

**Departmental Heads' and teachers' understanding and implementation of the  
Assessment Policy Statement in the Foundation Phase**

**By**

**D.K. Nkosi**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
M.Ed. Education Management, Law and Policy**

**in the**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**Supervisor Dr T.A. Ogina**

## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled: Teachers' understanding and implementation of the Assessment Policy in the Foundation Phase, which I hereby submit for the degree MEd Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



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## ETHICAL STATEMENT

I Duduzile Kate Nkosi obtained ethical approval for data collection on the research topic – **Teachers' understanding and implementation of the Assessment Policy in the Foundation Phase**. I declare that I observed the ethical standards and policy guidelines for responsible research in the code of ethics for researchers prescribed by the University of Pretoria.

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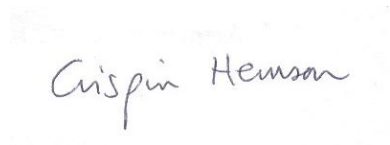
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have carried out language editing of a master dissertation by D. K. Nkosi entitled, **Teachers' understanding and implementation of the assessment policy in the Foundation Phase.**

Yours sincerely



Crispin Hemson

## DEDICATION

- Firstly, I would like to dedicate this study to God the Almighty, who made it possible for me to complete my dissertation and also touched the hearts of the people who assisted me and encouraged me not to give up even during difficult times.
- To my family who supported and encouraged me in my academic aspirations, for which I sometimes had to compromise my duties as a wife and a mother so as to dedicate my time to my studies.
- To my daughter Khanyisile, who has always been my pillar of strength. Her encouragement and motivation kept me going even during difficult times.
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## ABSTRACT

South Africa has had several changes in the curricula from the time it became a democratic country. The implementation of changes in the curricula has been problematic which made it necessary to introduce further changes. This study explored how Foundation Phase teachers and Department Heads (DHs) understand assessment and implement assessment policy. A total of three primary schools in the Gauteng, district of Ekurhuleni North was chosen as the sites of the study. Three teachers and three DHs from Foundation Phase (Grade 1-3) were chosen to participate in the study. Two participants (one teacher and one DH) were selected in each school. Data was generated through interviews with the participants. A thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data from the interviews. Thematic analysis was suitable for this study because it is a technique that enables the researcher to systematically identify, organize and give an in depth understanding of themes across the generated data. The findings of this study show the different ways in which the teachers and the DHs understand assessment and how they implemented the assessment policy. The teachers perceived assessment as a tool that is used to determine the progression of the learners as well as identifying the learners who are not performing well and assisting them. While the DHs perceived assessment and assessment policy as a tool for planning as well as obtaining feedback of the teaching and learning process. While teachers played the role of developing learners to improve in their performance, the DHs performed the leadership and management role in the implementation of the assessment policy. The challenges that the teachers experience as well as the support that they need are also presented. This study gives recommendations that other stakeholders like parents should play a supportive role in the pre-assessment, during assessment and post-assessment periods of the assessment policy to improve the performance of learners.

**Key words:** Assessment, Assessment policy, CAPS, Foundation Phase, Policy Implementation.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AFL	Assessment For Learning
AOL	Assessment of Learning
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum assessment policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EFL	English First Language
ELL	English Language Learners
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
SAT	School Assessment Team
SMT	School Management Team
SOLO	Structure of the Observed Learning Outcomes
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat
TALIP	Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

South Africa has gone through several changes to the national curriculum, from the time it became a democratic country that aimed at ensuring equality, justice, and fairness (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2013). However, the process of implementation of curricular changes has been problematic, which made it necessary to introduce further changes in the education system. According to Moodley (2013), curriculum change is not something new; it happens globally, and it is influenced by the changes and challenges faced by the society. Maharajh et al. (2013) assert that the variations made in the curriculum implied adapting to new ways of teaching and learning used by teachers, as well as new methods of learner assessment. The changes in the curriculum imply refocusing the learning outcomes for teaching and learning, as well as assessment methods.

In all the changes in the curriculum such as subject content and teaching methods, assessment has always been a focal point as it focuses on measuring the learning outcomes actually achieved. The inauguration of the Curriculum assessment policy Statement (CAPS) brought changes regarding what should be taught and assessed in the classroom (DBE, 2011). Since curriculum design determines the effectiveness of teaching and learning, Gareis and Grant (2015) describe curriculum as a set of envisioned learning outcomes that enable learners to acquire or gain knowledge and develop or acquire skills. The South African National Protocol for Assessment (2011) describes assessment as an essential and necessary aspect of pedagogy in which teachers can establish what learners have comprehended from the lesson taught. In addition, assessment is also used to generate and synthesize data that shows the learning that has taken place in the classroom. Such information assists stakeholders in determining the academic progress of the learner (DBE, 2011). This definition features the value of assessment in the education process.

The role played by assessment in the teaching and learning process connects educational policies, curriculum, syllabus, and approaches as well as classroom tasks and activities (Brown & Deneen, 2013). Assessment also plays a role in accountability,

grading, progress, and in transferring a need to support quality in education (Archer, 2017). The purpose of the introduction of the South African Curriculum and assessment policy Statement (CAPS) was for it to be a major navigation tool by the teachers in advancing excellence in educating learners (DBE, 2011). From the study done by Maharajh et al. (2013), it was discovered that teachers welcomed the introduction of CAPS, with the hope that it would give them direction and guidance in teaching as well as in assessing learners. Teachers acknowledged that CAPS is a good policy, giving the teachers hope that things would change for the better in terms of transmitting knowledge and learning (Maharajh et al., 2013). However, a concern was raised about the implementation of the objectives of CAPS that are not easily achievable due to some challenges. Since CAPS is a top-down policy, it was expected that educational experts would do monitoring and follow ups concerning the execution of CAPS. The achievement of this expectation remains questionable, creating a reason for the researcher to undertake this study.

Richmond, Salazar and Jones (2019) assert that classroom-based assessment is the most extensively used tool to measure teacher effectiveness and is seen as a source of information to guide teacher development. Consequently, teachers need to be provided with all the necessary information and tools required for the enactment process of CAPS. In the school setting, departmental heads (DHs) play the leadership role in curriculum implementation and learner assessment, this is why the DHs are included in this study to participant in answering the research questions. Research (Archer, 2017; Richmond et al., 2019) confirms that the role played by teachers during assessment is influenced by their personal experiences and professional training, among other factors. Therefore, if teachers are not well trained, they may construct their own understanding of assessment using their personal history and experience in teaching (Sethusha, 2013). The gap in literature reviewed is the reality of how teachers understand and implement assessment policy needs. This applies similarly to the context of this study, Ekurhuleni North district schools in Gauteng province, South Africa.

This introductory discussion on assessment gives a sense of urgency in exploring how teachers understand assessment as well as how they implement assessment policy in teaching and learning. This study is underpinned by the assumption that the way in which teachers understand and implement assessment policy may either affect learning beneficially or can be detrimental to the expected learning outcomes. The problem that motivated the need for this study is discussed in the next section.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The introduction of CAPS in South African schools was intended to change the methods of assessment and correct the mistakes in the previous curricula that had had damaging consequences in the education process. The intentions of CAPS were also to curb the problem of learners' poor performance and contribute to better teaching and learner evaluation by teachers (DBE, 2011). Since the introduction of CAPS, teachers have been attending workshops and in-service training with the aim of exposing them to the current developments in curriculum matters and assessment. Furthermore, several resources such as CAPS documents and other learning resources have been supplied to schools to support the teachers in fast tracking the changes in curriculum that leads to improved quality teaching and learning. However, the dropping of education standards and learners' poor performance during assessment continues (Kanjee, Sayed & Nkomo, 2013; Van der Nest, 2018). Most of the blame is directed to teachers' ineffectiveness and lack of knowledge regarding the implementation of CAPS (Beckmann, 2018). The obstacles of policy application are factors such as the absence of educational resources and unprepared teachers regarding skills and subject knowledge base (Maharajh et al., 2013; Beckmann, 2018).

Although various research studies (Sethusha, 2013; Ramabulana, 2017) have been done and numerous findings reported on teaching and learning outcomes, very few, if any, have focused on teachers' understanding of assessment and assessment policy as it relates to the upgrading of teaching and learning outcomes. Yet, one of the responsibilities of teachers is to develop logical thinking, which requires teachers to be knowledgeable of assessment and guided by assessment policy to assess learners effectively and to advance the value of education (Atif & Pathak, 2019). Likewise,

Sethusha (2013) asserts that it is crucial to have a good comprehension of assessment and bring it into line with classroom learning evaluation practices. Sebate (2011) also found that teachers need to understand their role, the influence and the constraining factors that affect the process of assessment. However, DeLuca and Lam (2014) state that teachers are still struggling to get clarification on assessment policies and execute learner evaluation practices that speak to the current principles. Such knowledge gain and practical implementation of assessment policy may enable teachers to be motivated in the building their knowledge of assessment literature. From my observation, literature on learner assessment strategies is still failing to recognise some of the goals of assessment and the problems experienced by teachers and learners because of changes in assessment policies. To address this gap, this study anticipated to investigate in what way teachers understand assessment and how it relates to the role of assessment policy towards improving teaching and learning. The role that the DHs and the teachers play in assessment as well as the influences and constraints of assessment policy in pedagogy is established in this study.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

As a teacher, I have been observing how teachers do assessment. During my teaching experience, I have noticed that teachers treat assessment as a single exercise that is excluded from the education process. Many teachers that I have worked with usually concentrate on summative assessment, which they do towards the end of each period to be able to grade learners. During this formal assessment process, teachers use a “teach-to-the-test” approach to prepare learners for assessment, which only aims at fulfilling narrow curriculum goals (Shepard et al., 2017). I have also observed that most of the learners fail these assessments tests, possibly because they are not used to assessments and cannot comprehend the instructions given by the teacher. Furthermore, teachers who do classroom assessments fail to give feedback to learners, which makes it difficult for learners to correct their mistakes and improve their performance. This makes me wonder if the teachers are aware of the structure, principles and process included in the assessment policy. If they are aware of the

contents of the policy, then how do the teachers understand the policy and how do they explain the strategies that they use in implementing assessment policy?

Furthermore, in my experience, I have noticed that in most cases, classroom activities that are done as formative assessment are only treated as proof of teaching and content coverage and not necessarily for fulfilling the purpose of learner assessment. This is contrary to the views of William (2011), who asserts that formative assessment principles emphasize that assessment should be continuous and measure learners' knowledge acquired through the process of educating learners. Bertram (2011) argues that teaching, learning and assessment must be treated as a single process and be organized systematically to foster constant development of competences that can be learnt continuously. However, Shepard et al. (2017) argue that, by not using formal classroom assessment, learners are likely to receive different messages from the high stakes standardized achievements tests.

This study involves primary school DHs and teachers who teach lower grades 1-3 (Foundation Phase) because they are at the elementary teaching, learning and assessment stage in education. The teachers are accountable for the future success of the educational achievement of the learners. The research assumption in this study is that the reason why some learners are not coping with the academic work in higher grades is likely because they have not been assessed in line with the assessment policy and thus encouraged to master the basic knowledge and skills that they are supposed to have been taught at lower grades, pointing to poor assessment by their teachers at the lower grade levels (Kanjee, Sayed & Nkomo, 2013). Such an assumption needs to be investigated, and evidence provided to support or reject this claim. Learners' poor performance and pressure from parents, community and the government also have a negative effect on teachers. In my experience and observation, teachers have developed a low morale because of this presumption that they are incompetent. In that case, this study explores how the teachers experience the implementation of the assessment policy along with how they make sense of the policy. These findings from the literature reviewed the researcher's own observation

as well create a need to explore how teachers understand assessment and the assessment policy including the processes they use in applying the policy.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to determine how primary school teachers understand assessment and how they implement the assessment policy. The study explores how the DHs and teachers view their role in assessment, including the influences and constraints that assessment policy places on teaching and learning, as well as what could be done to help teachers in achieving the standard of assessment as indicated in the assessment policy.

### **1.4.1 Objectives of the study**

- To establish how DHs and teachers describe assessment in relation to the assessment policy
- To explore the views of DHs and teachers regarding their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes
- To identify the influences and constraints of implementing the assessment policy in teaching and learning
- To determine what can be done to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment set in the assessment policy

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

### **1.5.1 Primary question**

What are teachers' understandings of assessment in relation to the assessment policy?

### **1.5.2 Secondary questions**

- a. How do teachers describe assessment in relation to the assessment policy?
- b. How do teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes?

- c. What influences and what constrains the implementation of the assessment policy in teaching and learning?
- d. What can be done to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment set in the assessment policy?

## 1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is constructed by the researcher through integrating a set of related concepts that underpins the study (Tamene, 2016). To construct a conceptual framework, a researcher brings together a set of interrelated concepts to explain or give a broader understanding of a phenomenon being studied in qualitative research. In contrast, while in a quantitative study, the conceptual framework is used to predict the issue or problems being studied (Imenda, 2014). A simplified model of Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice (TALiP), adapted from Xu and Brown (2016), is used as the conceptual framework for this study. The researcher used the different concepts of this model to explain the findings of the study that answered to the main question and the sub-questions. The model presents components of the teacher knowledge base, conceptions of assessment, assessment literacy and identity construction which all relate to assessment and the implementation of assessment policy.

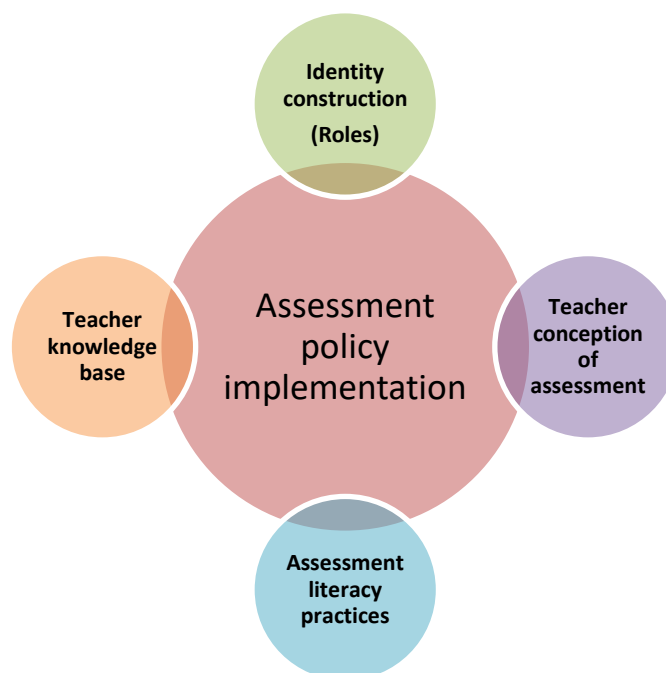


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework - TALiP model (adapted from Xu & Brown, 2016)

- Teacher knowledge base.

One of the key concepts of this conceptual framework is the knowledge that the teachers have regarding assessment and assessment policy. Looney et al. (2017) state that, in order for teachers to do assessments, they need to have the ability to cover both subject knowledge and skills to execute their duties or their teaching practice on the subject in a comprehensive manner. Teachers who have acquired knowledge and skills develop confidence, understanding and application of assessment practice within a reliable educational context (Looney et al., 2017). Such teachers create reliable assessments and apply different assessment practices and skills, to appropriately manage and interpret assessment at classroom and state levels (DeLuca & Lam, 2014). The skills and knowledge acquired by teachers in their specialized subject/s are used to interpret evidence, provide instructions and give feedback to the learners. In doing assessment, knowledgeable and skilled teachers can guide student learning and report students' achievements as well as produce good classroom test and achievement data on a large scale. Furthermore, teachers are also able to use different approaches in analysing assessment data, which is then used to improve learner academic performance (Looney et al., 2017). The researcher envisages exploring the knowledge that the teachers have on assessment as well as their understanding of assessment policy, in the first research question of this study. The researcher has also analysed the knowledge base of the teachers as demonstrated in the responses that the teachers gave in answering the third research question, which explored the influences and constraints of assessment policy in teaching and learning.

- Assessment Literacy in Practice

Along with the subject knowledge base is the importance of teachers having a sound knowledge of assessment and being able to practise it. Xu and Brown (2016) assert that the most critical aspect of teacher specialized development in the field of education is the capability of the teacher in identifying, understanding and

communicating assessment information. This is done through the data accumulated from learners' assessment and progress, then followed by new teaching strategies (Xu & Brown, 2016). After such professional development, teachers can be able to address areas of weakness and continue to monitor learners' academic progress. During high stake tests, the focus of the teachers is on calculating the marks obtained by the learners and improving the statistics (Brown, 2011). Even during teachers' evaluations, concepts such as assessment purposes, process fairness and measurement theory as well as teachers' quality with respect to their professionalism are considered (Brown, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2011; Xu and Brown, 2016; Atif & Pathak, 2019). In this study, the third secondary research question provides knowledge on assessment practices by further exploring the factors that influence or limit the capabilities of the teachers in applying assessment policy. The interview questions required teachers to explain their understanding of formative and summative assessments as well as to differentiate the concepts of assessment and grading, and thus aimed to determine the assessment literature level of the teachers.

- Conception of assessment

Assessment is the main concept in this study. Teachers' beliefs are very important in determining how teachers describe assessment as a concept. Tan and Turner (2015) argue that teachers' beliefs of assessment are often influenced by their practical teaching and learning experience. This means that in judging the quality of teachers one should consider how the teachers theorize learner education (Sethusha, 2013). Therefore, teachers need to develop their own personal beliefs around assessment to enable them to respond to future external demands regarding learner assessment. Regardless of how well the teacher development process has been, the competence of teachers' assessment is influenced by their rational choices and decisions to promote learning. This study explores how DHs and teachers conceptualise assessment and the assessment policy. The participants shared with the researcher what they believe assessment consists of, and the relationship between assessment policy and how they assess learners in their classrooms. The notion of assessment as perceived by the participants in this study was further explored when the researcher

asked the participants to explain the difference between assessment and grading as well as their understanding of formal and summative assessments. The researcher further asked the participants in the interview about the strategies they use to improve their teaching and learning.

- Identity construction

Teachers may develop multiple identities depending on the issues or the role of the teacher that is being investigated. Xu and Brown's (2016) Model provide a space in which teachers may reconstruct their identity as assessors. The identity construction of teachers is regarded as a dynamic, meaningful, and a constant changing process in which the teachers see themselves as competent assessors among other identities. This period of identity construction is marked by active, significant, and continuous changes, including dialogues and concerns. Therefore, assessment identity construction refers to the time where teachers identifies and strengthens their knowledge and professional skills, and be provided with opportunities to connect with the process of assessment in personal and profound ways. During identity construction, teachers develop the sense of caring, as this is the time where teachers' thinking and creativity abilities are challenged (Deluca & Lam, 2014). In this study, the sub-question on how teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes intends to generate knowledge regarding teachers' practice in applying assessment policy, as well as how they describe their identity as teachers when they are involved in assessing learners. The question – how teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning reveals the identity of teachers and the DHs that links to the responsibilities of assessing learners. The last question is this: 'What can be done to assist teachers in confirming that assessment is based on the subject content taught by the teacher and the knowledge acquired by the learners?' The narratives of the participants given in response to this question were used by the researcher to construct a description of the identity of the teachers and DHs that emerged in this study. All the elements that are shown in the above figure facilitate or inhibit the implementation of assessment policy.

## **1.7 RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

The interpretivist paradigm served as a foundation in this study, as it uses a variety of viewpoints to recognize and evaluate the opinions of different people based on the data produced (Thanh et al., 2015). The interpretivist paradigm provided the researcher with the basis to generate in-depth knowledge and insight into the meaning of phenomenon being studied from the perspective of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Maree, 2012). To offer a detailed examination of specific cases, a qualitative case study design seemed suitable to be used by the researcher as the research design. The goal of the study was to gather detailed information that provides information on how the participants (DHs and teachers) construct their knowledge and sense of the relevant social reality, which in this study is the understanding of assessment and the enactment of the assessment policy. Three primary schools in the Gauteng in Ekurhuleni North district were the data collection sites of this study. Three DHs and three teachers were chosen as participants. The participants were chosen based on their different ages, qualifications and experience in their positions. The three schools were chosen because they are in the same cluster and also not far from each other, which was convenient for the researcher. Teachers in these schools frequently have meetings to discuss issues and techniques used during teaching and learning practice. These are some of the reasons why the researcher chose the three schools. After data collection, a thematic analysis process was used. Thematic analysis is a technique that enables the researcher to systematically identify, organize and give an in-depth understanding of themes across data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2012). After doing thematic analysis, the research findings and discussion were stated. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in the last chapter of this dissertation.

