds in what is being taught.

BPE4- I will see from the home work the next day the period is over. But if not, I can see from the class work then I know whether they have understood the topic or not. If the period is over before I do corrections for class work, then I check them next day.

Probe question: Do you keep teaching even if they don't understand?

BPE4- If I see that they don't understand, ah, ah, I have to stop. I can't carry on with the other topics because they will have that gap and they will not even understand the new topic because maybe it must be build up on the information. So I can't carry on I have to teach it so that they understand and sometimes you can see that some of them can explain (those who can understand) to others. Sometimes I have to change the method of teaching and try other examples and try anything for them to understand.

BME5- After teaching you know, I give extra work like homework for the next day.

Probe question: Do you move ahead when learners don't understand you?

BME5- I don't ignore topics that they don't get it even though I have to meet department deadlines and that I may have my plans of finishing a particular topic at certain days. I have to teach for them to understand because without them understanding and learning I can't move on so I end up taking afternoon classes and Saturday classes because I always won't to finish the syllabus on time. So I use my hundred rands to buy petrol and come and teach on Saturdays sometimes and the department people just say take afternoon classes and have extra classes for learners yet they don't help.

BHD6- You asked them questions whether they have understood you or not then you one able to assess whether they have understood or not. Then if you do have time you can give them few question on what you have taught. You can mark them and give corrections or give homework which is usually the norm. Because you can't always give classwork and take their books away and go and mark. So it is a continuous process which can flow into the following day.

Probe question: And then during the teaching, when they find that learners don't understand do they continue teaching?

BHD6- Yeah, sometimes the time does not allow. But some few teachers go back to teach the topics all over. In fact that is the reason why they have to do extra classes. Because there are slow learners in the class who cannot be overlooked whilst teaching. And you find out that because of them even though you have pace setter to follow you have to go slower for them also to understand that is where they have to do extra classes to bridge the gap. So they are expected to cater for slow learners and also to re- teach the topics and also assess daily. The teachers also have to have back-up work for good learners because it's the slow learners who determine your pace in teaching and how many assessments you can give.

Probe question: Do they sometimes ignore slow learners?

BHD6- Ah, that can happen at the end of the term or when they are getting closer to exams but at the beginning of the term they accommodate them, but sometimes you see, when it's three weeks to exams and you know you haven't finish what you suppose to teach and assess then you have to strategise and balance up to summarise the work for them also attempt to have an idea. So they leave them in some cases in order to finish the topics before exams.

14. How do you give feedback to your learners?

APE1-The classwork even though I mark them together with the learners, I do take them.....from time to time just to say I will sign their books. So when I look through their books then I see in most of the time that what they or some of them have written is not what they were suppose to write then I write comment there. I write comment because when they were writing they may understand but not completely what was being said by me. So I write comment in their books on what they should do. The other thing that I usually do is to group them with those that I know they understand and make sure those ones explain to others. That to me is peer teaching and it work for learners to understand better of what I want from them all. Otherwise, I do during break time call them especially the struggling learners. Sometimes I find out that its their house problems rather than the subject. So in such cases, I speak to them to focus on their school work and it is then that I chip in whatever topic I or comment I want to clarify in.I normally give verbal feedback and also written comments. On their scripts also I do write comments.

Probe question: Are your comments detailed?

APE1-No it's brief. Because what I do is, if I see that all learners have done the same mistake or similar, I will rather underline or give question mark and make sure I do it in class for all to see the reason why I have underlined or put question mark in their books or scripts. You can't comment on all their mistakes that is why their work are assigned marks to show wrong or right but I try to say some comments anyway.

Probe questions: Do learners perhaps go along with your feedback?

APE1-Yes, in Physical science class they are keen. They might be lazy to do work but they are they are keen. Once I have given them that attention through individual comments, once they see that you are giving them individual attention, to make sure they improve, they apply the feedback. They do try to change things as I expected. At least this year learners are better than last years, they do listen and try to apply what you have said about them.

AME2- I always write comments on their scripts when marking. I do give verbal feedback as well as possible. Sometimes some of the learners do surprise you then you need to acknowledge by motivating them. Most especially when they are improving and you motivate them in class they like it and try to do more. So any signs of improvements I need to appreciate and acknowledge as feedback.

Probe question: Do you do corrections as feedback?

AME2- Yes, when they get the question wrong I have to go through the questions with them so that they know where they went wrong and therefore write the right answers.

AHD3- Firstly, they give marks as feedback then also if they see that a learner obtain 80% you give comments on the scripts just to encourage him or her. For weak learners you just have to keep your comment. Because you can't give negative comments. Its demoralised them so you better write 'see me' and then speak to them by sitting down with. If the problem is from home you try to advice them. The corrections are also done as a means of feedback because, you mark, you give script then where they have gone wrong you bring out the correct answer, this they now become focus and know what to do when the same or similar questions re-surface.

Probe question: Do teachers give feedback on informal work?

AHD3- Not really comments but signatures to show some acknowledgment of work but just few teachers do this. Majority don't have time for that.

Probe: When learners failed to understand what is been taught, do the teachers continue teaching?

AHD3- Ah, its all depend on the teachers and also the timing. Some don't care about understanding; they simply want to finish teaching what is in the work-schedule on time or earlier so they continue. Others keep repeating till learners understand but then time comes against them then they have to do extra classes to catch up with the time.

BPE4- In the class works, you can see that the performance is good then you write in the book, "good" then if the work is incomplete then you write, "Incomplete work". Then if it's an assignment maybe, then you can see that few of them didn't do them correctly, then when you mark you write "see me" and you explain to them exactly what you wanted. I give comments written and sometimes verbal. Then if it's a test, most of the time they are motivated when you convert their marks to percentage and levels, example 50% is level D and 0-29 is level as one which is fail and so they can see whether they are

doing well or not. Because they know exactly where they are. They know that I want them to get not below level 4 which is 50%. So they come to know what they are doing right and if they don't do well in term one, because they know their levels in tests, they know that they have to do well in the second term. So the level helps them to learn harder because every term they have to learn harder and improve in their learning.

BME5- If there is mistake done by learners, I do corrections for them on the board. Sometimes the learners ask where they went wrong and I help them. I also yeah give comments on their answer sheets and work books after marking a task. This serves to motivate those that have done well and I reprimand those that have done some silly mistakes. Also, I talk to them about ways they can improve. I also involve their parents and discuss their performances and how they can assist them but parents here are not so interested.

BHD6- The marks that the learners have got...serve that purpose. With marks, you can say to a learner, look the highest is so much and you are so much down here, you need to do sometime. Or you are the highest in the school but comparatively to other learners from other schools because you need to compete with them, you need to put in more effort. So comments like pull up your socks, you need to improve for the final exams, you need to put in more effort in order to prepare for external exams etcetera, are given both in written or verbal based on the marks attained by the learner. So they put in comments as feed-back and the corrections on work.

Probe question: Are comments only given for CASS components?

BHD6- No, no, not only of the CASS ones. Whatever work they have done and there is opportunity for you to put comments for something to be rectified then they put a remark.

Probe question: Do these comments not seen as workload?

BHD6- No, no, when I say they put comment I am saying where they are able to find the time, so it's not on everything or every task but sometimes. You know they try to give but sometimes the time is just simply not available especially looking at the syllabus, they are big so sometimes they teach and leave assessments but the CASS work also must be done anyway so they find way of doing it.

15. How useful is the feedback you get from moderation?

APE1-From the HoD, he doesn't really know about Physical science so I don't get any feedback. What I give him is what I get out there.

Probe question: In terms of mark addition, do you get feedback?

APE1-You know, after I mark I let learners go through their marks to re-count them and also check if I have made mistake on their work before I give to the HoD so this re-marking and re-addition of marks are not problem to me so definitely my work come to me as it was given to him.

Probe question: In cluster moderation, what useful feedbacks do you get?

APE1-There are one or two teachers that I know; we are honest with each other so we can freely comment or talk about our work. Otherwise most of them you can't give honest comment or feedback even if the work is not right. Instead of giving honest feedback that at least you should change here or there because no one can say that he/she know Physical science hundred percent. Most of the teachers are not interested. They are just there to make sure that moderation is done. No one is to make sure that your work is of standard. And to make sure we improve and that things are done correctly. It's just tick and go thing.

Probe question: In terms of assessment practices, do you discuss your best practices as positive feedback to others?

APE1-No, if you try other teachers may think you are there to show off. Each one comes there to do re-marking and go. Even re-marking if marks are wrong they don't take the pain and time to correct you. It's put in pink pen and go.

AME2- There is nothing much. There is that forms that he has to fill in, its checklist by ticking. He does remarking of the tasks, add the marks to see everything is fine and that when I go for CASS, he does not get any problems. For content wise, he was a maths teacher in Grade 12 so he can assist when I ask him.

Probe question: In cluster moderation, do you get some useful feedback?

AME2- Yeah, when teachers re-mark and moderate your work they fill in a form to say whether your work is standard or below standard. So they do give comments about your work. Those comments serve as feedback as well. As for teaching strategies and assessment practices, we teachers don't really worry about them but sometimes you can see nice tasks like a project from another teacher which you can arrange with teacher and you also photocopy for your learners sometimes.

AHD3- What happens is that after moderation, you write the findings and give recommendations. If anything is not right, I write comments and next time I check if the teacher followed those comments then I draw their attention. So they get feedback, even re-marking sample of learners' scripts to check marking errors, addition of marks and also conversions done on their CASS marks form.

Probe question: What do you do to teachers who ignore your comments?

AHD3- It means that the teacher must write something down to explain why he or she keeps ignoring than implementing my comments or suggestion periodically. If it persists then I refer the case to the principal.

Probe question: What are the feedbacks the teachers get from cluster moderation?

AHD3- To some extent they do get. In cluster meeting, once you find out that a teacher in another school bring sub-standard task, then you give comment and the cluster leader will advice the teacher to go and do standard task. If he or she refuse in the next meeting, the issue is referred to the subject advisors to intervene and they have to find a way of letting that teacher do the work right. You see in this meetings when you are strict the other teachers don't like you so mostly each one ignore or keep quiet on others work and leave things as they are. You just tick when you are to give comment you write 'satisfactory' to cut long issues short. Even you find out there that some HoDs in some schools don't moderate work properly, they just rubber stamp the work. You find many problems in the work and yet the HoD signed to show that the work is moderated. So most of them are not doing the job properly. For some also you can't blame them alone, it may be the teachers themselves who give work late or that they are busy and have many subjects or classes to teach and moderate.

BPE4- You know sometimes they will tell you what their problems are. Then you explain further to them. Others do not care and do not come so it's not all of them that do what you wanted as a teach

Probe question: What feedback do you get from your HoD?

BPE4- He explains sometimes, for example, in some questions, he suggests by saying this question can't you ask it this way? Then you know how to ask the questions. He also re-checks marks because sometimes you make mistakes in the marking or even the marks totalling, so he helps.

BME5- Yes, sometimes, the feedbacks are useful to those who use or apply them. They improve and those that ignore those comments and don't mind also don't get anything out of written or oral comments. You compare our learners to the model C learners. They have their own problems. Most of them don't have parents and come from poor backgrounds whilst some are taken care of by their grandparents. They have many many problems that affect their school work also. I have a learner in grade 12 who has only one brother and they live alone. He is both a parent to his younger brother and a learner. They basically have no time for school work because he has to concern himself with playing parents to his brother, cook and do everything else.

BHD6- The teachers get feed-back from school based moderation. You see the moderation tools have comments on whether the teacher has done good work or that his work is not up to date and after you have done moderation he or she also signs and then takes a copy of the tool and in any case must be put into their files. So it's not for me I just give a copy for the teacher to have and look at the comments that I have been given as feed-back. So they do get feed-back.

Probe question: Apart from that do they get feed-back on assessment practices?

BHD6- That kind of feedback is on the question papers or tasks that they bring before given the task for photocopies and give to the learners. Because when you moderate work, you ask them to change whatever you don't like before they give it to the learners. If you find out because of time constraints that are not possible to apply my comments then the teacher must know that next time he or she must rectify that. Also when the work has been marked, they can send to me for moderation. There is tool used to check the marking, the question paper and the results of the learners and comments are given.

Probe question: In terms of content do you assist the teachers?

BHD6- Oh yeah, oh yeah, the teachers come and say I am not very comfortable with this area and I say, because I encourage them when they have a problem, then we discuss that content especially the 'hypothesis' things in the investigative questions which could be found in Physical Science, Life Sciences and Mathematics. We discuss how to teach that because you know that when they teach it nicely it's beneficial to the learners in many subjects. Then we encourage them to go for workshops also sometimes and see other teachers. But within the school we assist them when they come forward with problems.

Probe question: Do they attend workshops?

BHD6- Yeah, they do because those who give information there are teachers so they experience the same problems and therefore talk about how to overcome them.

Probe question: What kind of workshops?

BHD6- Even the cluster moderation is a workshop opportunity and its done once a term.

When they finish setting tasks do they bring them for moderation before or after administering and marking?

BHD6- The classwork, homework and even short test are not brought for moderation, that is too much work but the control tests are brought for moderation before given them to learners. But sometimes you find out that because of time it's the other way around. After the learners have written test and they are marked their scripts come to me and I re-mark some samples. But with CASS, when it comes to Grade 12 CASS, we normally try to use the same learners whose portfolios will be going to cluster moderation.

Probe question: Are there feed-back from cluster moderation?

BHD6- Yeah, because there is that forms that they bring from CASS meetings, for instance, if a teacher did not complete a CASS component or didn't meet all the requirements then as an HoD, you need to make sure that the teacher complies, so that it is approved in the next moderation or you have to look for the cluster leader and give to the cluster leader.