## **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The target of this study was to provide insight that could benefit the entire education community because teachers are regarded as central to teaching and learning. Therefore, the findings of this study may assist in contributing knowledge towards the empowerment of teachers as assessors as well as providing an understanding of

assessment and assessment policy. The role played by the DHs and teachers in assessment, which shows the identity formed in doing assessment and implementing assessment policy, is showcased in this study. According to Sebate (2011) and Sethusha (2013), teachers as assessors are expected to be more knowledgeable of the assessment policy, the nature of assessment and its implementation. Furthermore, they are expected to demonstrate understanding and the employment of assessment procedures in the arrangement of classroom assessment practices, to fulfil the objectives of the curriculum, assessment policy and guidelines. Teachers' conceptualization of their classroom assessment as shown in this study has an influence in their assessment practice. Although the findings of this study are based on a small sample of participants, the study adds the knowledge of how teachers understand assessment and assessment policy from the experiences of those who were involved as participants. Findings and the recommendations made from the study may also contribute to addressing the challenges that teachers experience during assessment.

## **1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

- Assessment

Assessment involves the procedures of evaluating the knowledge and skills acquired by learners over a period of time. The knowledge and other information collected during assessment are used by the teachers and other stakeholders in decision making regarding learner academic progress (South African National Protocol for Assessment, 2011; Looney et al., 2017). This study focuses on how teachers understand the concept assessment and assessment policy. Assessment is, therefore, a key word in this study.

- Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a continuous assessment done in class by teachers to assess learners' progress in academic work. Therefore, teachers need to be competent and understand assessment strategies that could be used to track learners' potential in class through acquiring various knowledge and skills (DBE, 2011).

Formative assessment is about using various evaluation strategies to determine the progress of learners in different subjects (Menéndez et al., 2019).

- Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is used to establish how well the learners in a grade are doing in a particular subject. Summative assessment can be described as a system used to evaluate learner academic performance for the purpose of progression (DBE, 2011). Summative assessment is also used widely as a state accountability assessment which focuses on calculating and improving the performance of learners (DBE, 2011).

- Assessment task

An assessment task is the formal or informal work given to learners. Teachers use assessment tasks to measure and learners' knowledge and skills on the subject content taught. Formal assessment is used as a methodical way of assessment that determines the academic achievement of learner in particular subjects within specific grades (DBE, 2011). An assessment task is also perceived as a tool that can be employed in evaluating work done by learners to ascertain their academic progress.

- Academic assessor

In education, teachers are the assessors of curriculum outcomes. Teachers as assessors are expected to be critically thinkers, creative, logical and have an idea of how learners can acquire knowledge and skills (Looney et al., 2017). Assessors in the school context are individuals who are responsible for appraising learners' acquired knowledge and skills gained in their progress in education. In the study by Clipa (2011), the learners perceived their teachers as assessors who are more interested in information presentation than creative problem solving or assessing psychosocial competences. In this study, the role of the teachers and HDs as assessors is explored.

- Departmental head

In secondary schools, department heads (DHs) are regarded as middle managers assigned the responsibility of ensuring that school plans and policies are implemented

(Khaeshe et al., 2016). Department heads can also be senior teachers who are responsible for a phase or specific subjects. The DHs are responsible for many tasks in the school, such as leadership and management in curriculum implementation, testing and examination, teaching activities, cocurricular activities, guidance and counselling (Khaeshe et al., 2016). This study focuses on the responsibilities of DHs concerning assessment of learners.

- School-based continuous assessment

School-based continuous assessment can be described as an assessment that is constantly done at school level in which teachers use diverse strategies and tools to account for learner academic performance (Kapambwe, 2010). The author Kapambwe (2010) further explains that continuous assessment is linked to formative assessment, which focuses on improving learner academic performance. Continuous assessment also enables teachers to gather cumulative marks of the learner that can be used in summative assessments. In the study, continuous assessments are described as one of the strategies of assessments.

- Curriculum and assessment policy Statement (CAPS)

The South African Department of Basic Education instituted CAPS in 2010 (Department of Basic Education 2011). CAPS is a comprehensive policy document used by the South African Department of Basic Education. This assessment policy document is structured to guide teachers on what to assess, how to do the assessment and when to do the assessment that guides teachers of what, how and when assessment should be administered. This is the policy that the participants who were interviewed referred to when the researcher explored their understanding of assessment and assessment policy and implementation.

- Assessment literacy

Every teacher is expected to be knowledgeable of assessment. Teachers who are assessment literate can demonstrate knowledge on how to create and select high quality assessments. They incorporate assessment practice and assessment results

in their actions and enable teachers to communicate accurately about learners' progress (Looney et al., 2017).

- Policy

A policy is a document designed by higher levels like governments and other institutions. Chigbu and Kolubowei (2019) state that policy is a formal statement that gives direction on implementation of activities in an organization. Policy is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action. Policy gives instructions, directions, and decrees on what to do, when to do and why to do (Best, 2013). The authors Chigbu and Kolubowei (2019) further explain that written policy documents provide details of how operations in an organization should be carried out, the objectives and the set goals to be achieved. In education, policies are often planned by the government. In the study the policy on assessment (CAPS) was developed by the South African Department of Basic Education.

## **1.10 OUTLINES OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter one: Introduction and orientation to the study

The first chapter of this dissertation concentrates on the study of teachers' understanding of assessment and assessment policy. The researcher presents the background and orientation of the study, which are then followed by discussion of the research problem, rationale of the study, purpose and research questions, conceptual framework, research methodology and the significance of the study. The key concepts are clarified and the outline of the chapters that makes up this dissertation is presented.

Chapter two: Literature review on assessment and assessment Policy.

This chapter explores and review literature on assessment and assessment policy. The role of teachers in teaching and the responsibilities of the teacher regarding assessment is reviewed, the teachers' conceptions of assessment, and strategies used in educating learners, including the challenges experienced in the implementation of CAPS, are presented. The role played by the different stakeholders

is also highlighted. The chapter ends with the discussion of causes of poor learner assessment and the benefits of doing assessment.

#### Chapter three: Research methodology

This chapter explains and describes the methodology employed in doing this research, which includes the research paradigm, approach, design, site and sample, data collection and data analysis. Research ethics as well as the measures taken to enhance trustworthiness of the study are contained in the chapter.

#### Chapter four: Research findings and discussion

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the research findings, analysis and discussion of how the findings relate to the literature review.

#### Chapter five: Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations

Chapter five contains the summation of the research findings, conclusion of the study and recommendations from the research findings. This last chapter also narrates the delimitations and limitations of this study.

### **1.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

Chapter one presents the background to this study as well as the research problem, rationale and research questions. The chapter also provides the conceptual framework that underpins this study. The significance of the study is included as well as the clarification of the concepts. The outline of the chapters of this dissertation is presented. The succeeding chapter represents the literature review on assessment and assessment policy, and the role of teachers in assessment.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ON ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT POLICY**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter outlined the introduction and background of the study. This chapter reviews literature on assessment and assessment policy. The definition of assessment is explained, and the role played by the teachers and DHs in assessment of learners is discussed. The chapter further discusses the different types of assessment strategies. In addition, the chapter presents the South African assessment policy, leadership in assessment implementation and the challenges experienced in implementing the of assessment policy as well as the roles of the different stakeholders. Furthermore, the literature reviews teachers' perception of assessment, causes of poor learner assessment and the benefits of doing assessments.

### **2.2 ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is a process used to establish whether a certain set of instructions has resulted in the achievement of the intended outcomes (William, 2011). Assessment plays a vital role in the process of learning and motivation because learners may not immediately learn what they are taught and needs time to absorb what they have been taught before they are assessed. Teachers do assessment so that they confirm if their teaching activities have resulted in the achievement of the anticipated learning outcomes (William, 2011). Assessment, as defined by Richmond et al. (2019), is a fundamental part of every education system and is used as a supporting system for educational activities that are delivered in classrooms and in programmes used for populace reports. William (2011) further defines assessment as a conventional term that comprises the different techniques for methods used to gather information about the knowledge gained by learners, the extent to which the learners have comprehended what has been taught, learner ability attitudes, and motivation. In addition to the above definitions, the DBE document (2011, p. 154) also defines

assessment as a *“systematic process by which data is collected, analysed and interpreted to understand the progress of the teaching and learning process”*.

The study adopted the definition by Sebati (2011), which defines assessment as a process that is used to measure the knowledge acquired by learners during teaching and learning process.

### **2.3 ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES**

There are many assessment strategies that teachers can use to evaluate learning. Some of the strategies are formative assessment, informal assessment via observation, online assessment, learner self-assessment, portfolio assessment, peer assessment, school-based assessment and summative assessment, among others (Singh, Muhammad, Mostafa, Yunus, Noordin & Darm, 2021). Mbwana (2024) found that the formative assessment schemes used by the participants involved in the reported study included the use of group projects, quizzes, and exercises done by the students. Singh et al. (2021) state that, although there were teachers in their study who used a variety of assessment strategies for the process as well as the product of learning, there were also teachers who continue to use formative assessment strategies that focus on confirming what the students have learnt instead of the process of learning which can be done by engaging learners to be part of the learning and assessment strategies. Mbwana (2024) further reports that the effective strategy of formative evaluation used in their study was including question and answer time during the lessons. This allowed learner classroom participation by engaging in learner-to-teacher and peer-to-peer interaction, thus enabling the teacher to evaluate the level at which the learners perceive the subject content being taught.

Furthermore, Ukobizaba, Nizeyimana and Mukuka (2021) highlight that in teaching and assessing of mathematics, there are many assessment strategies and models that can be used, such as the higher-order thinking skills model, the use of video games, authentic assessments, dynamic problem solving, and performance assessments of cooperative learning, among others. Despite the suggestion of the various strategies that can be used in assessing mathematical work, Ukobizaba,

Nizeyimana and Mukuka (2021) suggest a need for more research to be done to establish ways in which formal assessment can be done to improve the logical reasoning and the mathematical problem-solving skills of learners.

The categories that this study used to explore the different assessment strategies also include continuous assessment, assessment of different subjects and the use of digital technology on assessment strategies. The multiple assessment strategies used by teachers, such as peer assessment, performance-based assessment and self-assessment, should all focus on the student learning process (Singh et al., 2021). Peer assessment is important because, when students are involved in the assessment tasks and activities, both the students and the teacher can identify the strengths and weakness of a learning process. This gives the teacher an opportunity to plan for remedial learning sessions for those learners in need of learning support (Singh et al., 2021). Singh et al. (2021) also assert that the assessment strategies that engage the learners to be actively involved in assessing their own learning may encourage the development of thinking skills and ownership in learners' self-learning.

Engaging the learners in active learning may be based on the feedback provided by teachers. Teachers are expected to provide critical and supportive feedback, which is important for assessment for learning. Sun and Suzuki (2013) acknowledge that providing feedback that supports teaching and learning is difficult to achieve, although, if feedback is presented in a written narrative that describes the expected standard of assessment, the reason for failure in achieving the set outcomes as well as providing strategies for improving teaching can lead to a desirable change in teaching practices as well as learner performance. The literature pointed out that there is evidence that the performance assessment done by teachers has contributed to making learners stronger in mathematical problem-solving skills (Ukobizaba, Nizeyimana & Mukuka 2021). Given that there are many assessment strategies that teachers can use, it is crucial that teachers are familiar with the assessment policy, to be able to choose the most appropriate assessment strategy for the subject that they teach and assess.

### **2.3.1 Continuous assessment and competencies**

Modup and Sunday (2015) found that the term continuous assessment was conceptualized by the teachers in their study to mean tests given to learners after a lesson. The study by Marcus and Joseph (2014) found that science teachers in their study implemented the policy on continuous assessment in different ways, due to their level of content knowledge and experiences in teaching their assigned subjects. This means that the domain that was being assessed was subject content, which requires cognitive ability. Apart from the cognitive ability, continuous assessment should also measure the affective and psychometric abilities, which creates a problem, because many teachers are not competent in measuring such areas (Marcus & Joseph, 2014). The study done by Alfian, Rasyid, Habibi, Noprival and Yusuf (2022), focusing on higher education in Indonesia, found that the assessment done by English First Language (EFL) lecturers covered competencies that relate to subject knowledge, skills and attitude. Due to the approach of assessing the three competency domains, the lecturers used different assessment strategies. The lecturers who participated in the study covered the three-competency domain by doing observation for attitude, checking work performance to assess physical skills and testing methods for evaluating subject knowledge (Alfian et al., 2022). From this study, one can conclude that the lecturers seem to be knowledgeable about the assessment policy and strived to implement the policy effectively using different assessment strategies to evaluate the different domains of learning.

Donaldson (2018) discovered that the leaders of most of the schools she visited had given much thought to how assessment strategies might be created to fit into the framework of the curriculum for Wales. Schools that had established efficient assessment systems were able to create useful policies and procedures that support the goals and principles of assessment as stated in the Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2018). The structures that were set by the participants in this study seems to support learner progression, and provided assessment guideline (Donaldson, 2018). Apart from the ability of the teachers to use policy guidelines, the actual continuous assessment strategies differed from one school to the next and from one subject to the next. This is why more research is needed to establish the different

models that could be applied to the different needs of subjects and a variety of school contexts.

Ramalepe (2015) proposes a model that could be used for operative application of continuous assessment in Limpopo secondary schools. This includes monitoring of the implementation, providing the support needed and the resources as well as motivating teachers. Ramalepe (2015) further explains that, while motivating teachers to be able to effectively implement assessment policy, an appraisal process should be in place as well as measures to be taken to address the flaws in the practice of policy implementation. This is just one of the many studies that should be done to provide different strategies of doing continuous assessments with the objective of increasing successful learner performance.

It is the teachers that are responsible for continuous assessment of learners. This means that teacher motivation as well as teaching in a conducive environment that supports continuous assessment is crucial, while the massive promotion of learners to higher grades that is influenced by parents, principals and the government discourages teachers from abiding with the regulations for continuous assessment (Marcus & Joseph, 2014). Furthermore, the professional development of teachers that is done through government sponsored initiatives in form of established seminars, workshops and conferences may better prepare teachers for continuous assessment to improve the abilities of the learners (Modup & Sunday, 2015). From the above discussion on continuous assessment, one may conclude that continuous assessment practices that ignore the emotional wellbeing of teachers may have a negative effect on the role of teachers in doing learner continuous assessment. The assessment of learner achievement may also be different according to the subject taught by the teacher. This issue is discussed in the next session.

### **2.3.2 Subject-based assessment strategies**

The strategies used for assessing learners may differ depending on the subject that is being assessed. In a study done in Florida, United States of America involving English language teachers, Szecsi, Lashley, Nelson and Sherman (2017) found that the teachers with more experience in teaching “English Speakers of Other Languages

(ESOL)” were able to design assessment strategies that suited the abilities of the learners, while other teachers in the same study were culturally responsive and used assessment strategies that incorporated the varied background of the learners (Szecsi et al., 2017). From their study, Szecsi et al. (2017) suggest that English language teachers must be trained to have competency in managing the assessment of language literature and be able to interpret the results to improve learning outcomes. In Florida, and possibly elsewhere in the world, English Language Learners (ELL) are combined into mainstream classrooms with children who are native English speakers. This means that English language teachers should understand the abilities of the learners and use assessment strategies that accommodate the capabilities of all the learners (Szecsi et al., 2017).

With regards to physical education, a study done in Norway by Leirhaug and MacPhail (2015) found that physical education teachers valued engagement and reflection done after assessment as a base for changing their assessment practices and their likings. Engaging learners to be part of assessment is a strategy that may be applied in some subjects. In the Norwegian study that explored the assessment of physical education, the teachers allowed learners in presenting and discussing movements in the subject as part of assessment, thus empowering learners as assessors (Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015). The authors, Leirhaug and MacPhail (2015), emphasize that physical education teachers should concentrate on learner-oriented assessment approaches and individual learning experiences when doing assessment. Furthermore, teachers’ assessment practices and preferences in physical education in the Norwegian school context should concentrate on supporting students in doing self-assessment and be accountable for their own learning (Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015). Trained teachers in the study by Thomas (2012), did not have time for student-centred assessment strategies, because most of their time was used on covering and revising the syllabus. This means that the student-centred assessment approach needs more emphasis in both policy as well as implementation.

In mathematics, all assessment strategies in the study by Ukobizaba, Nizeyimana and Mukuka (2021) seemed to have the potential of motivating learners, increasing the

problem-solving skills of the learners and making learners active participants in improving their performance in mathematics. Ukobizaba et al. (2021) further advocate that, in assessing Mathematics, teachers need to take into consideration the abilities of students when constructing test or exam questions that require higher levels of thinking, despite the fact that higher-order thinking model train learners in problem solving skills when solving mathematical problems. The authors further suggest that, in teaching and assessing mathematics, teachers can use the SOLO taxonomy to provide insights on the instructional approaches and improve the ability of learners to improve their performance in mathematics (Ukobizaba et al., 2021). Using open-ended questions in tests or exams encourages logical reasoning as well as higher-order thinking in mathematical problem-solving skills (Ukobizaba et al., 2021).

The discussion of the above literature on subject-specific assessment strategies suggests that continuous specialised academic growth of all teachers, especially the teacher's progress that fulfils the requirements that are subject-specific, like assessing English language, is important and should be prioritized, instead of providing general workshop and seminars or tutorials on assessment strategies that are generic. The assessment policy must also include subject-specific assessment guidelines.

### **2.3.3 Assessment using digital technology**

Even in the digital space, there are different online strategies that teachers use, especially for distance learning, to assess learners, such as the use of rubrics in assessing learners' projects, self-learning modules, essay, group projects and other tasks (Agtarap, Januto, Aglibot & Toquero, 2024). Weigand, Trgalova and Tabach (2024) are of the opinion that, in teaching mathematics, the selection of the digital technologies and resources to be used should be aligned with the set objectives and goals to be achieved. The introduction of the use of technology in education, especially in the mathematics curriculum, needs critical evaluation, as do the physical school environment and the goals that are set for the subject (Weigand, Trgalova & Tabach, 2024). This means that the strategies and resources to be used in managing the technological changes in assessing mathematics need to be diverse, due to the multiplicity in the education settings.

Unlike the traditional assessment strategies that focus mostly on evaluating subject content, online educational games like Kahoot, Edpuzzle Quiziz, among others, are strategies used by teachers to evaluate the overall learning of students and not just the subject content. Other technological assessment tools include the use of Google Forms and timed Quizizz with automatic answers to assess the work of the learners done online (Agtarap et al., 2024). In most cases, online assessment is summative in nature and includes strategies such as online quizzes and feedback, using rubrics, asking questions on a digital space where students respond online, with their responses being marked using a rubric (Agtarap et al., 2024). Rubrics are used in online assessment as an assessment tool that provides the learner with the information regarding the expected quality of the work to be done; rubrics direct the learner on what will be assessed, and rubrics are also used to provide feedback. While digital programmes like Facebook, Messenger and Twitter are primarily for teachers to communicate with the learners, learners communicate with teachers as well as with other learners.

Although there has been an increase in blended learning (the use of both traditional and digital methods), the study done by Agtarap et al. (2024) in South Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines, found that teachers in the isolated and rural areas struggle to use technological platforms like Zoom and Google classrooms due to challenges related to poor connectivity (Agtarap et al., 2024). Agtarap et al. (2024) recommend from their study that teachers need professional development to be able to use digital technology strategies to assess learners and be innovative in creating more ways, not only in assessing the subject knowledge, but also in using digital games and other strategies to assess learning. Teachers at all levels should receive adequate training in digital technologies, which could be done at pre-service and in-service continuous professional development sessions (Weigand, Trgalova & Tabach, 2024). In the teaching of Mathematics, there is need to develop digital technologies in setting the standard of learning and giving learners tests and examinations during formative as well as summative assessments. Due to the nature of the digital world, all the school stakeholders must be flexible and prepared for continuous changes and modifications in the educational process. The literature on the use of a vast variety of digital

strategies for formal and informal assessment shows that teachers are already actively using electronic means of assessing learning. This suggests that the assessment policy should be inclusive of a variety of online activities that teachers may use in their school, depending on available digital connectivity. Furthermore, given that not all schools and learners have computers, laptops, technological infrastructure and digital data for online learning and assessment, the gap between the well-resourced schools and the poorly resourced schools is wider than in the era before blended learning and online teaching and learning. The question is – how can assessment policy reduce such a gap?