SECTION D: CHALLENGES FACED IN ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

16. What problems do you face in fulfilling what is expected of you in terms of assessment of learning?

APE1-Because as a cluster, we don't really work together to improve. You'll find that if I have a problem for instance in setting research project questions, which I know when I am setting it, I am just giving my learners an assignment. But then if I ask other teachers they will also say that they don't also know how it is done is frustrating. So there are those challenges when you ask around and get tired and you just leave it and do it as you please. But then you are not improving in that as I teacher irrespective of you number of years in teaching. You don't improve at all because you don't get help.

Probe question: In classroom, what other challenges you face in terms of learner accountability?

APE1-One problem here with most learners is that they don't do work. Others don't do work on time. Like today, I just find out that one learner did not do his practical investigation for last term. Could you imagine? Otherwise the management listen to you as a teacher and we work together as a school.

Probe question: What friction(s) have you pick with teaching and assessing?

APE1-Its about time. There is no time to finish the syllabus and the same time assesses them properly. So I give extra classes to catch up.

Probe question: What times do you do your extra classes?

For grade 12, since last two terms this year, we've been taking break times for topic discussion whilst they are eating. And every thursday afternoon after 14:00pm.

AME2- I don't normally stick to the requirements from the department. They insist we must always do the work and I don't think they consider the weighting and the work schedules. CASS assessments really slow me down in terms of finishing the work schedule. Learners here tend to submit work after the due date but I have to be patient and polite on the learners because I need the work from them for CASS.

Probe question: Have you been held accountable by parents or any other person?

AME2- Not really, what we normally do is that we call the parents and discuss the problems that the learners had before given their report. So that they know what is going on, some parents attend and some don't but we try our best. Sometimes it's the department pressure, you have to do this, you have to do that, meeting their deadlines, marking, moderations you see and still you should do wonders because the learners must pass your subject. They are available if the school is not performing and then they have to account for that.

AHD3- The problem of late work submission of CASS work and even informal is real. I think it will be better if all CASS are control test because assignment, investigation, project etcetera they copy, others simply don't do them. You try to threat the learners with actions but nothing could be done to penalise them, we can't cane nothing. You send for their parents, it takes months and others don't have parents. Even for control test, some learners absent themselves. You have to let them write later which is not fair to the others who came to school to write those tests. Another problem is the HoD's who do little when it comes to moderation even though we get extra pay in that regards. So teachers do whatever they feel like.

BPE4- One problem is late submissions of CASS works, ah, late submission is really a big problem. You give them work and they don't want to bring it back. They don't submit on the due date.

Probe question: What do you do when they bring in the work late?

BPE4- I talk to the learner first then if the learner doesn't bring it, I just report him to the principal then the principal will talk to the learner also. Then if the learner still postpone, then we tell the learner if you don't bring your work by this date then bring your parents or whoever you stay with. So sometimes it's a long process to get all their projects, the practical investigations and other work. But with test is fine because when they are in school they write it unless they are absent.

Probe question: Other challengers especially mark accumulation?

BPE4- The problem is when doing CASS for moderation, ah, you take a lot of time because you have been teaching to trying to cover everything then now there is this test that has to be done for CASS, now you have to do this test that needs moderation first. It takes your time to set even. You give the HOD and its takes time too to come back and also the time and preparation you have to do for cluster moderation like organising your files and that of the learners, marking, recording, conversion of marks to the required task and all that. Also for practical investigations and projects I have to battle before I can get all. Its not easy this CASS thing you know but...{pulse for a while} we have to obey.

Probe question: What about parental accountability?

BPE4- We encourage parents to come for their learners' reports and query anything about the learners but they don't come. Just one or two parents come and its the same for meetings. They don't come; they don't ask why their children fail a particular

subject or something. It is very rare that you get parent complaining about the learners marks or reports maybe its because they are illiterates.

Probe question: What about departmental challengers and accountability?

BPE4- Yeah, there is a problem especially with the common papers (June and September). Because you have to make sure that you cover everything that is required for that paper and you depend also on the understanding of the learners so it really takes time for you to be able to follow what they want in the work schedule and the department will not understand you as a teacher when you say you cannot write this paper because you couldn't finish the work schedule so you have to rush to finish and the learners suffer.

BME5- Some learners do not have calculators, pens and books are also a problem. They are not properly motivated at all but some try to cope with school work against all odds.

Probe question: Do you have problems with late submissions?

BME5- I do, but not like other teachers, for me if you don't give my work and I ask for some time I give zero. So they know me for that so they try to give my tasks.

BHD6- The first problem is lack of subject knowledge, lack of motivation because of the learning environment on both teachers and learners. Lack of discipline among learners because we cannot cane, we just have to talk to them which does not work. There is lack of parental support, you can call a parent until you blue on your face and they will never come. Some of the learners don't have parents who can come. They are staying on their own. They are their own parents so issues of discipline are not well addressed. There is also lack of laboratory facilities and chemicals. Where the few chemicals you have as a Physical Science teacher are carried to classrooms and brought back to the secure place and back because the learners can temper with them. That consumes a lot of time. Absenteeism is also a big problem, few learners are found in class which is discouraging in Grade 12 class. The learners think they are doing you a favour as a teacher by working hard. The commitment by teachers and learners cannot be ruled out also knowing that this is a difficult subject that you have to give your maximum commitment but they are able to give only 30% then this is a problem.

17. How do you deal with problem(s) you encounter when assessing your learners for reporting purposes?

APE1- For this year not really. Learners know once they write test or any task, they can always come and see their papers, so there is transparency here. Even when I finish marking all their papers, sometimes I ask them to total (add together) their marks themselves. Or if I have totalled I ask them to re-check so when it go to their report they know the correct marks already.

Probe question: In re-checking of marks, do you give learners the memorandum?

APE1- Sometimes they don't ask for it they just go to compare their work with their friends but if they ask I can give them. What I usually do is that I keep copies of memos ready.

Probe question: Do you have conflict with time allocation for your subject?

APE1- In the first term this year when I found out that we lag behind, I started extra classes. The periods are short so that is the only way to finish the syllabus. With trial around the corner, we are relaxed because we know we pushed to finish the topics. If a teacher doesn't use extra time, he or she can't finish the topics and assessment tasks expected. You cannot cover so you have to sacrifice.

AME2- When I find out that they don't do work, as I said that I have to give them time and persuade them to bring. I don't shout them always but I talk nicely with them. I advise as much as I can.

AHD3- For homework, what I do and some of these teachers have copied is that if two questions are not answered or the whole work was not done by a learner, then I add another two or more questions for that learner to do whilst I supervise when the school is out in the afternoon. It works because the learners fear for the extra work so they strive to do most of the homeworks. For absenteeism, the principal sort them out by speaking to them. The other challenge with parents, I don't know the best way to deal with because they simply don't care. Those who care are very few so nothing work out.

BPE4- For learners we try to talk one and one then principal comes in but the parents don't play their part at all. So things get prolong and difficult. The few parents who avail themselves we try to work out things. For the department I don't know what to do to get them change things so I try to comply with their requirement even though I see it is not easy.

BME5- I don't experience much problems. At times it's just absenteeism, where you give work and a learner is not in school and you have to give him or her a chance to write so that that learner can get marks for report or CASS delays me sometimes.

BHD6- Yeah, you know the school invites both academic as well as the religious motivational speakers to motivate both teachers and parents. We also invite parents to be part and help to support the learners. Sometimes we ask the Grade 12 learners what their problems are in front of their parents, if they have they talk and parents also help address these problems.

Probe question: Are there problems with CASS work submission?

BHD6- Yeah, you see, when it comes to research projects, the learners don't do it others they do it and submit late, yet there are deadlines for that so the teacher sometimes have to use teaching time to facilitate the doing of the research during teaching time. Instead of doing it outside their schooling time and this impact on time available for you to do what you are supposed to do.

SECTION E: CHALLENGES FACED IN ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

18. Can you tell me about the factors which draw you back in assessing learners for learning?

APE1- With learners, they are cases that you find out that they don't do the work. Most of the times, they don't see the reason of doing their work. There is a problem where you find out that even though you push to cover the work, you don't still have the time to do all the assessment. You have other classes also to teach. So what I usually do is like during this June examination, I find out that control test I haven't done it and its already time for the exams, so I talked to my learners and during the june exams even if after they've written paper 1, I let them write the test also. It means that whilst they are preparing for the exams, they are preparing for my test also. So you just put the assessment in-between there.

Probe question: Do you put class works and homework also in-between exams?

APE1- No, as for those they are not for CASS so you take your time unlike the CASS ones that you have no choice as a teacher to let your learners have them. It's the deadline for moderations and you can't go there without having the right assessment tasks.

AME2- For homework, mostly learners come to school and start telling stories why they couldn't do this or that. Others come to copy from friends but I can't go to the HoD or principal all the time so I have to advise them on the importance of education and the advantages of homework to them as learners especially during a test or exams time. Another thing is the absenteeism. It is a major problem here. It happens to the majority of the learners especially grade 12 class. When we ask them to bring their parents some do come and some don't even have parents. It affects their performance but they don't see it. Some when you ask them to bring their parents, they stay away from school for a week or so until the parent or guardian avails themselves for at school. So for them not to lose more days because of the parents we let them come any way to school because they need CASS marks also. Banking of classes is also a big issue. Learners miss classes deliberately even do they may be in school. Yet their parents are invited they simply don't pitch, yeah.

Are there problems concerning the number of assessment tasks you give and your teaching?

AME2- Yeah, I have a conflict there but, I have to push. That means I have to come to school every day and also go try some Saturday classes and afternoon classes once a week just to catch up and finish the syllabus.

AHD3- The problem here is the work overload from teachers. Because as a teacher you first have to teach which is your core business whether you know the subject properly or not, you have to prepare, you have to look for questions, send them for internal moderation, photocopy, give test, mark, record go for moderation and so on. So they do very little informal works. Even the formal one some teachers just focus only on the CASS requirements only, others struggle to meet the minimum requirements whilst you find out that others simply give only the five learners whose work go for external moderation and manage to give random marks for the rest of the learners without actually doing any tasks. Time also is really a factor when it comes to classwork, short test as well as their feedbacks. There is no time because at the end of the day you have to teach your content and they are too much. You have other classes not only grade 12 so you can imagine how stressful it is.

BPE4- It's the incomplete tasks, incomplete homework, homework not done. Another problem is that when learners start writing common papers and they get their timetable you cannot get them again to teach or assess. Because they are going to write exams they disappear and the time will be against you as a teacher because they feel that they are writing exams they don't have to be in class for anything else.

BME5- If you give more work they are not going to do it. So you have to know how much work you will give them. Other teachers in other subjects are also giving them work so homework etcetera have to be small, small work rather than a whole lots of questions.

BHD6- Oh yeah, lack of discipline in class you see can impact on how you are able to deliver. If you give homework and you come to school the next day you found out that just few or only half of the class have done the work then you lecture them a bit using the time to teach to lecture or talk to them then you have to make a decision whether to force them to do the work in class or just to continue teaching. It does have a negative impact on the teacher. So this teacher has to make that decision. And absenteeism as I spoke earlier is too much.

Probe question: Is the workload of the teachers also a problem?

BHD6- Yes, yes, you see when you talk about a Physics teacher in Grade 12 that same teacher teaches technology then he is going to do Natural Science in Grades 8 and 9 in the lower classes, and so on, so the workload does not permit them to do much. And also this nutritional business of feeding the learners where the teachers are involved especially the female teachers have to go to the kitchen also add up to their workload since hired women are not many. The re-deployment of temporary teachers have worsen things.

19. In learners' assessment feedback, what do you consider as problematic?

APE1- Especially with the other informal assessment like classwork at the beginning of the year they are so disorganise that they don't want to do them. Or you notice that they have simply copied. Then, I know that it doesn't help given them so much. What I have learnt is that I am not the only teacher pushing them but when like they don't understand something, instead of coming to me, saying, can you please go back and explain this or that to me? Instead they copied which is not the true reflection of them. That is a problem when you find them having the same answers.

Probe question: During the term, do they co-operate?

APE1- With time they only understand how important it is not to leave without understanding a topic especially during end of term. Because when they leave without understanding a topic, I tell them that I won't give them memo or do corrections, I ask them to go and learn and do whatever again. It is when you see that they are not motivated and not in the same level with you. They don't see why they have to do work, they don't realised it's their future. So it's take time for us to be on the same level.

Probe question: What other problem persist?

APE1- In grade 12 this year, we don't have large numbers so they not really problematic. The only problem there is that I have noticed is that, when they have to attend Saturday classes in town like ITEC (classes organised DoE), you find out that some don't go. There are those learners who are more interested in local football clubs who will only attend the normal classes which is not enough for this subject. This Saturday classes for instance, some learners when they come back they understand better what we've done in the normal class. Others still don't understand so I look at what other teachers taught them and then I consolidate it to enhance proper understanding.

AME2- I think the good learners follow the instructions and comments but most of the learners do not really see them as important so it's like that. I try to motivate them, but these kids, ah! You can't understand them.

AHD3- Time also affect the feedback as I said because you have to mark very quickly and give corrections and since there are many work you tend to rush and focus on the marks and forget or ignore commenting. It is difficult even to give verbal comments as you would like. There are also too many learners per class especially in other grades and a teacher need to teach, assess and so on so it becomes difficult to do those feedback or corrections often. But in reality other teachers stick to teach principles and do less assessment. Also the number of repeaters in classes are more and they are problematic because they don't do work, they don't listen and those who are not repeaters also copy them. So some learners don't care or worry about anything whether its corrections, revisions, written or verbal feedback you know its just a few cooperating.

BPE4- Some learners don't apply and others don't even bother to write corrections and use them but always the few serious and good learners use them but just few.

BME5- Most of the time despite the feedback they still repeat the same mistakes. You know learners are children so it's like that. You just sometimes also have to leave them otherwise you will stress yourself. I know they are not perfect but some little changes you want from them they simply can't do it and you can't force them to some extent.

BHD6- Some I have mentioned you see you give them feedback, they write down, they write down, but whether they use it to better their results is something else. Because sometimes you might after giving the feedback you might give them similar tests but still they might not do well. So the learners do not do extra work outside the class. Once they are outside the school or class, it is tavern, loitering around, boyfriends, girlfriends that is a major problem. And the environment is not helpful because that is the culture around here. So they don't normally go as feed-back is expected. Few minorities do apply them but many majorities don't care about comments or advice.