### **2.3.4 Challenges experienced in the implementation of assessment policy**

There are several challenges related to implementing assessment policy that spells out the different assessment strategies. The findings of the study by Mbwana (2024) done in secondary schools of Moshi municipality, Tanzania, shows that teachers rarely prepare the learners of what to expect from a learning experience based on the set learning outcomes for the purpose of formative assessment. Furthermore, the study (Mbwana, 2024) found that teachers in the study lacked an understanding of designing and using the formative strategies that are likely to contribute to good performance in Biology. Therefore, subject-specific assessment training should be part of pre-service professional development agenda. Another challenge relating to the different assessment strategies is that, in some schools, teachers use exercises that are given to students as part of formative assessments. The problem with this strategy is that at times the work is not marked due to the large class size and the nature of the questions asked in such assignment exercises mostly focuses on recall of knowledge, which is at the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Mbwana, 2024). In such cases there is no room for critical thinking. Marcus and Joseph (2014) also found that when there was a high learner population in the class, continuous assessment in science subject could not be done adequately because one teacher could not assess all the learners in each period of assessment. In other subjects like physical education, Leirhaug and MacPhail (2015) found that there is need for creating in the policy an environment that supports the successful implementation of physical education assessment for learning strategies.

Feedback is an essential part of assessment. Feedback is a concept that is perceived by teachers in different ways. Sun and Suzuki (2013) regard feedback as remarks and explanations from the teachers that helps learners to improve in their academic performance. In another study, Mbwana (2024) reported that the teachers used question marks, circles, and lines on the work submitted by the learners as assessment as a form of feedback, which was not constructive for encouraging better learner performance. The study (Mbwana, 2024) further reported that some teachers punished learners who scored low marks, instead of using other means to encourage better performance. Likewise, the study by Harrison, Könings, Schuwirth, Wass, & Van der Vleuten (2017) which explored how the different stakeholders would use teachers' feedback as a measuring stick to predict the future learner performance instead of uplifting the performance of the learners who were assessed and received the feedback. This means that the assessment policy should include how teachers should use feedback after evaluating learners to enhance performance.

The analysis of the literature on the challenges associated to the use of different assessment strategies suggest that teachers ought to be organised to practise collaborative assessment strategies, engage in activities that encourage self-evaluation, provide descriptive feedback to support the knowledge gain of learners and include sessions of peer assessment so that the learners can learn from and with their peers.

## **2.4 THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

As part of teaching and learning, assessment is used widely in education programmes, professional development as well as in school teaching. Assessment in education is significant because it is through assessment that teachers determine the achievement of learning goals. Assessment guides teachers on what and how teaching and learning should be done (DBE, 2011). Teachers use assessment as a navigation tool to track the teaching and learning process. A combination of teaching and learning experiences is used to meet the intended learning outcomes, on how learners are assessed and how to deal with challenges that are experienced during assessment (Gardner, 2012; Shepard et al., 2017).

Looney et al. (2017) assert that understanding and communicating assessment needs a range of competencies such as knowledge, skills and values. Through assessment, skills are developed to assist in resolving challenges experienced by learners as well as teachers. These skills are also used to solve problems experienced in teaching and learning daily (Gardner, 2012; Richmond et al., 2019). Moreover, assessment shapes learners' performance and behaviour in normative and thoughtful ways (Koh et al., 2012). Ishaq, Rana, & Zin (2020) did a study on students' assessment methods and found that the assessments done by the teachers focused on the scores achieved by the learners, instead of exploring other capabilities like learners' creativity, originality and the skills developed during teaching and learning. While the teachers in the study by Ishaq, Rana, and Zin (2020) were concerned mainly on grading the learners during assessment, the learners were also just interested in obtaining a qualifying grade for promotion to the next class. This means that it was not easy to tell if real learning had taken place because it was not clear from the participants in the study (Ishaq, Rana, & Zin, 2020) if the learning objectives per subject were achieved through the assessment approach used.

Good or effective assessment should be vertically and horizontally coherent, meaning assessment must involve learning goals that are envisioned by standards that are set in an assessment policy (Shepard et al., 2017). Henderson, Turpen, Dancy & Chapman (2014) reported that physics teachers in their study used tests and assignments to determine the learners' performance in formative assessments as well as in assessing teaching effectiveness. The learners' evaluation on teaching and peer observation were the additional methods used to evaluate teaching effectiveness (Henderson et al., 2014). This finding means that there should be set standards of teaching that can be evaluated through doing assessment. According to Namanya (2018), standards are set to measure the extent to which assessment goals are achieved, based on what the individual or institution wants to achieve. The scrutiny of the role of assessment in literature suggest that assessment goals are used for accountability purposes on teaching and assessment which leads to learner academic achievement. Therefore, goals need to be shared and designed for both classroom practices and giving directions on how the assessments should be done.

## **2.5 TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS**

Assessment can be administered in two forms, either as formative or summative. Both assessments are done for a specific purpose (DBE, 2011).

### **2.5.1 Formative assessment or assessment for learning**

Formative assessment, which is referred to in some literature as Assessment for Learning (AFL) is not a new thing in education but a procedure that teachers have been using to gauge the learners' comprehension of what is taught in a subject and the feedback given from the assessment to improve their teaching approach (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). Formative assessment involves obtaining different kinds and assessing them to determine the progression of learners on various aspects of academic and skills development among other improvements (Menéndez et al., 2019). Formative assessment goes on while teaching and learning activities are taking place and where there is the the evaluation of the work of a student in the classroom to determine the teaching that has been carried out in the classroom (Menéndez, Napa, Moreira & Zambrano (2019). The efforts put by the teacher and the individual effort from learners contribute to achieving the set objectives of the leaching and learning session (Iliya, 2014). Bhat and Bhat (2019) describe formative assessment as evaluation of student work in which the teacher gives descriptive feedback during the lesson when teaching and where no final mark is awarded.

The assessment for learning that is geared towards improving learner performance in higher education should be based on content knowledge as well as students' acquisition of skills (Ramalingam, Kasilingam, & Chinnavan, 2014). Menéndez et al. (2019) state that formative assessment is done during and after the lesson, in which the learner is evaluated on cognitive, linguistic, internal and external skills that the learner acquires to meet the learning objectives. The activities used in formal assessment are questioning during the lesson and observing the behaviour of the learning during the teaching and learning interaction (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). Iliya (2014) asserts that, unlike summative assessment that uses the same standards for all the learners in a grade, formative assessment focuses on the performance of an individual learner. This means that when teachers prepare lesson plans, they should

allow time for using existing ideas from individual learners. In the classroom situation, formative assessment involves different opportunities in which the learner performance is analysed, monitored and the feedback obtained used to improve learner performance (Menéndez et al., 2019). Formative assessment in a classroom situation may involve class or group discussions, discussions that take place in class, activities on clicker questions, instructor-created exams, weekly quizzes, 1-minute reflection writing assignments, homework assignments and more (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). Self- and peer-assessment are the two formal assessment strategies often used in AFL in language classrooms, in which teachers and learners use checklists as a tool for setting expectation and doing the assessment (Öz, 2014).

In South Africa, the DBE (2011) formative assessment or Assessment for Learning (AFL) is defined as a range of formal, non-formal and informal continuous assessment. Formative or Assessment for Learning is built on much detailed learning models. During the process, assessment is thoroughly combined with curriculum, instructions for the knowledge and a balance of skills that are assessed. Different methods are used to assess those skills by focusing on smaller units of instructions. The aim of doing formative assessment is to achieve the learning outcomes (Alfian et al., 2022).

Literature has reported some positive aspects of using formative assessment, Öz (2014) states that EFL teachers count on formative assessment as a suitable assessment method for EFL learners, while practical exams are used for Assessment of Learning (AOL), because the learners take an active role in learning the language through communicating with teachers, their peers, their parents and others. It seems that effective assessment practices, according to Donaldson (2018), arise when practitioners prioritize the function of formative assessment in teaching and learning and have a thorough understanding of the goals of assessment, how it facilitates learning, and how it helps to improve instruction. Donaldson (2018) found that prioritizing formative assessment empowers teachers with the ability to have a firm grasp on assessment targets, confirming learning, and encouraging the role of the stakeholders in advancing assessment practices. Among the methods used,

observation or teacher-learner interactions methods are used to allow discussions and feedback.

Teachers are called upon to ensure that formal assessment is based on what the learner has been taught. Although this is what the authors recommend, the challenge is that there are different learners with different needs in the classroom (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). Teachers are also expected to monitor and enhance learners' progress while teaching and learning takes place (Archer, 2017). A teacher engages in doing formative assessment throughout the year, which provides the teacher with an opportunity to evaluate the different achievements, the successes in doing assessment, weaknesses of the assessment method used as well as the limitations experienced by the learners on different subject (Menéndez et al., 2019). Teachers share with learners the results of their performance to assist them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. During the process of formative assessment, teachers also gain knowledge and understanding of instructional support (DBE, 2011; Gardner, 2012). Furthermore, through formative assessment, good learning conditions are developed with learners benefiting from being supported by their teachers and peers (Shepard et al., 2017). Learners are assisted to explore, discover and create their own knowledge and encouraged to work individually or create a collaboration learning with their peers.

However, this is not always the ideal practice. Alotaibi (2014) study on student assessment strategies in Saudi Arabia reported that formative assessment done by the teachers involved in the study focused on asking closed questions that did not give students room to express themselves to show self-learning. The author (Alotabi, 2014) further suggested a need for teachers to be trained and encouraged to provide opportunities for students self-learning instead of promoting the focus of content-based learning and providing feedback thereafter. Ahmed, Ali & Shah's (2019) study on the knowledge of language teachers about formative assessment and how it affects summative evaluation also found that teachers were not adequately trained to do formal assessments. The training of teachers to empower them for formative assessment needs to fit the school environment in which the teachers assess the

learners. There is no “one size fit all’ formative assessment in a classroom; it rather requires the teachers to be well prepared to face different type of learners with different needs (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). In the Turkish context, the teacher-led whole class interactions during EFL learning sessions require learners to be responsible and accountable for their whole learning. Therefore, teachers should provide students with an appropriate means for learning within their own school context, one of which is providing constructive feedback (Öz, 2014). The effective use of formative assignment challenges the teacher to have a sound knowledge base of the subjects, know the details of the discipline, give learners the attention they need, identify the learning barriers and use teaching strategies that accommodate the abilities of all learners in the classroom (Menéndez et al., 2019).

Menéndez et al. (2019) assert that formative assessment needs to provide learners with the feedback that is to be used to promote learning in a conducive classroom environment. Through feedback, both teachers and learners are assisted to reflect on how they need to improve their performance. Feedback is also used as evidence of learning (Gareis & Grant, 2015). If formative assessment is to be done on group work, the teacher should be able to understand the learning process in the group and encourage reflection and critical thinking (Menéndez et al., 2019). There are challenges that teachers experience in the process of doing formative assessment. In the study by Mbwana (2024), teachers seldom did formative assessment strategies in Biology lessons that could have supported the learners, possibly due to the pressure to complete the syllabus using a lecturing approach to imparting subject knowledge, which limits learner engagement in the classroom. Another challenge experienced in doing formative assessment is class size. A class that has above 50 learners limits the use of classroom discussions for learner engagement as well as the use of other collaborative strategies of learning in the classroom, including peer assessment (Mbwana, 2024).

In this literature, there seem to be different understandings of what formative assessment is and how it can be achieved. This calls for the assessment policy to contain more clarity and guidelines on the concept. The policy should also specify the

assessment approaches that may be used for formative assessment. The approaches include the assessment that can be done face-to-face and online/digital assessment strategies.

### **2.5.2 Summative assessment**

The concept of summative assessment is defined in different ways. DBE (2011) defines summative assessment as an organized assessment activity that teachers undertake to establish learners' progression in a particular subject or overall performance in a grade. Singh et al. (2021) state that summative assessment should pay attention to the achievement of learners instead of obtaining grades. Summative assessment reports on the summary of the performance of the learner, which can help the next teachers in grade progression find grounding for advancement in knowledge, skills and the affective domain (Iliya, 2014). It means that assessment strategies should amount to covering competencies that include knowledge, values and life skills. As explained by Gardner (2012) and Abdulla (2019), summative assessment measures or summarises learners' achievement at the conclusion of the lesson, topic and at the end of a term or year. Summative assessments are not only concerned with the awarding of the final work but can inform the advancement of instruction strategies employed by teachers because they take place at the end of the teaching and learning period and measure the overall performance of the achievement of pupils (Bhat & Bhat, 2019).

Archer (2017) further describes summative assessment as a connection of teaching and learning where a diagnostic approach is used to determine competences, gaps, and progress. The diagnostic assessment assists teachers to identify learners' strength and weaknesses. Summative assessment is done to report learner achievement after certain periods, check if the objectives have been achieved and the results of the assessment can be used as a base for school improvement (Iliya, 2014). Summative evaluations are often recorded as scores or grades that are reflected in the academic records of the learner and later given out as report cards (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). Summative assessment can be conducted prior to teaching, using learners'

information for the purposes of creating suitable learning environments and learners' needs (DBE, 2011). Formal tasks are used to administer summative assessments.

Summative assessment is used to inform decisions that have important implications for state policy, teachers' own performance evaluation and resource allocation purposes (Brown, 2011). Therefore, summative assessment has a huge impact on the accountability of teachers and the state, as the goals are set out by standards, the curriculum, and the needs of professional development (Shepard & Penuel, 2016). Moodley (2013) believes that through summative assessment, learners are encouraged to be lifelong learners, as learning is expected to take place in all contexts of life. Lifelong learning encourages everyone to be a responsible and productive member of society. Therefore, summative assessment should be taken as a positive assessment exercise that can be incorporated into the learning process. Bhat and Bhat (2019) state that summative assessment could take the form of final presentations, final projects, final reports, surveys of final grades, standardized tests and so on. All the three domains – cognitive, psychomotor skills and affective – should be included in doing summative assessment. Lecturers in the study by Alfian et al. (2022) did summative assessment which included mid-year and final tests on subject knowledge omitting the assessment of attitude and skills which were stated in the learning outcomes.

Teachers are provided with a systematic way of assessing and evaluating learners' progress to ensure that the set standards are realised (DBE, 2011; Namanya, 2018). Iliya (2014) states that the teaching and learning activities that are used in summative assessment include test marks as well as achievements from special tasks or regular activities like written assignments, artifacts from the creative work of learners, learner portfolios, observation of learner activities at practical sessions, discussion or group/individual presentations. Richmond et al. (2019) believe that learners' achievement and successes depend largely on what teachers do with assessment information. In addition to the positive assessment results of learners, education is also made meaningful as summative assessment develops collaboration and positive returns on learner achievement. In the process of doing summative assessment,

performance standards are used; this helps to ensure a competent workforce that can accumulated the required knowledge and skills (Namanya, 2018).

There are critiques of summative assessment in the literature. For example, Abdulla (2019) states that summative assessment does not satisfy the needs of learners and teachers. The assessment does not provide any information to teachers to inform them of their teaching and assessment practices in the classroom. Teachers are often not given the opportunity to be part of setting the summative assessments which hinders the performance of learners. Teachers also often work under pressure because of the limited time given for summative assessment. Teachers are expected to operate in a policy context that expects some work to be covered within a specific period without considering learners' understanding of the concepts. According to CAPS, teachers must assess learners using both informal and formal assessments. This is done through formative or summative assessments. In all these assessments, teachers are expected to give feedback to increase the quality of learning. As the CAPS policy stipulates, teachers must engage with the Annual Teaching Programme (ATP) as the guideline provided to inform what to teach and assess, taking note that teachers were not involved in making the decision on what to teach and what to assess (DBE, 2011). In South African schools, there seems to be specific guidelines for summative assessment. What seems not clear is the accountability on how the teachers implement the policy guidelines as well the avenues available for professional development for teachers who are struggling to implement the policy effectively.

### **2.5.3 The link between formative and summative assessments**

Formative assessment is about collecting evidence of the direct learner action as part of the learning process while summative assessment deals with evidence that shows what have been learnt (Iliya, 2014). The study done by Ahmed, Ali and Shah (2019) found that there is a link between formative and summative evaluation. Ahmed, Ali and Shah (2019) argue that it is better for a teacher to be able to know the class performance of a student during formative evaluation, so as to be able to give a holistic performance of the learner during summative evaluation, instead of just doing summative evaluation without knowledge of the background knowledge of the prior

achievement of the learner. Ahmed, Ali and Shah (2019) further assert that in a language subject the learners need to be assessed using both formative and summative assessment methods to get a better perspective of the performance of the learner instead of only doing summative assessment. The teacher participants in the study by Leirhaug and MacPhail (2015) asserted that formative assessment should feed into summative assessment as opposed to 'final skill-tests' to be determined by summative assessment only.

Certain authors (Ramalingam, Kasilingam, & Chinnavan, 2014) recommend that the current assessment practices in tertiary institutions should be an integrated assessment that includes the formative as well as summative evaluation as well as the assessment of knowledge which can be done through assignments and quizzes, including practical and technical skills. The downside for relying exclusively on summative assessment is that it mostly focuses on written texts, which means that other competencies such as oral or physical abilities are not evaluated (Ahmed, Ali & Shah, 2019). A mixed assessment approach that involves both formative and summative assessment methods is thus recommended (Ahmed, Ali & Shah, 2019). The researcher is also of the opinion that teachers should understand the purpose of both formative and summative assessment and be able to implement them accordingly.

## **2.6 POLICY FORMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

In this section, the researcher discusses the policy formation as well as policy implementation.

Policy serves as a guide for managerial decision-making and procedures (Gover et al., 2019). Maharahj (2018) asserts that policy enables change to take place and involves measuring change as well as the standards set for quality training of teachers at all levels of education. National assessments are used as evidence during the review and development of new educational policies (Best et al., 2013). In a study done in Nigeria, Obun, Owan and Akan (2018) found that policy creation focuses on a precise and organized process in which rules, instructions and plans of a programme

are stipulated, with the aim of realizing specified aims and objectives. The authors (Obun, Owan & Akan, 2018) further explain that the process of policy formation in Nigeria is grounded on certain concepts, which are translated into action plans, approved and adopted by governments and communities that the policy is intended for (Obun, Owan & Akan, 2018). Policy can be formulated from the field of teaching and learning. Evidence based policy is grounded on three main goals, namely, the measurement of the level of quality level of the policy, which is determined by the strengths, ensuring equity of the system in terms of funding and resources as well as determining the accountability tools to be used to identify problems and concerns that the policy makers should consider when amending the policy (Best et al., 2013).

The process that follows policy formation is approval of the policy followed by implementation. During the process of policymaking, the main areas of concern are the content, instructions, resources, and assessment. According to Brown and Deneen (2016), assessment connects classroom tasks and activities with educational policies, curriculum, syllabus, and approaches. Educational policy addresses curriculum development, resource allocation, learning and assessment, achievement standards, teacher qualifications, and teaching and learning practices. Teachers' resources include factors like experience and training (Best et al., 2013).

The process of policy implementation requires a knowledgeable leader who is able to give directions to what needs to be done to implement the policy successfully (Daniel-Kalio, 2019). Daniel-Kalio (2019) states that policy implementation is a structured change process that aims at achieving the purpose of precise policy guidelines. Teachers' understanding of educational policy is also very important, as it has an influence on their behavioural responses to assessment policy to improve educational outcomes (Brown, 2017). Policy implementers should be committed to playing their role in the realization of the policy and to meet its desired intentions (Daniel-Kalio, 2019). The school managers and teachers need to be committed to the process of policy implementation and to the achievements identified in the policy (Ramalepe, 2015).

The study by Suleiman, Yat & Iddrisu (2017) on the policy of access to primary education in Zanzibar found that, after the implementation of education policy, there was a positive change in learner enrolment and further suggested that action should be taken by the Department of Education in the regions with low learner enrolment. This study shows that policy implementation should be monitored, and action taken if the implementation does not lead to the achievement of the set objectives and goals. Alfian et al. (2022) recommend from the findings of their study that, at tertiary level, lecturers who are the implementers of policies in higher educational institution should consider attending seminars, workshops, and other training opportunities to become competent in assessment practices. This recommendation means that, for policy implementation to be successful, it requires teachers to undergo comprehensive and well-developed training to gain competencies required for policy implementation. After the process of policy implementation, there should be a policy evaluation process to assess the extent to which the primary goals of the policy are attained (Obun, Owan & Akan, 2018).