SECTION F: SUPPORT NEEDED IN ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

20. How useful do you find the support systems in place to boost your assessment of learning practices?

APE1- You know, we use to have problems where you will find that we will fight about period. Ah...even if you want to give test to learners, the other teacher won't borrow you period. But we've as teachers reach a stage where we work well together and give each other chance and we are not selfish when it comes to the time. We teachers here do discuss the learners challenges together. For example, Life science teacher and others will meet together to ask which one gives problems in your class, which ones are not performing or doing work and we try and find out how best we can deal with such a learner. Maybe its attitude problem and a teacher who is good at that deal with that learner. And the principal's door is always open. When we (teachers) find out that there is no break-through, he steps in and helps.

Probe question: Can you elaborate further on the help you get from principal?

APE1- Maybe you have a learner who continually doesn't do work or doesn't attend extra classes and you've giving such a learner second chances and even ask to bring his/her parents and all don't work. When you report to the principal he takes it upon himself and make sure that parent of the learner is in school and that the learner change. Also, parents are called to meetings and they are briefed on what is going on and how best they can help to solve that learner's problem.

Probe question: What other assistance do you get from HoD which boosts your assessment practices?

APE1- With HoD if maybe I need something and I know other teachers whom I can't approach them due to time factor or something, then sometimes he can go to them to get me that.

AME2- The first thing is the love of the subject so I have to make sure that I am motivated to do what is expected of me. I work hard to finish my assessment tasks on time. In the school, I don't have a problem with my HoD, he is very supportive. When I give him work to moderate he does it and returns the work on time. He understands how moderation goes, but I also look around for extra learning material. The principal is also supportive by helping to deal with problematic learners.

Probe question: Is there support from the department on assessment of learners?

AME2- The department does not assist much, the department I don't think they do assist. Its only cluster moderation meetings, they supply us with past question papers and memos some CASS materials like forms and dates of meetings. No workshops to assist us. It's only February in every year, they invite us and talk about results, it's always about the results and nothing else.

AHD3- The teachers don't like paper work. So they see this assessment thing as problematic. What happens is that teachers don't like recording marks for the learners whenever they do CASS tasks till they are going for cluster moderation so they work under pressure when its cluster moderation. But HoDs who have fewer periods than the teachers then sometimes step in and assist. Some teachers also don't want you as HoD to know that they have a problem. So I do offer assistance if they come to me. I don't mind marking their work if I'm free or less busy

BPE4- Ah, I will say yes because different teachers can see your work so it is helpful and if you have a problem with anything you can ask in the meetings and some may be able to help you but its not easy to get more help and feedback as teachers are impatient during this cluster meetings because they want things done quick quick so few give comments on work but generally teachers don't want to sell their problems so that is also the problem and is not helping things.

BME5- Yeah, teachers do assist in all cases, even the principal is supportive. If I need something he goes and look for it like question papers, study guides, departmental calculators and others.

Probe question: In cluster moderations do you get feedback?

BME5- Yeah, in cluster moderation, I do get feedback on certain things but not in detail. You know when you are moderating or marking another teacher's work you can see what is done properly and you learn from that teacher.

BHD6- The school is very supportive. The principal and the colleagues try to assist teachers, but they can do so much. Ah, the parent's components here are very weak yeah. And the department also comes in to give intervention especially that this school the matric past marks are not good. They are always here and have organised Saturday classes for the learners to attend to assist them and the teachers in a way. So at the end of the day the Lord is on the teacher to find their way to let learners perform. Because the teacher is a policeman, a nurse, a judge, when the learners fight – you are jack of all trades you are not basically a teacher you have to play all these roles and it takes stall on them also.

Probe question: Does departmental cluster moderation help teachers?

BHD6- I think these CASS meetings if anything, it has made the teachers being prompt because they know that there is CASS coming then they finish off the tasks which it may not happen if they don't go for CASS meetings. So it makes HoDs work easier in that, the Grade 12 class has become the easiest class to moderate because the teacher will come and he has the components expected by the department you just look at them and moderate so these meetings are helpful since the task don't get left behind. What happens within the CASS meetings is something else but at least it has made teachers aware that they must finish their components to get that 25% for the learners. It also put learners into better pressure because they work for the marks and through that they are learning as well.

Probe question: Is there any departmental help on assessment for learning?

BHD6- Yeah, but it's not consistent, sometimes officials bring some handouts to supplement teachers which assist teachers on other assessments such as practical investigation. It's not direct assistance but they ask teachers to do more informal tasks also.

Probe question: Aside that do department check informal assessment?

BHD6- In fact when the department comes, they call the HoDs and ask them to show how they control the work, what challenges they face, what has been improved upon, eh, sometimes they can ask for one or two books from learners and check the informal tasks as well. But that is normally done when there is a problem with the subject or the teacher but the HoD is there to represent the teacher. When they come they go to HoD's and we report on the teachers. They don't ask teachers and look into their books. They rely on the reports given by HoDs and principals unless the teacher is reported not doing what he/she was supposed to do or that he's been absent for long time without reasons and not teaching then they can thoroughly look into all his work.

Probe question: Is the department keen on informal as formal?

BHD6- Yeah, yes, they ask the teacher how many classwork the teacher has given, then you tell them. The department when they come, they come with template or checklist that they use to check. They emphasise that when we say CASS work it does not mean you cannot have classwork, homework and others, as they are all continuous assessment.

SECTION G: SUPPORT NEEDED IN ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

21. How has the assistance (by department) concerning assessment for learning improved your assessment practices?

APE1- You know, the one thing that helps is what we (teachers) usually look at as negative. You know when they come and look at your portfolios or when they come and see how far you have gone that will help you to be on your toes we see them with attitude thinking we are undermined. Because when they come they want to make sure that more work has been done even when it's impossible to do that. Otherwise, as far as quality of the work is concern, it's big no. For them they just look at quantity of work done. The department and especially subject advisors, they really don't give any proper feedback on quality of

work and teacher improvement. Normally, nothing on how we teachers should go about our assessments and the teaching of topics properly. Unfortunately, we teachers are not that serious about assessment and development. We say schools are far apart, we are all the time rushing home after school even if there are any forms of meetings for development.

Probe question: What assistance do you get from this school about assessment for learning?

APE1- You know what motivates is the fact that in this school, when learners don't perform,...they look at what really the problem is, there is no finger pointing like how department does it. Department will just say you as the teacher you're not performing. In this school, they look at whatever contextual problems you have and about the learners themselves. For example, how are the learners behaving and all that. They understand that sometimes is not only you the teacher. So that helps. I don't get demoralised I know I have to do my best. Also, when I am having extra classes, the other teachers or even the principal won't just leave you alone that it's your thing, you stay with these learners or that class because you're the one not performing. So you know that they appreciate that extra effort that I'm giving.

Probe question: In department part is there any assistance?

APE1- Not really, you know with department, this is how they work. They will only come when national comes or when their superiors want this or that. With Subject advisors, really and truly they don't really sit with you and see where you have a problem and try and help you with that. With them, even though they were teachers, if you say to them, I have a problem with this topic or on assessment tasks for them; you must just go and get your clusters or others to help you. And sometimes you know as experience teachers themselves they could just give you pointers that will make you at least break whatever barrier is there for you. So sometimes I just get mad with them, truly, I just get mad with them...their focus is just on the result at the end of the year. If a school is not performing, o.k then the teacher is not good and they don't care why the teacher is not good if they say is the teacher.

AME2- For informal assessment they don't really care about those work. They say we should give more classwork, homework, etcetera., but it ends there.

Probe question: What about the subject advisor?

AME2- He sometimes comes and ask how far are you with the work, how are the kids doing then after that he goes to the HoD and principal then leave. Just in few instances when maybe the national visitors come and they ask for the teacher and learner portfolio and check with their checklist.

AHD3- They only encourage teachers verbally to include informal works in continuous assessment when they visit. That is only when they come to a school but if they don't come teachers do as they have time for. The department come only when maybe once a year to a school or when those national or province officials want some report but when it is non-performing school then they are putting more pressure on teachers to try and get results. I think especially the subject advisors must come to schools regularly not only bad schools and when they come they must be available to give assistance like direct teaching and assessment solutions to teachers and learners. Always it's meeting with principal or HoD and it end there. So I think at least fortnight visit to help teachers to be able to do more of the informal tasks as expected.

BPE4- They do come and check the work that have been done and ask about syllabus coverage and encourage us. They also do extra classes for learners like Saturday classes to encourage our learners to improve their results.

Probe question: Has there been assessment training before?

BPE4- No, not any, unless I forgot, apart from CASS cluster moderation. And there its about re-marking of work and re-checking of mark additions and nothing else so there is no assessment training.

BME5- Do provide common paper like June exam paper and they organise cluster moderations which help us to be able to do work and provide learners with marks at the end for the year in a proper way. I will say because matric results at this school are very poor, they have tried to help us by visiting us frequently, offering moral support, and saturday classes for our learners where different teachers teach them and also the winter school and others. They want to make sure the learners do well this year but some schools they don't bother them at all. Also during moderation meetings they bring examiners to brief us on previous year's examination report on the final exams. The first moderation is about briefing and assessment guidelines for us teachers.

BHD6- No, the informal ones are many, because you go to a class and teach and you give a work but when it comes to CASS work which is formal with one hour or more, a teacher has to borrow a period from another teacher so that the learners can really finish the work. The classwork does not count because, its not invigilated and controlled and the learners may even copy. The teachers focus on the formal ones since it contributes at end of the year but they do the informal ones also. In terms of numbers there are more of informal tasks per term than informal tasks but they are very much serious with the CASS tasks.

SECTION H: BALANCE IN 'ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING' AND 'ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING'

22. In your assessment practices, how do you determine that there is a place for assessment of learning and assessment for learning?

APE1- With assessment for reporting and assessment for preparing learners for improving, as you go through the work you know it's not really only important to finish the syllabus or work schedule but to make sure that they understand through these assessments. So if you want your learners' to understand and be able to answer questions and improve then you have to see to it that both assessments are there.

Probe question: How does assessment help you?

APE1- To know what they are in learning. And also help you because if you jump without assessing for learning and now it's time for assessment of learning, they won't perform well because of lack of assessing them often with smaller works. This can help and can show that they are not prepared for such big assessment for reporting. So the one thing that I do is, if I see that there are still need for assessment for learning, I continue with that as much as possible and make time for that until I see that at least they can do formal work. Because when you teach it sometimes seems they are ready and when you give them formal test, it's another story that they fail.

Probe question: Do you concentrate more on the assessment for learning than assessment of learning?

APE1- It's not really to concentrate on this one or that one. It's just knowing that they both play a role...they both play a role. If you don't give enough time to one, the other assessment will show that you're not doing well on the other. So in my class I try to have both assessments.

Probe question: In terms of assessment of learning number of tasks, do you normally go beyond what DoE is expected?

It's depends, it depends; sometimes I can go beyond the DoE's minimum requirements but most of the time I can't. I just give the minimum because of time. There is no time to teach and at the same time assess learners of learning whilst marking is also there. It also sometimes depends on the topic, because on certain topics, I find out that, ah, I can do more than one practical investigation here even though the department want only one.

Probe question: Do you give more informal tasks than DoE expected?

APE1- It also depends on the topic. I make sure assessment of learning and for learning are catered for in my grade 12 classroom.

AME2- I simply rush the CASS tasks and push other assessments also. That means I have to give the CASS assessment tasks in good time so that in between I can concentrate on the other informal tasks.

Probe question: Why don't you just focus on CASS assessments?

AME2- For the benefit of the learners. Because we are looking at the results. Because in each and every year you are expected to improve your results. My learners are having problems with paper one. So I need to push harder by giving more classwork., homework, short tests as well as CASS work so that I can really prepare them for the final exams. So I can say it's 60: 40 balance. 60 for informal tasks and 40 for CASS work. Because really, the department looks for quantity of work done. If you have many classwork then it's fine with them. They simply check for quantity. You are a good teacher if you have more work.

AHD3- They just focus on the formal ones. They ignore the informal ones. When you take the learners work books you find out that they ignore them. They give just few and also don't mark or check them. For a whole year even though the number of informal tasks are a bit more than those formal you see that its still small. The teachers want the learners to do informal tasks and they get tired of doing something teachers don't check consistently. Part of the problem is that those informal ones are not moderated by HoDs as the formal ones.

Probe question: Is it by policy that HoDs shouldn't moderate informal tasks?

AHD3- The policy is quiet about informal tasks that is why.

BPE4- Mmm, you know, I don't teach for CASS requirements, CASS will come out of what I have taught. You teach the learners so that they have the content and understand everything then from the work that you have done you can choose the topic and questions for CASS tasks, otherwise if you teach for CASS work only you will not cover everything and your learners won't have all the information that is needed for the final exams. So as I teach according to work-schedule or syllabus then I set the CASS task but still do my classworks, short test, home works etcetera.

Probe question: How is your balancing?

BPE4- I don't focus strictly on CASS work. They have to balance with other assessments. Because I must have the CASS requirements since I cannot go to CASS moderation with empty files and my learners won't have their 25% marks needed to be given certificate but I will say its fifty-fifty balance. I can't ignore the other assessments like classwork, homeworks, short test and all other forms of informal assessments work then its means my learners cannot do well also in the CASS work and final exams.

BME5- For classwork and informal work in general I give a lot per term but for CASS work they are few because the department also want a few to be part of learners final marks. I do more informal work so that I can prepare the learners for the formal CASS work so that they will be able to do the final exams correctly.

Probe question: What causes the CASS work to be high?

BME5- CASS work is higher because of those projects, assignments, investigation

BHD6- The assessment tasks for CASS they are always in line with the requirements such as the number of tasks per term, but you know informal work, the teacher gives what he has taught to help them to be able to do the formal tasks.