Education policy development and implementation is a complicated process which requires the participation and approval by stakeholders with a focus of realizing the set objectives and goals (Obun, Owan & Akan, 2018). A study done by Daniel-Kalio (2019) emphasises that policy implementation in Nigerian universities requires effective leadership to address the internal and external issues that arise in the process of policy implementation. Daniel-Kalio (2019) identifies political, environmental and economic factors and the nature of the policy itself as factors that hinder successful policy implementation. It seems that, while policy is necessary for guiding the activities associated with education, there are many factors that can act as a barrier to the implementation of any educational policy. A possible proactive approach would be for the policy makers to take into consideration the possible obstacles that could derail the implementation of education policy and find ways of addressing them. This study highlights the barriers to implementation of assessment policy from the perspectives of the participants.

### **2.6.1 Assessment policy implementation**

The management of assessment has been an issue in many countries. Countries worldwide are developing assessment policies as their key components for their education systems. There are countries that can develop assessment frameworks that are working well, while in other countries assessment policy is still a challenge because the changes that have been made are still problematic (Singh et al., 2022). In addressing the issues of learner assessment, most countries have moved away from traditional standardised assessment methods to school-based assessments and are now focusing on school-based assessment systems which are grounded on knowledge construction and complex thinking (Tan et al., 2012). The assessment policies set standards for the purpose of measuring change and to assist teachers to achieve specific learning outcomes that include preparing learners for a future work environment (Namanya, 2018).

The focus of this study is on the understanding and implementation of assessment policy. Assessment policy outlines the principles and provides a common and regular understanding of procedures. Assessment policy is a key component of every education system (Bertram, 2011). These fundamental principles interpret and translate assessment policy into classroom practice and are mapped out against the content (concepts and skills) to improve teaching and learning approach (Black, 2018). According to Bertram (2011), through assessment, teachers become proficiently knowledgeable about instructional practices, such as organising teaching and learning logically. Teachers also learn to use all the resources available for each learner, as well as to select appropriate and relevant forms of assessment that suit all learners according to their different abilities (DBE, 2011; Koh et al., 2012; Looney, 2017). Teachers are also determined to achieve the specific outcomes to be assessed and create the assessment instrument and further analyse and report the assessment output (Singh et al., 2022).

Moreover, policy makers and other stakeholders in education system depend on assessment policy in making decisions that leads to improved learner performance. An evidence-based approach is used in policy planning and has been adopted around

the world because it uses learner assessment data to inform the process of assessment policy making (Best et al., 2013). The information obtained from subsequent assessment programmes is employed in reporting the level to which the education system enables learners to achieve the educational objectives. The decisions in assessment policy development are informed by evidence based on measuring skills, opportunities and outcomes (OECD, 2017). This suggest that during the process of policy implementation, evidence is used to inform policy decisions, and the process is usually rational and systematic.

According to Sebati (2011) and Namanya (2018), assessment policy should be interpreted and translated into classroom practice and into fundamental principles of improving teaching and learning. During the process, the focus should be on knowledge construction and complex thinking skills that address learners' creativity and critical thinking skills (Koh et al., 2012| Singh et al., 2022). Namanya (2018) is of the opinion that the relevant knowledge and skills can be achieved by following assessment principles of how to teach in the classroom and how to assist in learners' learning. As indicated by Van der Nest (2018), the relevance of assessment principles is critical, because they make up a coherent system for classroom assessment and learning. How the participants, such as DHs and teachers, understand and implement the assessment policy underpins this study. The DHs in this study are the leaders that are involved in directing teachers in the implementation of the assessment policy. The discussion on leadership needed for policy implementation follows in the next section.

### **2.6.2 Leadership in policy implementation**

Leadership is an important aspect in the general management of teaching and learning as well as policy implementation. Tolo et al. (2020) are of the opinion that school leaders must play the role of facilitation of the policy implementation process as well as being part of problem solving and teacher professional development. The role played by school managers and leaders in monitoring and providing productive feedback relating to assessment policy implementation is crucial to the success of policy implementation (Ramalepe, 2015). In a study done in Norway on implementation of assessment policy for learning, Tolo et al. (2020) state that school

cultures, school leaders' knowledge of policy implementation as well as the relationship between the leaders and teachers determine the approach that the leaders use in implementing policies in their schools.

These authors (Tolo et al., 2020) identify the three approaches to policy implementation that includes having trust that teachers will use their knowledge and skills to implement policies thus giving room for professional development. Secondly, the leaders request knowledge and expertise beyond the boundaries of the school due to lack of trust in the teachers' capabilities. In such cases teachers are not motivated to grow professionally as they depend on external assistance. Lastly, they advocate an approach that focuses on trust but also pushes teachers to become competent in acquiring knowledge and expertise needed to execute policies.

In South African schools, departmental heads (DHs) are the middle managers who are responsible for providing leadership and management of teachers in instruction delivery. The implementation of CAPS seems to redefine the responsibilities and the role of DHs, which include giving directions, managing time through timetabling, class visits monitoring the work done by teachers such as lesson planning, work schedules, managing learner school attendance and other responsibilities (Mogashoa, 2021). Malinga, Jita and Bada (2021), in the study of leadership capacity of secondary school science DHs, indicated that there were narratives of the DH taking up the multiple roles of developing, monitoring and supporting teachers in lesson preparation and teaching, while assistance in learner assessment was not given by the DHs. What seems limited in the study (Malinga, Jita & Bada, 2021) was the leadership role that involves professional development of teachers. A possible reason could be that the role played by DHs to assist teachers may be limited due to the high levels of work allocated to the DHs on their contact time, since the DHs are also teachers and are expected to do administrative duties besides their teaching responsibilities (Malinga, Jita & Bada, 2021). Apart from the challenges of insufficient time that the DHs had to assist teachers, in another study, Mogashoa (2021) found out that the DHs lack the ability to plan, organise and control the activities that facilitate the implementation of CAPS.

The participants in the study (Mogashoa, 2021), who were teachers, were concerned about the lack of quality check on the support that the DHs give to teachers in the implementation of CAPS due to the cases of improper mentorship from the DHs. The teachers seemed uneasy about mentorship role played by the DHs, most likely due to the lack of DHs' competency in playing their expected role. These findings highlight the expected role of the DHs to include both management of policy implementation as well as leadership in the process of policy implementation, which requires people skills. This study confirms the importance of the DH competency in the assessment knowledge base as teacher leaders.

Leadership training for policy implementation appears to be a crucial factor in ensuring that policy informs practice. Suleiman, Yat and Iddrisu (2017) recommended that successful implementation of assessment policy in primary education requires capacity development of teachers, gender equity, establishing partnership with stakeholders and considering the context of policy implementation. In this study, the leadership role of the DHs in the implementation of assessment policy is explored.

## **2.7 SOUTH AFRICAN ASSESSMENT POLICY (CAPS)**

For the past two decades the challenges and practices in South African Education system have forced several revisions and changes in curriculum. According to Moodley (2013), revisions and changes are usually prompted by societal changes in values, new curricula and technology, which usually determine teaching and learning models. Ramabulana (2017) states that the consequences of curriculum policy reform have led to shifts in the approach used in curriculum delivery and expectation from teachers and learners in the classroom. Through pedagogical changes, new innovations are introduced with the aim of producing something better for all the stakeholders. Therefore, teachers' involvement in educational changes is of paramount importance as curriculum implementation cannot be successfully achieved without the input of the teachers who are the implementers of most educational policies. The decisions taken during the process of policy making should provide and improve the quality of education and enable long-life learning for everyone (Namanya, 2018).

Since 1994, new policies were developed in South Africa which also brought the changes even in curriculum. The purpose of the change in the curriculum was to equip learners with knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-improvement and being responsible citizens (DBE, 2011). OBE was the first to be introduced, followed by Curriculum 2005 (C2005). C2005 was supported by the elements of change, access, equity and development (DBE, 2011). The aim was to ensure that all learners achieve their highest abilities and become lifelong learners. This curriculum change was followed by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) grades R-9 and National Curriculum Statement (NCS) grades 10-12. Later RNCS grade R-9 and NCS grades 10-12 were combined to NCS for Grade R-12 (DBE, 2011).

However, all these curricula failed during the implementation process and resulted in introduction of the new Curriculum and assessment policy Statement (CAPS) document, which is currently used in South African schools. The purpose of introducing the CAPS document was to strengthen the NCS and bring change in the methods of assessment. The content framework of CAPS guides teachers on how to use content, knowledge, concepts and skills that are to be taught and assessed in every subject. Teachers are guided on how to plan a lesson in such a way that learners can use different skills of learning (inquiry, investigative, observational and experimental). Through assessment teachers are expected to be able to track learners' progress and maintain full records of every learner. The same information is used to diagnose or check the quality of teaching and learning and in submitting reports to parents and senior members of the school (DBE, 2011). However, one of the drawbacks of CAPS is that the approaches used are not learner-centred. The study by Mabunda (2023) explored the perceptions and experiences of school managers regarding the implementation of CAPS and found that the syllabus focused on subject content with little attention to skills and attitude, which means that the approach is overly teacher-centred. The teachers in this study talk about CAPS, which shows that the policy document was at schools and the teachers were aware of the policy. The area of lack of clarity, which motivated the researcher to do this study, is how the DHs and the teachers perceive assessment and how they implemented the assessment policy at their schools.

### **2.7.1 Implementation of CAPS**

Initially, the introduction of CAPS was welcomed with open hands, hoping that South African education would change for the better. CAPS was also seen as an opportunity in which teachers' teaching and assessment practice would improve, besides the application of different assessment strategies to promote teaching and learning (DBE, 2011). Van der Nest et al. (2018) as well as Moodley (2013) also believed that this opportunity was going to give teachers the liberty to use their own experiences and circumstances to expand CAPS concepts and design. The time given for CAPS implementation also meant that teachers would spend most of their time teaching and assessing (DBE, 2011). The participants in the study by Mabunda (2023) appreciated the assessment guidelines, and procedures of assessment activities which were clearly stated in the policy as well as providing room for continuous assessment. Other benefits of CAPS are that the lesson plans for each subject are available for the whole year making the planning and teaching work of the teacher easier (Ojo & Mathabathe, 2021).

However, the study by Mather and Land (2014) shows that, although the participants seem to have read and engaged with CAPS, the implementation of the policy was problematic because the teachers lacked full understanding of the subject content and there were also some uncertainties of the purpose of various aspects of the subjects, for example reading skills. In the study by Lumadi (2013), teachers chose to do continuous assessment instead of the examination-driven assessment stated in the assessment policy. The reason for such a decision is that the teachers applied assessment methods that made sense to the individual teacher and a strategy that works for the teacher instead of following the policy directives that seemed unclear for the participants in the study.

### **2.7.2 Challenges experienced in implementing CAPS**

- Perception

CAPS was established by the Department of Basic Education to narrow the difference in the education provided in private and public schools, however, the reality of

achieving this objective has not been clearly stated in terms of the impact on schools, learners, and teachers (Ojo & Mathabathe, 2021). Elsewhere in the literature, a study done in primary schools in KwaZulu Natal by Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize (2016) found that the participants perceived the implementation of CAPS as a top-down approach with no room for being part of planning, discussion during implementation or follow-up with policy implementers (teachers). Furthermore, since CAPS is a top-down approach, teachers were excluded during the development stage and their contributions were not considered as the implementers of the curriculum (Maharajh, 2018). Several studies (Moodley, 2013; Maharajh, 2018; Van der Nest et al., 2018) show that some teachers feel that CAPS is not fully understandable. In theory, CAPS looks exciting but practically the policy is not easily applicable because of lack of favourable conditions. Other stakeholders perceive the CAPS curriculum as exam oriented and focused on making learners pass rather than improving the knowledge base of learners (Ojo & Mathabathe, 2021).

There is also the perception that poor numeracy and literacy skills are still a persisting problem that hamper progress. There is also no clarity as to how learners progressed in implementing CAPS (Van der Nest et al., 2018). Jones et al. (2019) and Brown et al. (2019) assert that a change in curriculum policy results in changes and adaptations to the new teaching and learning methods which at times are problematic for teachers in the absence of several support measures. Therefore, teachers' involvement at the assessment policy development stage could have enabled them to make a meaningful contribution to assessment policy. Teachers' input is vital in structuring the assessment policy because the same policy is used to evaluate the value of education (Brown et al., 2019).

According to Popham et al. (2011) and James (2016), assessment literate teachers also understand the implications of education policy and ethics. Hence the translation of assessment policy into classroom practice needs teachers who have a good understanding of content knowledge and deep understanding of the fundamental concepts of assessment. Also, the increasing effect of socio-cultural theories compels teachers to be more knowledgeable in assessment (Brown & Deneen, 2016).

However, the study done by Khoza (2015) on the reflections of student teachers on CAPS found that there was a misalignment between the assessment policy and what was practised at schools in terms of the Boom's classification of three domains of assessment, namely cognitive (which concerns subject knowledge), psychomotor skills and the affective domain (which deals with values and attitudes). Although the three domains are included in CAPS, the student teachers were not capable of understanding and reflecting on them (Khoza, 2015).

Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) found that the participants in their study believed that the structure of CAPS includes many assessments on the subjects which are not spaced out evenly; this leaves learners with a heavy workload of assessments to be done at the end of the year. Based on this finding, Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) recommended that the Department of Education should consider proportionally dividing the different assessment given to the learners per subject in the different school terms. These different concerns expressed by the CAPS policy implementers which are teachers shows that there is more work to be done to pave the way for successful implementation of CAPS.

- Workload

In the implementation of CAPS in South African context, Mogashoa (2021) found that, in practice, the execution of CAPS increased the workload of the teachers because it involved a lot of paperwork which proved to be a taunting task for teachers who were also expected to plan for assessment and other activities. In an earlier study, Lumadi (2013) also reported that implementation of CAPS was perceived by one of the participants as increasing the workload of teachers as the process required a lot of paperwork.

- Training

Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize (2016) assert that the implementation of CAPS has been problematic due to insufficient support or lack of support from the Department of Education, in terms of resources and competent teachers with knowledge and skills to implement the policy. In addition, the infrastructure for executing CAPS that the

teachers expected to receive from the Department of Basic Education were not delivered in the required time to enable the implementation (Mogashoa, 2021). Furthermore, teachers who are the role players in implementing the curriculum and assessment policy were not competent and lack the confidence in fulfilling their expected duties (Letshwene & Du Plessis, 2021). This is possibly why Ramabulana (2017) and Maharahj (2018) state the importance of staff development and training as a critical element for a successful implementation of the curriculum. Mabunda (2023) highlights a need for training for the assessment approaches to be used in schools, including both the methods as well the expected tasks through which learners can be supported to develop their potential and progress in their education.

An example is in a study done by Mather and Land (2014), which explored how teachers understand the reading skills of developing learners in readiness to implement CAPS. The findings of the study show that teachers were not using the reading methodology that they had been exposed to during their professional training for CAPS implementation. CAPS (DBE, 2011) stipulates a number of skills that learners are expected to acquire through reading skills, namely, learners should be able to comprehend what has been read, reading should activate prior knowledge, reading should lead to making inferences and predictions, drawing conclusions, writing summaries as well as evaluating of the texts. The study by Mather and Land (2014) found that there was no change in the teachers' practices in terms of implementing CAPS in the development of reading skills of learners, even after teachers were trained on the implementation of CAPS. This was evident in the post-reading assessment that used shallow questions that did not reflect deep understanding and interrogation of the work of the learner as expected in CAPS.

Mather and Land (2014) also found that the teachers in their study used the reading skills practices that they were familiar with and avoided implementing the reading skills development structure stated in CAPS. It seems that the teachers mentioned did not use the pre-reading activities and questions as expected in the policy, although in their lesson plan there was some evidence of engaging with some aspects of reading skills stated in CAPS. From the findings of their study, Mather and Land (2014) emphasise

that the training workshops that are organised by the Department of Education should be informative in terms of explaining the aims of CAPS, in terms of the implied pedagogy that may not be clearly explained in the policy, and in terms of what is stated in CAPS concerning the subject area, what it means as well as how and why teachers should approach the subject teaching in certain ways. In addition, Lumadi (2013) also recommended that pre-service and in-service training programmes should take into consideration the needs of novice teachers in terms of their conceptual knowledge of assessment as well as the skills and understanding of assessment and assessment policy.

The findings of the above studies suggest that teachers are perhaps inadequately trained to implement CAPS. This fact hampers the execution of CAPS. The teachers not only lack theoretical knowledge but are also ignorant of the principles that inform the implementation of CAPS (Ramabulana, 2017; Maharajh, 2018). In addition, some teachers feel that CAPS has not reduced any workload, as the work from assessments is still demanding, especially in languages (Moodley, 2013; Ramabulana, 2017).

With regards to the professional development for the implementation of CAPS, the study by Mogashoa (2021) on how teachers understand the implementation of curriculum and assessment policy reported that teachers in the study considered the three days superficial training they received in the form of a workshop was not adequate in preparing them to implement CAPS. There was insufficient assistance from the subject advisors, who were also uncertain of the expectations of the curriculum (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016). The significance of the principles that underpin CAPS that could have directed teaching and learning was not covered in the training sessions (Mogashoa, 2021). Land (2014) further recommends that future teachers should be trained on the knowledge and expectation of CAPS as well as to acquire the ability to reflect on their practices and be able to address the challenges that they experience in policy implementation.

The professional development of teachers aimed at facilitating the implementation of CAPS should focus on novice as well as on experienced teachers. Experienced teachers also need continuous training to be able to keep up with the changes in

assessment content and strategies by reflecting on their current knowledge of assessment and connecting it to expected classroom practices with subject-specific strategies (Lumadi, 2013). Although the teachers in the study by Pillay (2024) were willing to implement CAPS, the lack of professional knowledge and skills development for rural science teachers and their deficiency in resources limited the ability of the teachers to implement CAPS.

The recommendation presented in this discussion means that teachers need to find the professional training understandable and well explained in terms of teaching and learning methodologies from the teachers to change from their old practices to new ways of teaching, learning and assessment. The assessment strategies indicated in CAPS focused more on the cognitive domain than the other two domains, which are psychomotor skills and affective domain (Khoza, 2015). It means that through development and training, teachers should be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for implementation process of CAPS. Generally, there is a need for teacher professional development through workshops, seminars and in-service programmes in which principals should motivate teachers to focus on student-centred assessment strategies (Thomas, 2012).

- Large classes

The reality in some schools is that there are large classes which are overwhelming, as the number of learners in the classrooms are high, which makes it very difficult for teachers to reach every learner. Maharajh, Nkosi and Mkhize (2016) report that teachers struggle to implement CAPS policy in large classes. Furthermore, there is a deficiency in the required resources and competent teachers. In large classes, there is a high possibility of inadequate resources available for teaching and learning as well as coordinating and monitoring learners' homework. Additionally, the environment in which CAPS is implemented to guarantee its successful implementation is not conducive in most schools, due to overcrowding. The administration workload also makes it difficult for teachers to use enough time to teach and give learners individual attention, especially in large classes. The large number of learners in the classroom also inhibits the successful implementation of CAPS in practical subjects like the

teaching of science, which requires monitoring and assessing the practical work done by the learners (Marcus & Joseph, 2014). Thomas (2012) concludes from the finding of his study that student-centred assessment strategies are important, and teachers may consider using the strategies to holistically develop learners and not just concentrate on rote memorization teaching. This recommendation is however not possible in large classes.

- Lack of resources

Even though CAPS was welcomed with the expectations that it would bring about change and help teachers to enhance their methods of instruction. According to Mbatha (2016), CAPS assessment policy does not appear to be fulfilling all its goals as is still regarded as a challenging policy to comprehend. CAPS is expected to be implemented in various educational contexts with different types and amounts of resources. The study done by Pillay (2024) emphasises the challenges experienced in the implementation of CAPS in South African rural context, given the lack of resources, language barriers and assessment strategies constraints. According to Pillay (2024), the lack of resources for teaching, learning and assessment, such as equipment needed for science and other practical subjects, restrains the implementation of CAPS. Although teachers are encouraged to improvise for the lacking equipment and materials for teaching, learning and assessment, the quality of the improvised material maybe not be up to the required standard (Pillay, 2024). Pillay (2024) further explains that the use of improvised material for teaching, learning and assessment in the rural schools seems to be a simplified version of the real task and at times the practical exercises were not aligned with CAPS policy guidelines. This study shows that it is important to ensure that all schools are supported by providing quality resources of adequate amount to ensure successful implementation of CAPS.