Probe question: Are there practices that are not in line with the policy?

BHD6- Well, well, many. I'm not sure of a policy which says learners must be given another chance to write a control test or to re-do work but I think it's because of the circumstances teachers are doing that. I have heard in many schools they give as many as possible and for each learner the teacher chooses the best that the learner has done. Then you question the uniformity in cases like that. You see there are three tasks that I have done, I take up the highest tasks mark. But it's all due to the pressure of the department to force non-performing rural schools to perform to boost the province pass rate just like the model C schools.

23. What other comments will you like to give in conclusion of all what you have outlined on assessments?

APE1- To me, the only comment I can give is that, if the department was to stop doing lip service with the workshops or moderations because these are just for the sake of doing them. Just for the saying that we've done workshops or we've done assessments or moderation meetings. If they were really to go down (schools and teachers) and see where there is a need, what the need is and help there then I think we'll see progress and we will improve both in assessing and teaching. As it is now, it's up to you as an individual teacher in your own corner to make sure that you improve if you want to. But you know with most of us (teachers), the information I have as a diploma teacher will not be the same as a teacher or somebody who went to do the subject in a Bachelor's or honours level. For me to be at the same level I only have to take the textbooks and get those information to be given to the learners. And sometimes when you take the books, there are certain topics or things that I find out that still I can't understand them myself. Therefore as teachers we need to interact and make sure that we share information especially the content instead of being teachers who will just say that I don't have time or that I don't others know that I don't know the topic. There is attitude in the teachers. They don't want you to know that they also don't know certain topics so they end up not sharing information at all. If you don't know content, you don't know assessment also. Because, you only depend on previous questions and their memorandum only. You can't come out with your own stuff.

Probe question: Is there a role that DoE can play with this regard?

APE1- Instead of making sure that we have geographical meetings or groups for nearby schools to improve ourselves, they just talk about it and forget. They have to make sure teachers meet and they monitor not just wait when they need to write report for their superiors then they rush to make sure something is just in place even though is not working. For example, I saw on TV (television) that in KwaZulu-Natal teachers from a cluster meet every Wednesday where this teacher will teach a topic and another will teach the other. If we were to do that here and do it properly, every teacher will be confident in his/her classroom, and then assessing learners will be also smoothly done.

Probe question: Will teachers here be committed for such meetings?

APE1- Also from the teachers side the commitment is not there really. Teachers are not committed even though I can't blame department alone but it's because they don't monitor and see exactly what goes on in programmes.

Probe question: In terms of assessment for learning practices, what do you think DoE do?

APE1- The department can do much, because there are HoDs who are here with you who also don't know. They also have to teach their classes and so on. Department must really work very close with HoDs to force them to work with teachers as expected. Another thing is, the honest is on you as a teacher to do your work and then HoD should make sure that they are done properly not just brush through. The principals must also assist HoDs that it's not a matter of going through checklists blindly and must be held accountable. The department I know they can't go to all the schools every day to check teachers work, even if they do they can't go to all the schools, so its left to the teachers, their HoDs and the principals to be honest and dedicated enough.

Probe question: What about department giving forms to monitor assessment for learning tasks?

APE1- You know, if they issue forms, it will be just window dressing, you know they will just fill in and say oh just make sure those things are ticked even if it's not done and HoDs don't care and worry about that as far as it doesn't give bad report to a teacher. Its about politics now. But if you we were to be given forms, we must be honest as teachers and HoDs to make sure the best things are done. It's not for the department, its for us and our learners.

AME2- It's all about hard work from you as a teacher. The kids always look at you. If you are lazy they will also be lazy to work. But once you do your work they do their work as well. They do their best if you do the best. Sometimes at school as a teacher you have to help learners to finish your assessments on time. Learners need to be motivated all the time so they can do your work well.

What advise would you give the department concerning assessment practices?

AME2- I think they could do away with this CASS thing because it's just time consuming. We spend two to three weeks preparing for CASS moderation meetings. We waste a lot of time in the process. We teach lots of subjects in different classes and learners are doing a lot of subject. It's better if we give them marks at the end of the year because we put a lot of pressure on the kids asking for tasks every time. The learners get confused and some give up not performing at the end of the year. CASS must be once a year and subject advisors must be available at schools.

AHD3- Firstly CASS is important, it plays a fundamental role on the side of the learners. It help them to prepare, work under pressure and end up being serious in their learning. Therefore, if the Subject advisors can visit schools often and also place more support on the informal tasks then things can change because the informals are missing. They are not done properly like

the formal. Even learners don't see the importance of doing them like the formal tasks for CASS marks. Also parents and guardians must come for parents meetings and support their children.

Now the HoDs must be subject specialist because if I don't know a subject I cannot comment much. If something is incorrect I will allow by thinking the teacher is right. But the department also must hold some HoDs and teachers accountable of proper things are not done when it comes to assessment practices. Even they should moderate teachers work themselves and give feedback to the teachers and the HoDs so that the next year they change the way of doing the same mistakes. I think there must be proper training on assessment. Its important so that we know the best way year after year. I also think if the department can hire more subject advisors or more HoDs then at least there could be head way in assessment practices because teachers want really to do their own things. The cluster moderation is also time wasting as it is done now if you consider how things are rush and no better moderations take place. It must be refined or stopped and marks must give submitted by the principals at the end of the year.

BPE4- The department must have proper assessment plan and organise CASS moderations well. They should organise better workshops to educate teachers not assuming that we are fine. I think its time the department focus on having physical science content training, I mean better one not the one that somebody will be called to show us things on computer screen only but to teach us like teaching learners so that we become more confident on all the topics then we won't have problems with the CASS and its moderations. Also, even though the common exams like June exams or trial exams prepare learners on standard of work, their long time table take out the time for finishing the syllabus. We always rush and do not have much time for learner assessments and other important things.

BME5- CASS is good but teachers don't do it well and properly. You know during CASS moderation teachers don't have time, others give sub-standard questions and give more marks to their learners and no one raise issues. So the department must have common tasks for all CASS components for standardization purposes. The marking and internal moderation are not properly done. The subject advisor must really get involved in the CASS business and not sit down and leave everything to the teachers and HoDs for they just re-mark without checking properly. They as subject advisors have to evaluate all the works and ensure HoDs to be effective in moderation and not just accept whatever teachers give them. I think projects, assignments and investigations must not be added to the 25% marks for the learners. They get the CASS marks inflated but all the same I should think it's intentional just to help learners get more marks at the end of the year.

BHD6- I think the teachers when it comes to assessment they have come a long way, yeah, the CASS has helped them to understand and strive for what is expected. When doing cluster meetings, they can pick up new ideas if they really want to improve from the way of doing things. They can get feed-back from other teachers but you find out that teachers especially Grade 12 teachers, don't want to open up.

Probe question: Are there any suggestions you will like to give to the department concerning teachers assessment practices?