- Language barrier

Since English is the main language used in the implementation of CAPS, Pillay (2024) reports that teacher participants in the study used code-switching between English and isiXhosa as a remedy for the learners who experienced the use of English as a

learning barrier. The issue of English language as a media of instructions is not limited to CAPS; Szecsi et al. (2017) recommend that English language teachers need to be professionally developed to gain insight in teaching and assessing English literature. This is because in Florida and other parts of the world, learners who are not English Language Learners (ELL) who may be experiencing language barriers are taught in the same class as native English speakers. This indicates that English language teachers should find ways of supporting the learners experiencing the language barriers to cope with the teaching and learning that happens in the classroom. The further challenge is for the teachers to pay attention to the different language abilities of the learners to be able to use assessments strategies that do not disadvantage the learners (Szecsi et al., 2017).

- Support

Another problem that hinders successful policy implementation is the absence of or inadequate support from experts that is required for enabling the implementation of CAPS (Mogashoa, 2021). Pillay (2024) states that there are insufficient support structures for teachers in rural schools in South Africa to be able to successfully implement CAPS. The support needed is for supplying relevant resources and providing opportunities for the professional development of teachers. Given the numerous challenges experienced in the implementation of CAPS, Mabunda (2023) suggest that more research needs to be done to identify strategies that could be used in implementing the policy in different South African school contexts. Teachers' challenges of implementing CAPS in these settings are identified by Pillay (2024), who calls for teachers as assessors to be able to adapt to their school context and be creative in using the available resources to accommodate the teaching and assessment of Natural Sciences with the aim of improving learner outcomes. Due to the multi-layered educational inadequacies in rural settings that prompts the need of various support mechanisms, Pillay (2024) advocates for a differentiated, flexible and supportive rural-based structure for the implementation of CAPS. Such structures should be considered without compromising the educational standard of quality when

designing the policy, as well as in its implementation, which is monitored by the Department of Education (Pillay, 2024).

Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) found that the participants in their study associated the absence of resources with time demands in educating and evaluating learners. The lack of resources inhibits the learners from completing their homework in time for assessment. Furthermore, the time allocated for the implementation of CAPS was not adequate for completing the syllabus and hindered the use of effective methods used by the teachers and learners (Letshwene & du Plessis, 2021). In addition, Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) are of the opinion that the Department of Education should consider identifying subject content that is not important and removing it from the syllabus to save teaching and learning time and increase the time needed for preparation and doing assessments. With regards to time management, Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) are of the opinion that the subjects that do not add value to the future life of the learners should be removed from the syllabus as the subjects consume valuable teaching, learning and assessment time. They (Ojo & Mathabathe, 2021) recommend that such subjects should be removed from the syllabus. A counter argument is that the diverse subjects offered in CAPS covers the needs of the different learners and motivates learners to think, although it increases the administrative paperwork of the teachers (Ojo & Mathabathe, 2021). The opinion of the researcher in this study is that the advantages and disadvantages of having more subjects should be considered, and of teachers being equipped to give learners individual attention in teaching and assessment.

The challenges that the teachers in this study experienced in implementing the assessment policy are highlighted in chapter 4 of this study, which presents the research findings and discussion.

## **2.8 TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF ASSESSMENT**

Teachers' perception of assessment has a strong influence in teaching and learning including the implementation of assessment practice. Sethusha (2013) and Opre (2015) define teachers' perception of assessment as the assimilation and association

of concepts of knowledge and beliefs that influence the outcomes, attitudes and dispositions about assessment. Brown (2004) also views teachers' conception of assessment as a framework in which teachers view, interpret and interact with the teaching environment. Teachers' beliefs influence their perceptions and judgements, which results in teachers constructing their own understanding of assessment. Thomas (2012) found that trained as well as untrained teachers perceived classroom assessments as formal tests and examinations that are done to contribute to determining the academic progress of the learners.

According to Opre (2015), teachers who believe that assessment is a useful method of achieving the goals set for teaching and learning constantly use the assessment tools or methods that are favourable to their teaching and learning practice. Lumadi (2013) also found that, although there are many factors that influence how teachers assess learners, how teachers define what they do and the teachers' own personal background experiences of assessment influence their classroom practices. Singh et al. (2022) are also of the opinion that the experiences of the teachers have a significant influence on their knowledge and skills in assessment.

Sethusha (2013) similarly believes that the positive conception of teachers regarding assessment results in them taking accountability for learners' learning. Competent or trained teachers are able to deal with all the learners, even those who are academically challenged. Teachers become proficiently competent towards remedial education and assist learners to strengthen their basic academic skills. Through remedial work, learners acquire the skill and the ability of reading and understanding of what they are learning (Oyedele, 2016).

As Brown (2011) argues, teachers' perception of assessment and involvement make meaningful contributions to assessment policy as the implementers of curriculum. The exclusion of teachers from policy design limits their full understanding of the requirements of the policy, thus restraining the employment of the assessment and hampering the academic progress of the learners. The non-involvement of teachers in policy development results on some teachers perceiving assessment as an irrelevant tool that is used as a form of victimization. The teachers also feel judged through

learners' assessment results. According to Looney (2017), learners' results should be used for school improvement but not against teachers' performance during appraisal.

The involvement of the society and culture, also have an impact on teachers' conception of assessment. According to Sethusha (2013), teachers feel that their interference devalues their work as they don't get the attention they deserve. The interference experienced by the teachers, results in them being reluctant to implement the strategy of school curriculum management plan which is used in assessment and in the school improvement plan. Teachers' valuable contribution in assessment is usually lost or deprived in the assessment process because of the interference of other stake holders (Brown, 2011). As in the case in CAPS, it is stated clearly that learners must do baseline assessment during the beginning of each term, but some stakeholders are resisting that, complaining that it is a waste of time as teachers have a lot of work to do.

Those involved in teacher quality evaluation usually base their value statements on their own viewpoint and have no time to respond to the external demands of teachers (Jones et al., 2019). Exclusion of teachers from policy decisions about assessment poses another problem as observed by (Jones et al., 2019). Hence, teachers' understanding and classroom practices are influenced by performance standards and accountability procedures set by the state (Namanya, 2018). As a result, the quality of education is then compromised, as the focus changes to pass rate, dropouts and the increased ability of the low paid teachers to raise their income (Namanya, 2018).

DeLuca & Lam (2014) state that teachers are still struggling to understand assessment policies and apply the principles of assessment policy in their practices. The current information and assessment principles require building-up responsive professional learning structures to encourage teachers to be competent in their understanding of assessment literature. Teachers' perception of assessment has a strong influence in their instruction and the practical application of assessment policy (Sethusha, 2013). To effectively assess learners, teachers must also be able to select strategies that make sense to learners. Looney et al. (2017) emphasize the significance of teachers' comprehension of essential concepts and techniques of assessment, learning

outcomes and instructional decision making. This discussion means that teachers may become effective if they understand these fundamental assessment concepts and methods indicated in the assessment policy, as they have an enormous impact on teaching and learning objectives.

## **2.9 SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS' ROLES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS**

Curriculum change necessitates a change to the responsibility of all the stakeholders. All stakeholders in the schools should be involved or support educational assessment because it is an essential element in a curriculum design, apart from the teaching and learning methodologies and resources (Menéndez et al., 2019). Successful change requires active validation and implementers who can carry out the changes (Brown et al., 2016). For educational change informed by policy to happen, all the role players should embrace the reformed policy and be willing to revolutionize the classroom culture. The assessment policy document provides broad guidelines and approaches to changes and identifies the stakeholders responsible for implementation.

### **2.9.1 The role of departmental heads in assessment**

The process of teaching has been viewed as requiring a wide range of skills, including subject knowledge, and the capacity to direct learning through planned interventions for specific outcomes (Brown & Deneen, 2016). Departmental heads are teachers with added responsibility of providing leadership and management to other teachers. The responsibilities of DHs require that they ought to be more knowledgeable of their subject areas than other teachers so that they are able to develop the teachers and share their expertise with others as well as lead and manage other teachers.

The CAPS document stipulates that DHs have a responsibility of planning, organizing and monitoring all the activities, including assessment (DBE, 2011). The DHs are also expected to ensure that all the learning goals are met effectively and efficiently. Their role includes encouraging sharing their leadership practices among the teachers and other members of SMT, to contribute to school improvement strategies (Govender & Mabuza, 2020). It is the responsibility of the DHs to make certain that, during planning, Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) are followed accordingly (DBE, 2011). The lesson plans

are aligned with the assessment policy to accommodate the diversity of all the learners, as well as to make sure that teaching and learning take place effectively in all the classes.

Departmental heads are further entrusted with the role of being quality assurers in the implementation of assessment policy. The Curriculum assessment policy System (CAPS) document is used by the DHs as a guide to help develop assessment standards for subjects with the assistance of other teachers and stakeholders. The coordination and collaboration of school stakeholders is required in planning and managing the variety of assessment tasks. The DHs also play the role of assisting with the moderation and administration of formal assessment activities to confirm that every assessment data is recorded and analysed. Through the analysis of assessment data, educators can identify areas in teaching and learning that require improvement (DBE, 2011; Govender & Mabuza, 2020). Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) report that, while CAPS gives room for learners to actively participate in their learning through doing schoolwork and homework, teachers are also able to use the structures provided in the policy to prepare their own lesson plans. Furthermore, Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) suggest that slow learners who struggle to catch up with other learners in teaching, learning and assessment processes as stipulated in CAPS may consider doing practical subjects. This suggestion implies an increase in the work of teachers and also sound leadership from the departmental heads. The benefits of this recommendation need to be explored further in future studies on learner assessment.

### **2.9.2 Teachers' role in assessment**

In the implementation of assessment policy, teachers are not only expected to deal with the changing of content knowledge but also a change in educational knowledge (Mbatha, 2016). Therefore, teachers as implementers of educational policies are expected to be in the forefront of the new development to ensure that assessment policy is implemented in the classroom. As the implementers of the policy, teachers can decide on how they teach and assess learners, as long as they develop assessment that aligns with the requirements of the policy. According to the CAPS policy document, teachers are regarded as the key contributors to the transformation

of education in South Africa. Therefore, teachers need to be qualified, competent and fulfil the role of being educators (DBE, 2011). Teachers need to be given the support and provision of extensive professional training, to be well equipped with relevant skills and a sound knowledge of the curriculum and its content. The motivation of teachers is also important as it promotes successful implementation of changes. Hence there is a need to engage teachers in the policy making process. Teachers' beliefs need to be considered, as they are critical in determining what is taking place in the classroom in terms of teaching and learning. The beliefs of teachers can lead into actions which may have an impact on learners by influencing the role they play in the classroom (Singh et al., 2022).

The role that teachers perform in classroom-based assessment and the use of assessment outcomes is central in determining the value of the assessment procedure (Looney et al., 2017). This means that the basis of good assessment depends on the teachers' set of knowledge and skills. Deluca and Lam (2014) assert that mastery of skills and knowledge offers teachers the opportunity to encounter and connect with the process of assessment in a personal and profound way. Furthermore, Bertram (2011) is of the opinion that through assessment, teachers become proficiently knowledgeable about their pedagogical practices, resulting in teachers learning to organise teaching and learning logically. Teachers also learn to use all the resources available for each learner. In addition, teachers are expected to be able to select appropriate and relevant forms of assessment that suit all learners and their different abilities (DBE, 2011; Koh et al., 2012; Looney, 2017). Teachers also determine the specific outcomes to be assessed and create the assessment instrument, analyse and report the assessment output as well as ensure follow-up in school-based assessment (Singh et al., 2022).

Zamri and Hamzah (2019) highlight the importance of teachers being competent in implementing present policies as well as newly developed policies. The authors (Zamri & Hamzah, 2019) expect the competencies acquired by teachers to include teaching content and methodology as well as effective evaluation methods that are learner oriented. Pattallitan (2016) and James (2016) argue that, for teachers to show

understanding of assessment, they need to use methods that enhance learning, and help learners to achieve learning goals through skills and self regulation. Teachers should construct meaning and make sense of what learners are learning so that learners can be able to recall and integrate information.

During planning of assessment, teachers plays the role of ensuring that all the principles of assessment are adhered to. Teachers are responsible for setting learner evaluations that are fair, reasonable and consistent to enhance the quality of learning (DBE, 2011). Teachers are also anticipated to create a situations in which learners' subject knowledge is activated and nurtured. In playing their teaching and learning role, teachers should be able to communicate with the learners using language that the learners understand. Brown (2004) point out the importance of good use of language because language plays a critical function in communication and constructing knowledge. As Pattalitan (2016) argues, teachers and learners need to learn more about language of communication because the use of language is beyond just a verbal approach; language can be used to develop full imaginative thought and pass on clear instructions.

Through the process of instructions, teachers have the responsibility of using the learning goals of a subject and prioritizing the broken-down units to what learners need to know and be able to do to achieve the learning goals (Shepard & Penuel, 2016). According to Shepard et al. (2017) and William (2011), it is necessary that teachers focus and set goals that are compelling, reachable and consistent. In addition, teachers need to use diverse teaching models directed by certain learning goals to ensure effective curriculum delivery and quality assessment. Clarifying and sharing learning goals promote effective dialogues, performances and responsibilities that yields good learner performance (DBE, 2011; Penuel & Shepard, 2016).

Learners also need to learn to answer critical questions to strengthen and develop their skills (DBE, 2011). Teachers plays a role of encouraging active learners' participation in critical thinking to motivate and promote understanding of goals and criteria, that could be jointly achieved by teachers and learners to solve problems (Looney et al., 2017). Teachers may create an attitude of co-operation and foster

healthy relationships among learners and the school community (Abdulla, 2019). In order to help learners think and act beyond their current level of ability, teachers acting as assessors need to create an environment that is stimulating. The competency of the teacher in assessing learners also motivates the achievement of learning objectives that lead to improving the academic performance of the learners (Zamri & Hamzah, 2019). Teachers play the role of helping learners in developing critical and active learning, as well as inspiring and advancing the learners to achieve the objectives and goals. Furthermore, teachers are also responsible for creating meaning and making sense of the learning material by breaking down learning objectives to smaller units that is easier for the learners to achieve (Looney et al., 2017).

Teachers also play the role of providing feedback to the learners. The importance of feedback is discussed in the above section that explains the assessment methods. Feedback is also used to assist learners during problem solving to think critically while the teachers are guided by the critical thinking strategy they use to understand the abilities of each learner (Shepard et al., 2017). Individual teaching is regarded as effective because the teacher is able to identify challenges experienced by the learners by assessing learner's work which is followed by providing clarification and follow up remedial sessions if necessary (William, 2011). Learners are encouraged by the teachers to do regular self assessments while teachers give formative feedback to improve the learners' academic achievement. During the feedback process, learners are motivated and their self esteem increases (Pattalitan, 2016). Effective learning that takes place through feedback is shared and constructed in a friendly environment in which appraisals and rewards are recommended for the good work done as well as to motivate learners to put more effort in their learning (James, 2016). The approach of creating a supportive learning environment is used as a way of developing good habits for learning as it occurs naturally and learners are encouraged to think critically (James, 2016).

The various responsibilities of teachers in learner assessment described in this section affirm the need of the teachers to have comprehensive knowledge of the assessment policy and be able to implement the policy in an effective manner based on the

objectives of the policy. The next sections describes the process that teachers use to assess learners.

### **2.9.3 Role played by stakeholders in the process of teaching and learning as well as learner assessment**

Schools have different stakeholders, namely parents, teachers, learners and the community members among others. Learners construct knowledge from their prior knowledge and experience using inductive or deductive methods (James, 2016; Pattalitan, 2016). This means that learning is the condition that responds to external stimuli, therefore, the learning environment need to be rich with information to provide learners with many opportunities to master learning skills (James, 2016; 2019). This means that learning takes place even at home and this involves the contribution of the caregivers in developing learners. Learners use their day to day experiences to learn new concepts and skills and then apply the new knowledge to their daily life experiences. To allow learning to occur, teachers would develop a favourable learning environment with a climatic condition that permits high quality interactions between learners and teachers (Pattalitan, 2016). This means that learning opportunities should be extended to environment outside the school premises to fulfil the learners need for holistic development. Abdulla (2019) and James (2016) believe that learning is a mediated activity that occurs naturally and an active process of acquiring knowledge.

The process of learning involves the collaboration of different people and a shared understanding in the social group (James, 2016 ). This means that, during a collaborative learning process, the different stakeholders make learners feel safe, communicate freely, develop their own ideas and move at their own pace. Social cohesion among the stakeholders creates an attitude of co-operation and healthy relationship among learners and school community (Abdulla, 2019). Social cohesion implies that teachers should create a good relationship with parents to share information about their children learning and to shape supportive experiences at school and home. Both teachers and parents should use the information shared and assist learners respectively in achieving the set learning outcomes (Pattalitan, 2016). Development of cultural identities is important because learners are shaped by their

culture and community. Furthermore the supportive role played by the stakeholder should be in the learning process as well as in learner assessment process.

Learners ought to be assessed in an integrated way through different activities and times. James (2016) found that, to assess learners effectively, whether in formative assessment or summative assessment, appropriate instruments should be used. Teachers may use mental processes such as diagnostic thinking and the ability to solve problems and make decisions in everyday classroom practice. Activities and tasks should consist of problem solving and clues for solutions to facilitate discussion. Dialogues, discussions, demonstrations, and observations should also be used to find, reflect, and respond to information with an aim of enhancing learning (DBE, 2011). During classroom assessment, learners should be given activities that allow them to think critically, and their active participation in learning be seen as a process aimed at changing behaviour based on learners' experiences (DBE, 2011). Providing students the opportunity to do self-assessment increases the self-confidence, self-assessing skills and ownership of the results, as well as making them partners in the assessment process (Thawabieh, 2017).

Demonstrations and practical strategies are also used by the teacher to observe learners mastering their practical skills (DBE, 2011). Through an active learning process, the learners are assisted in order to be able to do regular self assessment while teachers give formative feedback to increase their self esteem. In a study done by Thawabieh (2017), students were capable of assessing themselves using the criteria for self-assessment that was provided by the teacher after training on the use of the tool. Teachers use the outcomes of assessment to be able to take appropriate action to redirect learning towards the envisioned direction and to move teachers and learners forward.

Teachers need to establish an environment in which learners can be inspired to reflect on their performance and strive to improve their level of competences (James, 2016; Abdulla, 2019). The process of teaching and learning may include displaying of artefacts which learners can access easily and use in their discussion and knowledge formation while teachers act as a facilitators (Pattalitan, 2016). Learning environments

need to be rich with information to provide learners with many opportunities, for example, to master their reading skills which is the foundation skills for mastering all the other subjects (James, 2016). Furthermore, during the process of learning, observable behaviour, skill development and memorisation of information for a particular concept are used for assessment purposes (James, 2016).

Scholars like Abdulla (2019) and Pattalitan (2016) are of the opinion that using different methods and strategies in formative assessment assists learners with learning difficulties as well as giving the teachers opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learners. When the learners struggling with a particular activity, teachers need to change their teaching methods and strategies to allow learners to practise more on their weaknesses (James, 2016). Different methods and strategies used for teaching and learning provide consistency and understanding and further help teachers to choose a more effective instructional scaffolding technique. Teachers should search and interpret what has been learned and determine how learning goals can be achieved (Shepard et al., 2017).

According to Pattalitan (2016), among the other roles, teachers need to use a appropriate range of tools when assisting struggling learners. Scaffolding may be used and be withdrawn when a learner gains knowledge and confidence in the subject content being taught. Learners should be given tasks that consist of problem solving with clues for solutions to motivate their thinking capacity. Both teachers and learners should jointly try to solve problems to develop skills and understanding of the problem and the requited solution. Abdulla (2019) states that, by using a scaffolding method, teachers create room for an attitude of co-operation and healthy relationship among learners and the school community. Therefore, different schemes of instruction approaches need to be used by teachers to be inclusive of the diverse abilities of learners. The teaching strategies used by the teachers should speak to the assessment policy to ensure the relevancy of the assessment done during or after the teaching and learning period.

## 2.10 THE CAUSES OF POOR LEARNER ASSESSMENT

Researchers like Gardner (2012), Dann (2014) and Beckmann (2018) believe that most teachers lack the expertise of using formative assessment correctly, which can be a reason why teachers cannot produce positive results. Yet Richmond et al. (2019) argue that it is crucial that teachers engage in using the correct assessment strategies and tools, to avoid having a negative impact on learners' performance. For example, most of the assessments generally formulated by teachers encourage memorizing, quick learning, and competition among learners (Gardner, 2012). These three aspects of learner assessment are considered not to be healthy to the academic achievement of learners. According to Mather and Land (2014) there was some effort in implementing the reading skills objectives stated in CAPS, but the efforts of the participants in their study were insufficient for enabling the learners to read and understand the content as expected in the policy. This means that the poor approach to teaching a subject may lead to poor learner assessment. Mather and Land (2014) recommend that South Africa teachers need to be effectively trained to comprehensively understand CAPS as well as supported to implement it as stated in the objectives of the policy document.

Teachers act as facilitators and at times tend to train learners to respond to instructions correctly and rapidly without higher order thinking. Such assessment approaches may have a poor impact on learner achievement because it involves memorizing the subject content instead of being able to understand, think critically and analyse knowledge. Likewise, positive feedback given without a specific appraisal and corrections of mistakes may not be effective in enhancing learner academic performance. Such assessments tend to be formulated based on the teachers' standpoint and not on learners' or that of the educational community (James, 2016).

Another aspect of poor learner performance is that the progress of learners in the academic performance of learners is evaluated through tests that focus on specific subject content instead of evaluating holistic learner development (James, 2016). Furthermore the language used in assessment should be at the level at which the learners can understand what is expected from them. The language proficiency

required for the classroom is important for clear and understandable instruction (James, 2016). This is because it becomes difficult for most of the teachers to pose problem-solving questions or ask meaningful questions in the absence of competency in the language used for instruction. Similarly, most learners may not be able to understand the instructions given by the teachers or questions being asked in an assessment if the learners struggle with the language of instruction (Gardner, 2012). Beckmann (2018) attributes the shortcomings in teachers' ability to use the language of instruction effectively in designing assessment tasks and tools to the lack of relevant training in the professional development of teachers during the in-service teacher training period. Such inadequacies in teacher preparation and development might also be having a negative impact on the quality of assessment in schools as well as the ability to implement the assessment policy as required.

Another issue that may lead to poor learner assessment is the policy on learner progression or promotion to the next grade. Ojo and Mathabathe (2021) found that the curriculum design does not give room for slow learners or learners who struggle with reading to complete their work for assessment; instead, slow learners are treated in the same manner as other able learners in the classroom. In some cases, learners who have been given one chance which allows them to repeat the grade and failed are still passed on to the next grade, although they have not achieved the required pass mark. This policy directive is problematic because such learners may struggle to cope with the work demands in the new progressive grade since they were promoted prematurely.

## **2.11 BENEFITS OF DOING ASSESSMENT**

Studies done by Brown et al. (2016) and Shepard et al. (2016) state that assessment allows teachers to assess what is truly valuable to be learnt. Both teachers and learners benefit from assessment as they learn the fundamental ideas and key skills from the feedback generated in the various content areas after assessment. In addition, in a study done in Pakistan regarding how teachers value classroom assessment, Thomas (2012) found that classroom assessment was important for teachers because it provides the opportunity for teachers to collect and evaluate

assessment data to determine the needs, weakness and strengths of the learners. The teachers then use such information to make changes to the teaching and learning approaches to improve learner academic achievement. Therefore, when teachers plan for assessment, assessment goals need to be clear so that assessment can be integrated with curriculum and effective instruction. Teachers and learners may be assisted to improve performance, while assessment also serves as evidence of teaching and learning (Gareis & Grant, 2015; James, 2016; Abdu, 2019). Furthermore, the participants in the study by Thomas (2012) considered assessment to be an opportunity for learners to reflect and critically think about their own performance.

Teachers may also use scaffolding techniques to enhance interaction and collaboration between the teacher and learners (Pattalitan, 2016). Therefore, teachers as assessors need to have adequate knowledge and skills in developing and administering assessment (Braun, 2019). The emphasis of this literature review seems to focus on the effectiveness of teachers' knowledge and comprehension of fundamental assessment concepts and procedures which has an influence on learning outcomes and on instructional decision-making processes may contribute the benefits of assessment. The researcher's assumption is that the knowledge of the teachers regarding the assessment policy and the implementation of the policy can benefit the learner in terms of improved academic performance and teachers may gain from being professionally developed in their teaching subject.

## **2.12 IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching and learning can be improved if there is efficiency on the teaching and learning role played by teachers (Shan, 2019). Teachers are the designers of learning opportunities, and they can prioritize educational resources. Brown (2011) also asserts that teachers need to develop correct approaches to teaching as more complex tasks require the development of new capabilities. This expectation calls for teachers to strive to have deeper knowledge on subject content and assess learners according to their individual capabilities and learning pace. This means that teachers need to be capable of choosing strategies that are suitable and meaningful to learners.

Xu and Brown (2016) also support the stance that teachers' assessment knowledge forms the foundation of understanding the assessment principles, assessment purpose, content, and methods. Teachers' theoretical knowledge and components push them to pass those deeply embedded concepts (Deluca & Lam, 2014). This means that teachers need to be knowledgeable on assessment as some concepts and skills are best assessed with specific forms of assessment (Brown, 2011; Looney et al., 2017). Ukobizaba, Nizeyimana and Mukuka (2021) stress that all the assessments strategies used in mathematics can be used to enhance learner performance if learners are given room to be actively involved in the learning process and not just be receivers of knowledge.

According to White and Delaney (2019), a change in how teachers view assessment could assist the teachers in becoming more effective in the classroom and they may also change their belief system about their teaching and assessment practices. Teachers ought to be encouraged to learn to do regular self-assessment and rectify their mistakes. The teachers can also make the learners correct their mistakes through giving them effective feedback, using different methods like descriptive, corrective and evaluative feedback (White & Delaney, 2019). Ukobizaba, Nizeyimana and Mukuka (2021) recommend that the assessment done by mathematics teachers should not only geared towards grading the learners, but the assessment should also be used to reflect on ways in which the performance of the learners can be improved. Feedback should be constructive, or exhibit the effort put in doing the assessment tasks to make the feedback meaningful in the context of learners' future learning needs.

Teachers need to be able to analyse, do a diagnostic assessment and identify the challenges that may exist, in the quest to improve teaching and learning skills (Xu & Brown, 2016; White & Delaney, 2019). Teaching and learning can be improved by teachers giving learners with learning difficulties specific attention through carefully planned interventions and the observation of their performance and behaviour during assessment. This statement means that teachers should develop a close relationship with the learners, develop mutual trust and listen carefully to the learners to build their self-confidence and a healthy self-image. Giving individual attention to the learners

with special needs can be done through different scaffolding techniques. Pattalitan (2016) defines a scaffolding technique as a continued systematic incorporation of feedback and feed forward mechanism which enhances interaction and collaboration during the lesson. The purpose of this process is to assist individual learners to overcome their learning difficulties, unleash their potential and be motivated.

Even though formative assessment has been proven to be effective for both teachers and learners, teachers seem not to be able to associate teaching, learning and assessment as one aspect of the teaching and learning process (Gardner, 2012). The society and other stakeholders still believe that summative assessment and the standardized tests results are the only truly acceptable evidence of learning (Stiggins et al., 2017). Such a mindset needs a paradigm shift in accommodating other forms of assessment that are more learner centred. This finding encourages teachers to engage with the contents of assessment policy, in the context of South Africa CAPS, to be able to implement the policy effectively for improved academic performance.

## **2.13 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter has presented the literature review concerning the assessment and the implementation of assessment policy. The discussion was intended to provide a comprehensive thought about the meaning of assessment and assessment policy in literature as well as teachers' perspectives of assessment in the education system. Teaching improvement through assessment and the challenges that teachers experience in the assessment process have been discussed. In the following chapter, the methodology that guided this study is presented.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the literature on assessment and assessment policy, including the role of teachers in assessment and different types of assessments, was discussed. This chapter presents the research methodology of this study. The chapter includes discussions on the research paradigm, approach, design, site and sample as well as data generation and analysis methods. Ethical issues and trustworthiness of the study are also presented.

### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A paradigm is a model that is used to guide researchers through the research process. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state that the concept “paradigm” originated from a Greek word meaning pattern. Research paradigm, therefore, guides the researcher in understanding how to construct knowledge, the methodology to be used and the criteria to be used to get insight and in-depth information during the research procedures (Thanh et al., 2015). Perera (2018) points out that a research paradigm is concerned with the viewpoint of the researcher or the ideologies that underpin the study. The author (Perera, 2018) further declares that a paradigm consists of established beliefs commonly shared by researchers in explaining the understanding of problem under study. A paradigm moves the researcher to understand the research topic and the world in which the problem/issues happen (Ghiara, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (2013) state that there are three components of a research paradigm, namely ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Ontology is a philosophical dimension that deals with the assumptions and how the researcher defines reality or makes sense of it (Scotland, 2012). Ontology is the way a researcher talks about truth, existence of reality and other social entities (Antwi & Hamza, 2015), while epistemology is about the formation of knowledge. It explains how the researcher generates knowledge about the phenomenon under study (Gray, 2014). Epistemology explains how the researcher gets to know and makes the connection between the knower and what is to be known (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Epistemology is thus the theory of knowledge that depicts the knowledge of reality and the assumptions that underpin how knowledge is generated and acknowledged (Selvam, 2017). There are many research paradigms based on different ontological and epistemological stances. Some of the paradigms in quantitative and qualitative studies are positivist, post-positivist, critical theory, constructivism, interpretivist and pragmatism among others.

The research paradigm in this study is interpretivist. Researchers doing research in the interpretivist paradigm ground their philosophical stance in the subjective reality as explained by the participants who experienced the phenomenon being studied. Since the participants in such studies may be many, there will be multiple realities of the phenomenon from the different experiences of the participants (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim & Martin, 2014). With regards to epistemology, the interpretivist researcher believes that there is no objective knowledge, since knowledge generation depends on the experiences, thinking and reasoning of the research participants. Interpretivist researchers believe that there is no single way or method to gain knowledge (Pham, 2018). This assumes that all the answers are interesting as they are leading the researcher to the reality of the study. The interpretivist paradigm is subjective as it allows a researcher to investigate and prompt things that cannot be observed, like the thoughts, values, prejudice, perception, views, feelings and perspectives of the individuals (Pham, 2018). Working within the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher can interpret the data collected as the researcher understands the subject of the study (Pham, 2018).

This study was based on this paradigm as it uses multiple perspectives to accept and critically interpret the views of different individuals from the generated data. The focus of this study was specific as it has explored how teachers understand assessment in relation to assessment policy. The researcher could not only depend on policy documents as the only source for interpretation of the phenomenon, as the study involved a broader spectrum of assessment, which made the researcher decide to underpin this study in interpretivist paradigm. In this study, the data was generated from different participants which leads to multiple interpretations and development of

themes that answered the research questions. According to Creswell (2012), each participant's view represents an interpretation and presentation of a research as much as the subject of the study. However, the interpretivist paradigm does not have a fixed ground for a judgment as the results may not be perfect because of the influence of the personal feelings or opinions of the participants (Maree, 2012; Pham, 2018). A researcher's findings are actually disputed as they are affected by the researcher's own interpretation, beliefs system, ways of thinking which causes possible bias (Pham, 2018). To address this limitation of the interpretivist paradigm, the supervisor of the researcher in this study checked and guided the researcher throughout the process of data interpretation, to reduce researcher bias.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This study used a qualitative research approach, as it is exploratory and descriptive, rather than a quantitative approach which focuses on using numbers in collecting or working with research data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative approach emerges from the interpretive paradigm as it gives insights and in-depth information to understand and interpret the meaning of the phenomenon studied from the perspectives of the people involved. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to state the purpose and formulate the research questions in general by using few participants' experiences and views. Qualitative research is flexible and can adapt to changing and unexpected situations. A qualitative approach can create a lot of potential data points which are usable to research (Creswell, 2016). In qualitative studies, the research questions often follow exploratory pattern (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Such questions are stated using words such as *why*, *what*, or *how* at the beginning of the sentence for the researcher to generate in depth narrations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Creswell, 2016). The qualitative approach allows the researcher to ask the participants questions that will reveal their feelings and thoughts about the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher in a qualitative study plays an active role in data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2018). While engaging in the data processing, the researcher gains in depth understanding of the phenomenon through the realities narrated by the participants in the interviews.

Creswell (2016) argues that the purpose of a qualitative study is to provide an understanding of a phenomenon from the rich narrated experiences of the participants. According to Creswell (2012), Maree (2012) and Tetnowski (2015), qualitative study should be done in its natural setting where different sources can be used to gather information. In this study the natural settings were the schools from which the participants were identified.

Using qualitative approach in this study assisted the researcher in seeking answers from teachers as they are familiar with teaching, learning and assessment. The study depended on the views of the teachers regarding understanding and interpretation of assessment experiences in their natural environment, which is the school. According to Creswell (2012) and Maree (2016), qualitative research allows researchers to conduct their studies in natural settings to get the insights and in-depth information that are necessary to understand the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, in this study, the school environment was the natural setting that allowed the researcher to explore and prompt information, views and thoughts of teachers concerning assessment. The literature study in chapter two shows that, to date, there is limited study on South African teachers' understanding of CAPS policy and how they implement the policy. The researcher, being in a qualitative study was an active participant in data collection and analysis.

However, qualitative research has limitations. Qualitative research depends upon the experience of the researcher. The researcher may use personal experience and try to influence the process during data collection and analysis. To avoid such an influence, the researcher used predetermined interview questions to guide the conversation with the participants during the interview. When the participant needed clarity on certain questions, the researcher gave a brief and simple explanation of what the question meant without giving any guidance as to any expected answer. Another limitation of qualitative research is the lack of statistical representation on measured answers. To overcome this limitation, the researcher provided quotations from the participants in

reporting the findings. The findings of qualitative research cannot be generalized to the wider population beyond the scope of the study due to the limited number of participants. The understanding and the views of participants may not be the views of all the teachers; however, the findings provide insights on the phenomenon under study. Creswell (2016) states that the qualitative approach needs a lot of time for data collection and the conclusion is sometimes deceptive. The participants may decline to be part of the study in the eleventh hour, and this may force the researcher to look for other participants. Therefore, the study may take longer than anticipated. Fortunately, in this study all the participants gave their consent and were willing to participate in the study as scheduled. Based on the qualitative nature of the study, an inductive process of data generation and analysis is used in this research (Maree, 2012).

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is a specific procedure involved in the research process. A research design is a framework that is grounded on the methods and strategies used in answering the research questions (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). In a qualitative study, the research may opt to use one of the following designs: Phenomenology, Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Hermeneutics, Case Study, Historical or Narrative Design, among others. The researcher decided to use a case study design to explore how DHs and teachers understand and implement assessment policy. In using a case study design, the researcher aimed at exploring the understanding and the implementation of the assessment policy to establish a deep understanding, as explained in the data from multiple participants and document analysis (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). The researcher adopted a case study design because the research seeks information about the real-life experiences and current situation of DHs and teachers regarding assessment and the implementation of the assessment policy.

Teachers who were the participants in this study explained and described how they understand assessment through semi-structured interviews. Teachers were given the opportunity to share their experiences, perceptions and beliefs related to assessment. For the study to be effective, the school environment was used as a research site. Using a case study also assisted the researcher in understanding the relationships

that the participants had with the subject being studied and how they made meaning from that relationship (Tetnowski, 2015).

Case study presents several benefits as a research design. For example, it allows the researcher to gain deeper description of the study and guides the research process as well as a deep understanding of the phenomenon by using multiple participants and data sources (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Case study also works flexibly with the data collection and analysis methods, allowing any changes and interventions if they are needed. Case study design is closely connected to what is being done and accessible to all parties involved and can be done without any physical contact (Creswell, 2012).

However, case study is limited to perspectives, values social experience and viewpoints and uses a small sample size to be effective; this means that the findings from a case study design cannot be generalized to a population beyond the sample studied because of the size of the cases (Creswell, 2012). Despite the limitation on generalisation, a case study design can provide understanding of the unit of study as a whole and may suggest future studies to be done on the research topic or theme (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021).

### **3.5 RESEARCH SAMPLING**

This study was done by teachers of the three (3) primary schools from Ekurhuleni North District in Gauteng province, South Africa. Teachers in the schools usually meet and share challenges and strategies they use in their teaching practice. The schools were selected for their proximity to each other, as well as the ability of the researcher to easily access the schools. Apart from being not allowed to visit the schools due to Covid restrictions, the research data was generated through telephonic interviews, it was easier for the researcher to have access to information regarding assessment. The type of sampling the researcher used was purposive as well as convenience sampling.

Maree (2012) and Creswell (2012) define purposive sampling as the method that is used to intentionally select individuals and sites that have the same characteristics

and that have the potential to provide rich information that can assist in answering the research questions of the study. Purposive sampling is also used to develop a detailed understanding that might provide useful information and describe some sub-group in depth to produce a theory or explore a concept (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The intention for purposively selecting participants is the assumption that they will be capable of yielding detailed data for the study (Yin, 2018).

Creswell and Poth (2018) state that, in qualitative studies, the sample size of the participants is generally small. The researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018) recommend a sample size based on the research design. For narrative designs, the sample may include one or two individuals; phenomenology designs may range from 3–10 participants; grounded theory may need 20–30 participants to reach the saturation point; ethnography may examine one single culture-sharing group with numerous artifacts, interviews, and observations; while case studies may use about four to five cases. In this study the researcher explores three cases. The sample of the participants in this study consisted of three primary school teachers from Grade 1 to Grade 3. One DH and one Foundation Phase teacher were selected per school. The sample from each school consisted of a departmental head (DH) who also happens to be a member of the School Assessment Team (SAT) and a teacher. SAT is the school committee that is responsible for the whole school assessments. The responsibility of the SAT is to manage and control assessment for each subject and grade and to assist teachers with assessments and arrange training workshops where necessary. The other participants were class teachers, who teach all the Foundation Phase subjects. The participants were selected according to their ages, years of experience and qualifications. The school principal acted as the gate keeper in this study and helped the researcher to get access to the participants. All the participants were females. This is because most primary schools Foundation Phase teachers are women. Teachers in these schools frequently meet to discuss issues and challenges they are facing as well as the pedagogical approaches they are use in teaching and assessing the learners.

### 3.6 DATA GENERATION

This study used interviews to generate data. An interview is defined as a two-way conversation between the researcher and the participant which aims at acquiring rich information that can help in understanding the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality (Maree, 2012). When doing qualitative interviews, the researcher can listen to the narratives of the participants concerning their lived experiences to establish the understanding of their world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Patton, 2015). The interaction between the researcher and the participant during the interview allows co-construction of knowledge about the research topic (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The researcher during the interviews is able to explain the questions for clarity that may enable the participant to give relevant detailed responses within a short time of time. Data generation using interviews is regarded as a flexible method in which the researcher may probe the responses of the participants for deeper engagement and understanding of the research problem (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

There are many types of qualitative interviews that researchers may use to generate data. Some of the examples include formal, informal, structured, semi structured, unstructured, focus groups and telephonic interviews among others. In this study, the researcher decided to use semi-structured telephone interviews to generate data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were the preferred data generation method in this study because the researcher was able to have a flexible conversation with the participant, who was allowed to speak freely when answering the research questions (Patton, 2015). The researcher used predetermined open-ended questions to give the participant room for elaborating on the responses to the research questions (Yin, 2018). The aim of the interview questions in this study was to explore the DHs' and teachers' understanding of assessment, the role they played in the implementation of the assessment policy as well as the challenges they experience during the process of assessment.

Since the interview was telephonic, the place of interview was not restricted. Those who choose their place of employment as the interview site tend to be disrupted by a number of factors like unplanned meetings and extra mural activities. The participants

who chose to be interviewed after work hours were disrupted by family members and there was a lot of background noise during the interview session. In such cases the researcher scheduled follow-up interviews. The interview schedule which was prepared by the researcher contained the core questions that guided the researcher during the interview (Creswell, 2012). The researcher used the same prescribed interview questions during all the interviews which allowed the researcher to compare the responses across the participants and generate quality data. Semi-structured interviews give room for the researcher to pose additional questions when an important aspect of the study emerges from the participants during the interviews (Young et al., 2018). In this study, the researcher gave the participants the interview questions before the interview sessions to enable the participants to reflect on their experiences. During the interview, the researcher took short notes and recorded the interview, which was transcribed verbatim after each session.

According to Creswell (2012), the advantage of using interviews is that it allows participants to speak and share their experiences with the researcher. The participants who participate in the interviews often feel comfortable sharing ideas and to provide information that could answer the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During the interview process in this study, the participants felt comfortable sharing their personal information through conversation. Through the interview process, the researcher was able to ask relevant follow-up questions related to the study to generate data. The process required adequate preparation of questions which were prepared in advance. Open-ended questions were used and explored thoroughly to get answers from the participants. The prolonged interviews, as well as follow up interviews done by the researcher, may establish trust and rapport with participants which may generate rich data (Seidman (2013).