BHD6- The department must ensure that there is uniformity in textbooks because different textbooks that are used by different teachers cause problems. A teacher takes assessment task from a textbook which lacks the requirements and standard but the teacher will say he or she got it from so so and so textbooks and there is nothing you as HOD or other teacher can do. So there must be consistency in textbooks by coming out with one common approved textbook that can help teachers with more information on assessment tasks. They must also reduce teacher's workload.

Probe question: Are there issues of teachers held accountable?

BHD6- It is very, very negligible because parents don't follow up why learners fail. One instance in three years when a parent and learner came to school and demanded why the learner failed and the parent wanted him to pass to the next grade since the feels that he cannot stay in the same class. But not really.

Probe question: Do HoDs also hold teachers accountable?

BHD6- We have departmental meetings sometimes to know what is expected but it's difficult to hold teachers accountable just like that.

APPENDIX H

RUBRIC TO EVALUATE TEACHERS AND LEARNER PORTFOLIO TASKS

SCHOOL: _____

EDUCATOR: _____

SUBJECT _____

TASK _____

July 2012

RUBRIC TO EVALUATE TEACHERS AND LEARNERS PORTFOLIO TASKS

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4
1. Content coverage and relevance: LO and AS addressed and tasks correspond with content throughout CASS process.	-LO's and AS's not addressed -No alignment of tasks with content covered	LO's and AS's were partially addressed throughout -Partial alignment	Most LO's and AS's addressed and most tasks correspond with content	All LO's and AS's addressed and all tasks correspond/align with the content throughout the CASS process
2. Weighting of Cognitive levels of tasks per policy and guidelines	-Standards of weighting and cognitive abilities of all tasks were poor - Tasks required learners to recall facts -No application of key concepts, knowledge, skills nor attitudes	-Standards of weighting and cognitive abilities of all tasks were fair - Tasks required learners to use low level understanding -Little application of key concepts	-Standards of weighting and cognitive abilities of all tasks were good -Tasks required learners to use abstract information and to examine information -Apply key concepts and knowledge	-Standards of weighting and cognitive abilities of all tasks were excellent -Tasks required learners to construct and make judgements -Apply key concepts, knowledge, skills and attitudes
3. Development or setting of assessment tasks (three or more forms of assessments)	Inability to develop assessment tasks that contain a variety of forms of assessment	Can develop assessment tasks that contain some of the forms of assessment with more errors	Can develop assessment tasks that contain a variety of forms of assessment with less error	Ability to develop assessment tasks that contain a variety of forms of assessment with virtually no errors
4. Relevancy of assessment tools: rubrics, checklists, memorandum, observation sheet etc	Assessment tools do not match the assessment tasks	Assessment tools partially match the assessment tasks	Assessment tools match most of the assessment tasks	All the assessment tools are relevant and match the entire assessment tasks
5. Rating of marks allocated to tasks (questions and mark allocations) and learners (marking errors in tasks)	-There were more tasks (questions) overrated or underrated -There were more evidence of marks overrating or underrating	-There were few tasks (questions) overrated or underrated -There were few evidence of marks overrating or underrating	-There were very few instances of tasks (questions) overrated or underrated -There were very few evidence of marks overrating or underrating	-There were no tasks (questions) overrated or underrated -There were no evidence of marks overrating or underrating during marking
6. Evidence of feedback to learners: (corrections, revisions, comments, self- and peer assessment)	No evidence that feedback was given to learners	Some evidence of feedback given to learners but will not improve learner performance	Feedback given to learners will improve some aspects of the learner performance in learning	Feedback given were adequate and will improve/enhance all aspects of the learner's performance in learning
7. Evidence of SBA and cluster moderation (to deal with reliable and fair tasks, marking errors and teacher feedback)	There was no evidence of any form of moderation	There was evidence of both internal and external moderation at times but will not improve teacher assessment practice	There was evidence of full moderation but may improve few aspects of teacher assessment practice	There was full evidence of moderations taken place both in the SBA and cluster which will improve teacher assessment practice
8. Evidence of	-There was no	-There was no	-There was little	-There was more

recording and reporting	evidence gathered during learning activities recorded. -No evidence from various tasks but from only one task recorded and reported hence high stakes attached to results -Inaccurate and inconsistent recording and reporting	evidence gathered during learning activities recorded. -Very few evidence from various tasks hence partial high stakes attached to results -little accuracy and consistency in recording and reporting	evidence gathered during learning activities recorded -More evidence from various tasks recorded and reported hence little high stakes attached to results - recording reporting fair, accurate and consistent in most aspects	evidence gathered during learning activities recorded -More evidence from various tasks recorded and reported hence no high stakes attached to results -detailed recording and reporting which were fair and consistent in all cases
9.The criteria usage	-The criteria use were not task specific for assessment for learning -Tasks were not criteria- referenced for assessment of learning -The criteria were not given to learners before tasks were administered	-The criteria use were not task specific for assessment for learning -Few tasks were criteria- referenced for assessment of learning -The criteria were not given to learners before tasks were administered	-The criteria use were task specific to address assessment for learning -Tasks were not criteria- referenced for assessment of learning -The criteria were given to learners before tasks were administered	-The criteria use were task specific for assessment for learning -All tasks were criteria- referenced for assessment of learning -The criteria were given to learners and explained before tasks were administered

Checklist for the Rubric

SCHOOL: _____ EDUCATOR: _____ SUBJECT _____

Type of Task	Criteria	1	2	3	4
	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
	4.				
	5.				
	6.				
	7.				
	8.				
	9.				
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	9.				
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	2.				
	3.				
	4.				
	5.				
	6.				
	7.				
	8.				
	9.				

SCHOOL: _____

RESPONDENT: _____

SUBJECT _____

TASK _____

Comments: (On all the above criteria 1-9)

1. Content coverage and relevancy	6. Evidence of feedback to learners
2. Weighting of cognitive levels of tasks	7. Evidence of SBA and cluster moderations
2. Development or setting of assessment tasks	8. Evidence of recording and reporting
4. Relevancy of assessment tools	9. The criteria usage
5. Rating of marks allocated to tasks and learners marks awarded	10. Overall comments of the Portfolio works

APPENDIX I

Table 2.1 Mark Schedule for annual formal assessment plan: 20

Physical Sciences: Grade 12

Name of learner	First Term						Second Term						Third term						
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3 for PoA	Practical 1	Practical 2	Practical 3 for PoA	Test 1	Test 2	June exam PoA	Practical 4	Practical 5	Practical 6 for PoA	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3 for PoA	Practical 7	Project for PoA	Trial exam for PoA	Total for PoA
Total																			
Average																			
Signatures	Educator		HoD		Principal						District official								
Dates																			

Source: EDoE Physical sciences CASS guidelines grade 10-12

APPENDIX J

Table 2.2: Physical science Programme of Assessment schedule

Only converted marks according to tasks

No	Surname initial	Term 1		Term 2		Term 3			PoA
		Practical task 3	Test 3	Practical task 6	June exams	Project	Test 7	Trial exams	Total PoA
		20	05	20	10	20	05	20	100

Teacher: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

HoD: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Principal: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Cluster _____ Signature _____ Date _____

District Official _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Source: EDoE Physical sciences CASS guidelines grade 10-12