However, even though the participants were given an assurance of confidentiality, some were still not comfortable and felt uneasy divulging some of the information needed. To overcome this limitation, the researcher ensured that during the interview process the interview session was not disrupted, and the researcher remained focused on asking the predetermined questions as advised by my supervisor. As Maree (2012)

and Creswell (2012) state, interviews as a data generation method may also be problematic to novice researchers. The researcher in this study was a novice and the supervisor provided step by step guidance from how to prepare the interview questions to the process of conducting and doing analysis during and after fieldwork. Young et al. (2018) also point out that the general critique about qualitative interviews is the danger of bias and of leading questions. To overcome this weakness in this study, the researcher read several books and articles on how to formulate open interview questions that are not biased or leading. The supervisor of the researcher also checked the questions, and the necessary editing was done before the interviews started.

A pilot study, which consisted of two interviews, one with the DH and the other with a teacher, was done to test the research questions in terms of clarity in the language used, how the participants understood the questions and the general duration of the interview (Young et al., 2018). The researcher also transcribed the pilot interviews and shared with the supervisor if the interview questions could generate enough data to answer the research questions. The necessary adjustments were done accordingly. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) also recommend that the researcher's opinions, motivation, possible bias and interest must be made clear throughout the research process. In this study, the researcher gave reasons for all the decisions made during the research process. Another disadvantage of using qualitative interviews is that the findings cannot be generalised beyond the context of the study, as could have been done in a quantitative data collection method like using questionnaires with large numbers.

During the process, telephonic interviews were used due to Covid 19 restrictions and audio recordings were done to capture data. Interview questions were sent prior to the interview session to guide the participants on what is expected from them. The duration of the telephonic interviews was about 30 minutes for each participant.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Creswell (2012) and Maree (2012), data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data collected, and information gathered. Data analysis is a

continuous and interactive process in which data is generated, processed, analysed, and reported as findings (Clarke et al., 2019). Data analysis is also a process where concepts of the research process are used to identify key elements in the data that helps the researcher to understand and interpret the raw data (Tetnowski, 2015).

Thematic analysis was suitable for this study because it is a technique that enables the researcher to systematically identify, organize and give an in depth understanding of themes across data collected. A researcher who follows a thematic analysis process to analyse data starts by identifying patterns in the data, then makes meaning of the data to be able to present it as a narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis provides flexible approaches because of its logical way of identifying and summarizing messages (Braun, Clarke & Rance, 2014; Tetnowski, 2015). It is through the flexible and recurring process of data generation and analysis that the powerful descriptive and exploratory properties of the case study design are revealed, and the main question is answered. The collection and analysis of data were done looking at different angles across the whole dataset to suit the requirements of the research. However, irrelevant data with no interpretation was not used to answer the main research question; only the relevant data was used during analysis.

In this study the researcher followed the six-phase process for thematic analysis advocated by Clarke and Braun (2012) and Braun, Clarke and Rance (2014).

- Organizing data

In this study the interview data was generated from three DHs and three teachers. The first step was to organize the data. Maree (2012) states that the organizing of the text is done to ease the mind of the researcher and avoid being overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data. In this study, the researcher organized the data by transcribing the recorded interviews verbatim. Transcription is the process of changing field-notes and audio tape recording into text data (Creswell, 2012). The interview recordings in this study were transcribed into interview transcripts. Although the transcribing process takes time, each text was written down to understand and get a general idea of what

the data is all about. The electronic version of the transcripts was filed in different folders.

- Familiarizing with the data

The researcher then read the transcripts several times to get familiar with the data and get the general sense and meaning of the data generated from the participants.

- Coding

The coding of the data started after reading the transcribed data several times. Coding of data is a process of separating the text into parts and labelling it to form descriptions and extensive themes so that the data can be simply understood (Creswell, 2012). For this reason, codes can be assigned to individual words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs in each transcript, to aid the interpretation of meaning. In this study, the researcher started with a coding process after arranging the data into segments by taking the text data and segmenting sentences from the responses of the participants. The researcher kept reading and checking the irrelevant text; the information that was irrelevant was discarded. The codes were converted into categories which were labelled using actual words from the participants. While labelling the codes, the researcher made notes to be used in the analysis of the findings.

- Searching for themes

Related codes were organized and arranged into themes or categories as suggested by Creswell (2012). Maree (2012) defines themes as information grouped together and having the same meaning. The themes in this study emerged from the conceptual framework which were these: teachers' conceptions of assessment, identity construction, assessment literacy practices as well as teacher knowledge base on assessment. The researcher merged the codes to form categories and linked the categories to form themes and sub-themes that answered the research questions. All data that was relevant to the research questions was reviewed. This process strengthens the credibility of the research findings (Creswell, 2012).

- Description and naming of themes

Themes were divided into smaller numbers. They were described, named and arranged according to the research questions. Describing and naming of themes addresses the most significant aspects of the case study, aiming to remain true to the research questions, conceptual framework, and the data. Having fewer themes helps to provide detailed information rather than general information (Creswell, 2012). The researcher constructed the emerging themes into narrative passages and presented them in a logical manner.

- Producing the report

After coding, naming, and describing the data, the research findings were written down, guided by a table that aligned the research questions with the themes (Creswell, 2012). Each finding was followed by direct quotations from the participants and interpretation of the findings. The findings were also discussed in relation to literature and the conceptual framework at the end of each theme.

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

Trustworthiness of qualitative research refers to the extent to which a report of a qualitative study contains the same robust procedural description as any other study. Maree (2012) defined trustworthiness as the way in which the researcher will be able to convince the people that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and the research is of high quality. Trustworthiness of the study includes the measures that a researcher puts in places to reduce biases and possible subjectivity and furthermore to increase rigour in the process of doing the study and presenting the findings (Nyathi, 2018). Collier-Reed et al. (2009) also asserts that trustworthiness should be developed between the researcher and the participants to measure the value of research and its effects as well as leading the way by providing firmness and kindness in the research process. Trustworthiness strengthens research outcomes by constructing knowledge and increasing the potential, which can be a factor contributing to the necessary societal change (Collier-Reed et al., 2009). Yin (2016) as well as Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that trustworthiness of the findings can be obtained through rigour in ensuring that the study is credible, transferable,

dependable and confirmable. To ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher adopted the four criteria of trustworthiness that were originally proposed by Guba (1985), that is, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability

### **3.9.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to the accuracy in the representation of the research findings (Maree 2012). Credibility is the extent to which the findings correctly display the reality that the participants experienced in the phenomenon being studied (Ahmed, 2024). To ensure that the study is credible, the researchers do member checking. Maree (2012) explains that member checking is a process whereby the researcher takes the interview transcripts to the participants to read and correct errors where applicable. Member checking involves providing audio recordings as well as transcripts to the interviewed participants to review and give their input before using the data (Tong, et al., 2016; Nyathi, 2018). The limitations of member checking are that some participants may be too busy after the interviews to give the researcher the time to review that transcript. Fortunately, the participants in this were all willing to read the transcripts and give their comments to the researcher. Another strategy for ensuring credibility is the use of triangulation. Triangulation is the integration and comparison of data from multiple research participants or different data generation methods to validate findings (Yin, 2018). In qualitative studies, the researchers strive to provide detailed descriptions of the research context, the participants and the research procedures to enable the reader to decide on the transferability of the study (Ahmed, 2024). By doing triangulation, the data from different sources of the research are compared to substantiate the findings of the study and enhance its credibility as well as reduce potential bias.

The researchers' time in the field, if prolonged, may lead to developing trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants, which could result in the participants giving more nuanced insight of their experiences and what they believe that contributes to generation of rich data (Ahmed, 2024). The credibility strategy that is referred to as reflexivity enables the researcher to recognize potential personal biases and prejudices in the research process (Ahmed, 2024; Nyathi, 2018). The

ability of the researcher to be aware of these leads to self-checking against being biased. In this study, the supervisor of the researcher was on the lookout for biases in the process of data collection, analysis and the discussion of research findings. In this study the researcher strived to ascertain credibility by aligning every step in the research process (Nyathi, 2018), such as research and interview question, themes and sub-themes as well as categories, which were all linked to the research questions. The information is tabulated in chapter 4.

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985), explains that transferability is a measure used by the reader of research to link elements of the study and their personal experiences to the research. Transferability is a term used in qualitative research which corresponds to the external validity or generalizability quality measure in quantitative research (Nyathi, 2018). This means that the findings of one study could be applicable to a different setting. As a result, Maree (2016) points out that the researcher needs to provide a detailed picture of the context and allow the reader to relate and link to their personal experiences. To ensure transferability in this study, thick descriptions and direct quotations from the participants were provided to support the research findings. A detailed description of the participants, methodology and the context of the study were also provided for the reader to decide on their own whether the information can be transferred to their experiences (Maree, 2016). The participants get the opportunity to assess the applicability and relevance of findings to other settings or situations. The criteria that the researcher uses for sampling must be clearly stated and justified to enable transferability of the study to similar population and context (Ahmed, 2024). In this study, the researcher has provided thick descriptions of the sampling of the participants, the context of the study as well as the responses from the participants as direct quotations in reporting the findings of this study.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability is a concept in qualitative study that referred to as reliability in quantitative study (Nyathi, 2018). Maree (2012) states that dependability is the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur. Dependability

relates to consistency in data and research findings which may enable the reader to trust and follow the research process followed throughout the study (Silverman, 2016). A researcher may ensure that the findings of the study are dependable if the details of the procedures and the decisions made during the research process are provided. This means that meticulous documentation of the research process must be done for transparency and to allow future research to replicate the study (Ahmed, 2024). Dependability also involves the use of an audit trail in which the decisions made during the whole research process can be easily traceable through the records kept for each step of the research process. In this study, the researcher used a notebook to record all the decisions made during the research process. There are audio recordings as well as transcripts of the interview data. All the tables used during coding, categorizing and forming themes and sub-themes used in the presentation of the research findings are audited. The available records from this study may enable the reader to decide on the authenticity of the research findings.

#### **3.8.4 Conformability**

Confirmability is comparable to objectivity in a quantitative study (Nyathi, 2018). Conformability focuses on making sure that the interpretations and findings from research are thoroughly framed by the participants as opposed to the researcher's opinion and bias (Maree, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It means making certain that the data and findings reported in a study accurately reflect what the participants said instead of what the researcher thinks (Nyathi, 2018). Peer debriefing is one of the strategies that can be used to ensure confirmability of the research findings. During peer debriefing, colleagues or experts in the field can be engaged in providing feedback or expert opinion regarding the interpretation of the findings of the study to reduce researcher bias and increase objectivity and confirms the findings (Ahmed, 2024). In this study the supervisor of the study and fellow teachers did peer debriefing of the findings of this study. Some of the responses needed verification against the assessment policy, therefore, the CAPS document was used for verification. In this study, the researcher also discussed the findings of the study and interpretations with the supervisor to verify the information. Researchers are also expected to keep a reflexive journal for recording the thinking of the researcher, possible bias and other

reflections during the research process. The ability of the researcher to reflect on the practices and all the activities during the research process shows the extent to which the researcher may be subjective, and this increases the confirmability of the study.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

In every research study, ethics must be taken into consideration to protect the rights and the wellbeing of the researchers and the participants. Ethical considerations are important in all forms of research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that research ethics include the obligation that researchers adhere to respect the rights, privacy and the confidentiality of the data obtained from the participants. It is the responsibility of every researcher to publish research findings that are not harmful to the research participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Ethics are values that guide research to have a positive effect on human rights (Maree, 2016). Therefore, every researcher must get a clearance from an ethics committee before commencing fieldwork. For this study, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria and obtained an approval from the committee. The researcher was aware that, after obtaining the ethical clearance, the next step would be to seek permission to access schools which were research sites. So, after the approval of the ethics application from the University of Pretoria, the researcher applied to the Department of Education for permission to use the sampled schools as the research site including teachers as participants. The researcher considered this study as social in nature, as it explored participants' beliefs, perspectives and experience in assessment, and ensured that a level of trust was developed between the researcher and the participants. After obtaining permission from the Department of Education, the researcher sought permission from the school principals of the three schools to get access to the school and the participants (DHs and teachers). The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study and explained the need for the study and the role that they will play as the participants. Davies and Hughes (2014) are of the opinion that the researcher should share the details of the research study with potential participants as well as scheduled data collection time, to avoid interrupting teaching and learning time. The researcher was cautious that some

participants would not want to be part of the study if they had uncertainty about the study.

The researcher obtained consent from the participants after sending them informed consent letters to sign. Appointments were booked after the participants consented to take part in the study.

In doing this study, the researcher adhered to the following ethical principles.

### **3.9.1 Research setting**

Letters to request for permission to use the teachers of their schools as participants in the study were written and submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education and the school principals. The letters had a university logo to show that I was a student from the institution and had been granted permission to do the research. In the letter, I included all the details concerning the study, such as the topic, purpose, duration, process, and how the data was to be used. I also mentioned that participation in the study is voluntary, and the name of the participants and the school would not be included in research findings and the final report.

### **3.9.2 Informed consent**

Every participant was given an informed consent letter. A consent letter is a statement that is signed by participants before they take part in the study (Creswell, 2012). The consent form mentions the rights of the participants and the guarantees. The researcher explained to the potential participants the research process before sending the consent forms. In this study, the letter that was given to the participants stated that participation in this study would be voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time if they wish not to continue participating in the study.

The letter of consent also stated that the names of participants and the schools would not be used; instead, codes would be used to represent the schools. The schools would not be associated with the research findings. The participants were allowed to ask questions about the study, after which they were given one week to respond to the consent letters. The participants were required to sign the informed consent letter

to give the researcher consent before the appointments for the interviews were made. The researcher also obtained the consent to record the interviews. The researcher in this study abided by the principles of informed consent.

### **3.9.3 Privacy, Anonymity, and confidentiality**

In this study, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was protected by not using their real names throughout the research process, which included the data collection phase as well as analysis and reporting of the study findings. Privacy and confidentiality of the interview sessions were done and protected as the interviews were telephonically. The identity of the participants was not revealed in the recording's transcripts, findings and the research report. Code names were used, for example, School A, School B and School C. The participants were referred to DH A, DH B and DH C, while the code names of the teachers were Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher C. The code names were used to safeguard the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

### **3.9.4 Protection from harm**

It is an ethical principle that the researcher gives assurance to participants that the study will not cause them harm of any nature, whether it be emotional, physical, or psychological (Creswell, 2012). After briefing the participants and their participation in the study, I gave them the consent form to complete and sign. The researcher gave the willing participants a copy of the consent form to be kept in their personal files (Creswell, 2012).

## **3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented the research methodology. It elaborated on the paradigm, approach, design, site and sample, data generation method as well as data analysis process. Issues of trustworthiness of the study and ethical concerns are included. The next chapter presents the research findings and discussions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the preceding chapter, the research methodology was discussed, including the research paradigm, approach, design, site and sample, data generation method as well as the approach used for data analysis. The trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations were also presented. This chapter presents the findings of this study as well as the interpretation of the findings. The findings of this study are further compared with the conceptual framework and literature on the studies that have been done on the phenomenon addressed by this study.

The purpose of this study was to determine how primary school teachers and DHs understand assessment in relation to assessment policy. The study explored how teachers and DHs view their role in assessment during teaching and learning. The study further investigates the influencing and the constraining factors that teachers experience during their implementation of the assessment policy. The interest of the researcher in this study was to establish what can be done to assist teachers to ensure that their teaching, learning, and assessment practices are aligned with the assessment policy. Data was generated by means of interviews with Foundation Phase teachers and their departmental heads who happened to be members of the School Assessment Team (SAT).

The study was done in three primary schools in the district of Ekurhuleni North in Gauteng province, South Africa. To protect the image of the school, the teachers and the DHs, a pledge of confidentiality and trust was established between the DHs, teachers and the researcher. Code names were used to represent the schools and the participants.

## **4.2 THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

The focus of this study was on the implementation of assessment policy, which is inclusive of all the subject-specific learning area statements, learning programme guidelines, and subject assessment guidelines for all subjects listed in the National Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Grades R–12 were superseded in January 2012) contained in the policy document known as the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Three primary schools in Gauteng's Ekurhuleni North District were identified and used as sites for the study. Three DHs and three teachers of learners in grades one to three were chosen to participate in this study. From each school, two participants were chosen. The participants chosen were one teacher and one departmental head from each of the three schools, making a total sample of six (6) participants. Departmental heads who also happen to be members of the School Assessment Team (SAT) were involved in this study. The SAT body is the school committee in charge of the assessments for the entire school. The duties of SAT include overseeing and managing the school's assessment programme for all subjects and grades, helping teachers with evaluations, and setting up training sessions as required.

The research objectives and the research questions were all included in the interview guide that the researcher created before the interviews. To help in scheduling the length of the interviews, the researcher considered the availability of each participant when making an initial interview schedule. The interview appointments were organised with the participants' consent in terms of their preference time for the interview.

## **4.3 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The biographical information of the participants in this study is given in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below, which reflects the profiles of the Foundation Phase teachers and

departmental heads who are also part of School Assessment Team (SAT). All the participants were female teachers of different ages and with different experiences. The gender of the participants was influenced by the fact that in most primary schools in the province, especially in the Foundation Phase, teachers are mainly females. The participants are referred to by code names (Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher C). The DHs are referred to as DH A, DH B and DH C from school A, B and C. All DHs are SAT committee members who oversee the assessment for the entire school. The duties of the SAT include overseeing and managing the school's assessment programme for all the subjects and grades. The DHs are expected to help teachers with evaluations and setting up training sessions as needed. The different ages of the participants also show that the older participants were more experienced than the younger ones and had postgraduate degrees. The profile of the participants, especially in the educational field, also revealed their experience in curriculum changes that has taken place over the years. As part of the School Assessment Team (SAT), the DHs are expected to be more experienced than other teachers, to execute their work better and more effectively. Looking at their qualifications, two of the departmental heads specialized in management while the other one specialized in Inclusive education.

Below is the table of biographical details of participants.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants (Teachers)

School	Participants	Age	Gender	Teaching experience	Teaching Grade & Subjects	Number of learners	Highest Qualification
A	Teacher A	29	Female	5 years	Foundation Phase – Life skills Isizulu HL, English FAL and Mathematics	40	B.ed (Foundation Phase)

BB	Teacher B	53	Female	23 years	Foundation Phase - Isizulu, English (FAL), Maths and Life Skills	53 learners	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
C	Teacher C	31	Female	7 years	Foundation Phase subjects - English, Isizulu, Mathematics and Life Skills.	38	Teachers diploma +ACE (Foundation Phase)

Table 4.2: Biographical information of participants (departmental heads - DHs)

School	Participants	Age	Gender	Experience as DH	Teaching experience	Grade	Highest qualification
School A	DH A	56	Female	15 years	22 years	Foundation phase subjects - Grade 3	B.ed (Hons)
School B	DH B	52	Female	11 years	27 years	Foundation Phase subjects - Grade 3	ACE (advanced certificate in Education) in Management leadership

							and Management
School C	DH C	54	Female	10 years	25 years	Foundation Phase subjects	B.ed Honours (Management Leadership)

#### 4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings of this study were generated from the data obtained from interviews with the participants. The findings are aligned with the research and interview questions. Direct quotations from the participants are included to support the findings. Below is the table that shows the alignment of the research question, interview questions, themes and sub-themes. The table also shows the categories under sub-themes.

##### 4.4.1 Theme 1 Teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy

Table 4.3 Research question 1, interview questions, theme and sub-theme

Research question	Interview questions	Themes and sub-themes
Research question 1  How do teachers describe assessment in relation to the assessment policy?	What is your view regarding assessment policy?	Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy  Sub-theme 1: Participants' views regarding assessment policy  Category 1: Teachers' views of assessment policy

	<p>What can you tell me about assessment and improving teaching and learning?</p> <p>Can you explain the difference between assessment and grading?</p> <p>What do you understand about Assessment for Learning (Formative) and assessment of learning (summative)? Explain briefly.</p>	<p>Category 2: DHs' views of assessment policy</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: Assessment and improving teaching and learning</p> <p>Category 1: Determining learner progression</p> <p>Category 2: Selection of subject content and determining learner comprehension</p> <p>Sub theme 3: The difference between assessment and grading</p> <p>Sub-theme 4: Understanding of formative and summative assessment</p>
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The first theme focuses on answering the research question: What are teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to the Assessment Policy? The objective and

research questions were intended to understand how teachers describe assessment and assessment policy followed by how teachers and DHs understand assessment and assessment policy. The interview questions were envisioned to determine the view of participants on the status of how teachers describe assessment and assessment policy. During the thematic analysis, four sub-themes and several categories identified. Table 4.3 above gives the outline of theme 1. The first two sub-themes present the findings on assessment policy as it relates to teaching and learning and the last two sub-themes focuses on teachers' understanding of assessment.

#### **4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Participants views regarding assessment policy**

This sub-theme responds to the interview question: What is your view regarding assessment policy? The teachers and the departmental heads (DHs) who were the participants gave different views regarding their understanding of assessment policy. The views of the participants in this study are presented in two categories. The first category presents the views of teachers, and the second category narrates the views of DHs.

##### Category 1: Teachers' views of the assessment policy

In this category, it seems that teachers perceive the assessment policy as a teaching tool that determines what to be taught as well as a tool used to align teaching with assessment. According to the teachers, learners seem to also benefit from assessment policy as they are reminded of assessment schedules by reading the policy. This is what the teachers said:

*For educators it inspires what they teach and exactly what we are supposed to be teaching, and learners learn what they are supposed to be learning, because at the end of the day you must assess what you have taught (Teacher A).*

*My understanding of assessment policy is that it assists teachers with the methods of assessment to be chosen during lesson planning. Also assisting teachers with knowledge and skills that need to be assessed in class. CAPS makes it easy for a teacher to know which task to be given to learners (Teacher B).*

*...assessment policy is to update and assists learners in the methods of lessons given by a teacher to updates learners schedules, for instance time of submissions, chapters that need to be assessed and so on (Teacher C).*

## Category 2: DHs' views of the assessment policy

The DHs interviewed in this study gave different ways in which they perceive the concept assessment policy. Assessment policy is described by the DHs in this study as a planning and feedback tool. Learner progress is determined by the assessment policy. The DHs are of the opinion that teachers seem to plan according to the feedback they get from assessing learners. The contents of the teaching and learning appear to be determined by the assessment policy.

*To us, assessment policy is very important because it helps us to see the progress of the learners. It also improves teaching and learning because it provides teachers with feedback which helps them during planning to assist learners to progress further (DH B).*

*I think this includes teaching and learning materials, like ATPs, workshops, lesson plans, recording sheets, and moderation forms that form part of assessment policy (DH A).*

*CAPS makes it easy for a teacher to know which task to be given to learners. (DH C).*

The findings in this sub-theme imply that the assessment policy is perceived as a multi-purpose tool that guides the teachers and provides a framework of what should be taught and how to present the subject content as well as how and when to evaluate the learners. Assessment policy also seems to deliver ways in which learner progression can be determined. Teachers also seem to benefit from the policy as it provides feedback that can be used by the teachers to plan future lessons. If there are any weakness in teaching a subject, teachers are able to make up for it, being guided by the feedback from assessment. The DHs, being in leadership and management, perceive assessment policy as a planning and monitoring tool. The DHs use the

directives in the policy as guidelines when planning lessons, as well as when doing assessment. The policy stipulation also assists the DHs in monitoring tools like record sheets and moderation forms. The only challenge from this finding is that there are many interpretations of the use and value of assessment policy, which implies different ways of implementing the policy. This sub-theme links to the element of teacher conceptualisation of assessment, which appears on the conceptual framework of this study (TALiP model-adapted from Xu & Brown, 2016). The findings of this study have shown how the teachers who participated in this study understand the concept of assessment policy, which may have influence on the implementation of the assessment policy.

#### **4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Assessment and improving teaching and learning**

In this sub-theme, the researchers explored what the participants say about assessment and improving teaching and learning. The interview question was: What can you tell me about assessment and improving teaching and learning? There are two categories in this sub-theme. The first category shows that assessment is used to determine the academic progression of learners, and the second category focuses on the selection of the subject to teach and evaluating what the learner has learned.

##### Category 1: Determining learner progression

The findings of this study show that assessment is done to determine the learning progress of the learners as well as to provide feedback to the parents on learner's academic progress. The performance of the learners, which is determined through assessment, can be used to improve teaching and learning.

*At our school, we do assessment daily in Foundation Phase. We do formative assessment and summative assessment at the end of the term to determine whether learners have understood the work. We also use assessment at the end of the term for reporting to parents and the learners. Informal assessment is done daily and is not recorded (DH A).*

*In my school we take assessment very seriously. To us assessment is very important because it helps us to see the progress of the learners and to make changes in our teaching (DH B).*

*When you are teaching you have to follow the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) and assessment framework. These frameworks help us to decide on what and how to improve our teaching (DH C).*

Category 2: Selection of subject content and determining learner comprehension

Apart from determining the learners' academic progress and improving teaching, assessment is also explained as a tool that provides the subject content information as well as teaching structure on how to proceed in subject delivery. The participants said:

*Assessment also improves teaching and learning because it provides teachers with feedback which helps them during planning to assist learners to progress further (DH B).*

*I think assessment includes teaching and learning materials, like ATPs, workshops, lesson plans, recording sheets, moderation forms that form part of assessment policy (Teacher C).*

Assessment is used as a tool that determines what the teacher should teach as well as to determine what the learners have understood. The participants said:

*...assessment policy wants you to assess exactly what you have taught and everything that you are going to assess it must be something that you have taught the learners throughout the term or throughout the year (Teacher B).*

*Yes, assessment is very important in learning and teaching because as a teacher you can see how your learners have understood what you have taught by giving them a task in each and every term (Teacher A).*

*In Foundation Phase, we are doing a school-based assessment task which is our assessment. So, by administering the assessment you can see whether your learners*

*have understood what you have taught, or your learners have met the outcomes of the curriculum that you have delivered to them (DH C).*

The above quotations show the different ways in which the participants relate assessment to improving teaching and learning. According to the participants' responses, assessment seems to be a systematic process of gathering information and checking the progress of learners to improve teaching and learning. Assessment is also used as an evaluation tool for teachers to check their progress in terms of the work they have covered in a specific period. Assessment seems to inform teachers on the methods and strategies they can use to improve learners' performance. It appears that through doing assessments, teachers can determine the progression of learners to higher Grade levels. The assessment of the learners seems to be done to determine what the learners have learnt which can be used to gauge the improvement in teaching and learning that is needed. The teaching style and the intensity of engaging with the teaching content seems likely to be decided by how learners understand what has been taught. The teachers gave the impression of using assessment to account for their teaching achievement as reflected in the outcomes of the assessment done which is shared with the parents. The findings of this sub-theme highlight that assessment is not only used to determine learner academic achievement but also a source of information that can be used by teachers in planning lessons and self-reflection on future changes to be made in teaching the subject. The question that yielded these responses is part of the three question that explored teachers' understanding of the concept of assessment as well as assessment policy. The other two questions are the difference between assessment and grading as well as formative and summative assessment discussed in the next two sub-sections. These two sub-themes further explore teachers' knowledge of assessment which is part of the assessment literacy practices in the conceptual framework of this study.

#### **4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 3: The difference between assessment and grading**

In this sub-theme, the researcher sought to explore how the teachers perceive the difference between the concepts of grading and assessment, by asking the interview question: Can you explain the difference between assessment and grading? The

purpose of this question was to determine how the teachers understand the concept assessment by telling the difference between assessments and grading. Below are the responses from the participants:

*Assessment and grading are two different things; they are not the same. I think grading is to evaluate but assessment is to see whether they have met the outcomes of the curriculum that have been delivered to them (DH C).*

*...assessment is a strategy to confirm whether the learners have met the curriculum outcomes, and I think grading is to evaluate individual learner's (sigh)... learning and performance (Teacher C).*

*Assessment is a systematic process of gathering information through tests and other methods, but grading is an evaluation of some sort, but I don't know it well (Teacher B).*

*We do assessment daily, to me grading we do it at the end of the year to summarize everything for the learner to go to the next grade (DH A).*

The findings of this sub-theme show that there is no common understanding of the differences between assessment and grading. While some of the participants conceptualized assessment as an overall strategy of gauging the achievement of learning objectives by the learners, the other participants presented assessment as an activity done daily. This finding suggests a varied interpretation as well as implementation of the assessment policy. Grading seems to be presented by the participants as both formative and summative evaluation. Grading is explained as evaluation that is done at a particular time in the school calendar. This shows that there is need for establishing a common understanding of what grading should consist of and what constitutes assessment, as well as when assessment should be done. There seems to be a gap in understanding of the two concepts that probably needs to be filled by training teachers on the differences between assessment and grading to have a common understanding that could lead to common ways of implementation. The different types of assessments form the knowledge base and assessment literacy expected of the teachers to be able to implement assessment policy effectively.

#### **4.4.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Teachers' understanding of formative and summative assessment**

This sub-theme presents the responses from the teachers based on the interview question: What do you understand about Assessment for Learning (Formative assessment) and Assessment of Learning (Summative assessment)? Explain briefly. The reason for asking participants to differentiate formative from summative assessment was to explore the participants' insights on assessment as a concept. The responses of the participants show that generally the formative assessment is about assessment of ongoing teaching and learning while the summative assessment evaluates the learning that has occurred during a certain period.

*Formative assessment involves comprehension in process of learning, some skills and acquiring knowledge during teaching and learning period. Summative assessment measures the performance at the end of the lessons and involves overall performance and marks of the learners in class (Teacher C).*

*Formative is given throughout the term with feedback given after identifying the gaps for improvement.... Summative is a summary of all the learning that has happened. Collecting the evidence and knowledge of how much learners know and understand and what they can do or cannot do. Then we take it from there to help learners with difficulties in learning (Teacher B).*

*Formative assessment, I think teachers are able to find out whether what was taught has being understood by learners before other concepts were introduced. Summative assessment is a learners' response. It is when we are doing tests and tasks (Teacher A).*

Participants' responses in this study show an understanding of formative assessment as a continuous assessment administered during the process of teaching and learning. The participants also seem to comprehend that, during the teaching and learning process, learners acquire knowledge and skills and teachers can give feedback besides identifying the gaps in understanding. Summative assessment is perceived by the participants as a summary of all that has been taught during a period of time.

Usually, the summative assessment appears to be used at the end of the term for grading purposes.

The above quotations suggest that teachers in this study understand formative assessment as the continuous evaluation of work done by the learners and the teacher as teaching and learning progresses. Formative assessment appears to be used to identify the gaps in teaching and learning, which helps the teacher in planning to fill the identified gaps, while summative assessment is done to evaluate the accumulation of knowledge gained by the learners over a period. The learning outcomes that are not achieved are identified, as well as learners who are struggling to achieve the learning outcomes. The gaps identified by the teachers seem to be included in future lesson plans. Summative assessments look like assessment for learner progression. The responses of teachers in this sub-section relates to the assessment literacy practices that are included in the conceptual framework that underpins this study (TALiP model - adapted from Xu & Brown, 2016). Some teachers who participated in this study seem to be more knowledgeable about the different types of assessment than others.

#### **4.4.1.5 Discussion of theme 1: Teachers' understanding of assessment and the assessment policy**

This study presented how DHs and teachers understand assessment as it relates to assessment policy and improving teaching and learning. The participants in this study perceived assessment policy as a framework which guides teachers on the subject content to teach and evaluation strategies to use to determine learner progression. This conception is in line with the definition of assessment policy given by Namanya (2018), who asserts that assessment principles should focus on content and delivery in the classroom. Furthermore, Richmond et al. (2019) stress that assessment is an auxiliary function to teaching and learning system in classrooms. Sebate (2011) and Namanya (2018) are also of the opinion that assessment policy needs to be interpreted in terms of classroom practices that improve pedagogy. The findings of the current study also highlighted that the feedback that teachers and learners receive

from the implementation of assessment policy may be used in future lesson planning and in refining learner achievement.

Although the findings of this study as well as previous studies show the importance of assessment policy, the multiple ways in which the teachers as policy implementers perceive the policy implies varied ways of policy implementation. Brown (2017) is also of the opinion that the way in which teachers understand assessment policy may have influence on how they apply the policy to achieve educational objectives. According to Maharajh et al. (2016) in the South African context, teachers should always align their lessons plans with the principles and procedures of CAPS. The findings of the current study imply that the participants in this study do follow the assessment policy consistently as a teaching and assessment framework.

This study also explored the teacher's knowledge of the concept assessment by determining how the participants differentiated assessment and grading. Some of the participants theorized grading as an overall strategy that determines learner achievement of the educational outcomes. This understanding of the concept of grading is similar to that in the study done by Cheng et al. in China (2017), which confirmed that the core purpose of grading should be a holistic evaluation of the competency of the learner which is gained through teaching and learning, instead of only focusing on test results. Grading includes a wider range of information on learners, including assessment, participation and attendance. All the information gathered is critically analysed and also reported to parents. The participants in the current study described assessment as a routine that is a day to day learning activity carried out in the classroom. This definition echoes William's (2011) definition of assessment which regards assessment as a holistic term that embraces the different methods of ascertaining the knowledge, skills and attitude gained by the learners during the teaching and learning process. Assessment, as defined by Richmond et al. (2019), reported that assessment is crucial in supporting teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom. In addition. Saad, Sardareh and Ambarwati (2013) found that teachers use assessment as a tool that motivates learners to be accountable for their learning. Other participants in the current study could not clearly distinguish the

difference between grading and assessment. Such participants presented the two concepts as the same activity. Grading seems to be presented by some participants as both formative and summative evaluation. This shows that there is need for establishing a common understanding of what grading should consist of and what constitutes assessment as well as when grading and assessment should be done.

Another way of determining the assessment knowledge base of the teachers was to ask them to distinguish between formative and summative assessment. Studies (Gareis & Grant, 2015; Archer, 2017; Shepard et al., 2017) have reported that formative assessment is used by teachers to monitor the academic progress of learners as well as to improve teaching and learning using the feedback obtained from the assessment. Teachers in this study understand formative assessment as continuous evaluation of work done by the learners and the teacher as teaching and learning progresses. Formative assessment in this study appears to be used to identify the gaps in teaching and learning, which helps the teacher in planning to fill the identified gaps. This finding is consistent with the reviewed literature on formative and summative assessment which asserts that formative assessment consists of the strategies used in evaluating learners work to inform the teaching and learning that takes place during the lessons (Menéndez, et al., 2019). The Department of Basic Education (2011) defines summative assessment as the systematic task carried out by teachers to evaluate learner competency for progression to the next grade.

In this study, the participants explained that summative assessment is done to evaluate the accumulation of knowledge gained by the learners over a period. The participants' understanding of the concept of summative assessment is like the description by Gardner (2012) and Abdulla (2019), which states that summative assessment is used to evaluate achievements of the academic performance of the learners at the end of a period such as the topic, term or year. Bhat and Bhat (2019) are both of the opinion that, in doing summative assessment, the learners' achievement is consolidated over a period of time and the assessment results used to improve teaching and learning. It means that it is the summation of the work of learners over a set period. The findings of this study also indicate that the participants used

summative assessments to identify the gaps in teaching and learning, which informs the planning of future lessons. This finding aligns with Archer (2017) who asserts that summative assessment makes a correlation between teaching and learning and is also done to establish competencies, gaps, and development in teaching and learning. Ahmed, Ali and Shah (2019) also report that there is a connection between formative and summative assessment, because, while formative evaluation gives data on the progression achieved by learners over a period of time, summative evaluation gives the total cumulative performance of the learner. This finding implies that both formative and summative assessments are important in teaching and learning and the policy that shows the implementation of the two types of assessment should be clearly stated and applied uniformly in classrooms

According to CAPS, learners in the Foundation Phase should be assessed continuously, and the results should be part of their promotional marks (CAPS amended, 2021). This means that formal assessment should feed into the summative assessment. In this discussion, on the understanding and on the use of formative and summative assessments, assessment policy and procedures should be implemented to inform the teachers' knowledge of assessment literacy that could lead to practical experiences.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: How teachers and DHs view their role in assessment during teaching and learning**

Table 4.4 Research question 2, interview questions, theme and sub-theme

Research question	Interview question	Themes and sub-themes
Research question 2 How do teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes?	Please tell me, what is your role in assessment	Theme 2: How teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning  Sub-theme 1: How the teachers and DHs perceive

	<p>during teaching and learning?</p> <p>How do you involve teachers to ensure that assessment practices are correctly done to improve teaching and learning?</p>	<p>their role in assessment during teaching and learning</p> <p>Category 1: The role of teachers in learner assessment</p> <p>Category 2: The role of DHS in learner assessment</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: Involvement of teachers in implementing assessment to improve teaching and learning.</p>
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The research question answered in this theme was: How do teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes? The three interview questions that the researcher asked in relation to this research question include: Please tell me, what is your role in assessment during teaching and learning? What do you do to assess learners in your teaching subject? Further, DHS were asked this question: How do you involve teachers to ensure that assessment practice is correctly done to improve teaching and learning? The following are the findings of the two interview questions presented in sub-themes and categories.

#### **4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: How teachers and DHS view their role in assessment during teaching and learning**

In this sub-theme, the researcher presents the findings of how teachers perceive their role in assessment followed by what the DHS regard as their role in assessment during the teaching and learning process.

Category 1: The role of teachers in learner assessment during the teaching and learning process

The findings of this study show that the teachers and the DHs play different roles in learner assessment during teaching and learning. The teachers said:

*My role in assessment as a teacher is to assist the learners and view learners holistically, in order to recognize those who are struggling to perform in a certain way (Teacher A).*

*...develop learners individually through informal and formal assessment. Monitor learners through orals or practical assessment and see if they are participating or performing. Then assess them individually and develop them individually (Teacher C).*

#### Category 2: The role of DHs in learner assessment

The DHs in this study perceived their role in assessment from the management, monitoring and quality assurance perspective. The DHs said

*My role and responsibility in terms of assessment is to draw management plans, exams or assessments. Make an exam timetable, marking management plan for quality assurance and question papers especially for Foundation Phase and then make dates for other HODs for pre moderation and post moderation for quality assurance (DH A).*

*As the HOD in the department and member of assessment committee, my role is to represent and make sure that assessment in the Foundation Phase is done accordingly. Teach; after teaching the learners we do informal assessment then do formal assessment for reporting and recording (DH B).*

*I think, we make sure that teachers administer the task or the school based assessment task and make sure that teachers when they set they use the framework that is supplied by Department of Education, and we also make sure that teachers administer the task and mark the task of the learners and record them into SASMS (South African School Management System) so that learners at the end of the term they get their reports. Also, as a SAT committee we make sure that the assessment plan is drawn in each and every time (DH C).*

The participants also talked of the role they play in encouraging team and collaborative work.

*I involve teachers by planning together, we sit and plan together the question papers as a team. Looking at quality of papers based on Bloom's taxonomy. I also check the quality of pictures used, font size and what is suitable for the Foundation Phase. We plan together basically as a team (DH B).*

*In the foundation phase, in each grade we do have grade leaders. We meet once or twice per term to prepare assessment activities. That is how we involve them and make sure what is in the assessment is what they have taught the learners (DH C).*

In this sub-theme, there seems to be a clear role definition of what the teachers are doing and the role played by the DHs in assessment during teaching and learning. The teachers seem to mostly play the pedagogic role of assessing the performance of the learners to identify the learners who are performing well and those who are straining to perform well. These are learners who need the support of the teachers and possibly other stakeholders to improve their performance. The teachers in this study seemed to use different assessment methods to identify the strengths and weakness of the learners, to determine the nature of support needed to help the learners improve their performance. It appears that the teachers focus on the total individual performance of the learners rather than collective learner performance. With regards to identity construction as a component in the conceptual framework of this study, it looks as if the teachers adopted an attitude of being sympathetic and supportive towards individual learners who were struggling to succeed academically. During planning of assessment, teachers play an important role of ensuring that the principles of assessment policy are implemented, that the assignment is objective and that all the principles of assessment are adhered to. Teachers are responsible for setting assessments that are fair, reasonable and consistent in producing quality of learning (DBE, 2011). Literature (Pattalitan, 2016) also states that teachers play the role of creating a conducive learning environment that facilitates learner interaction in achieving learning objectives, especially struggling learners. What is not clear from the

findings of this study is whether the well-performing learners get motivation to continue performing well.

Unlike the direct involvement of the teachers in assessing learners, the DHs play a management role in the process of assessing learners. Their role includes planning for assessment, organizing how the assessment will be carried out as well as monitoring the assessment process. The identity that the DH constructed in this study was that of leading and managing the assessment processes in the schools. As part of the leadership role, the DHs in this study seem to believe in building relationships through term work and collaboration in the process of determining the content and strategies to be used in assessing learners. The DHs in this study seem to assume leadership and manager identities in involving teachers in planning the assessment, guiding the teachers in the process of assessing the learners as well as doing quality assurance of the assessment processes. The DHs seem to play the role of using assessment as evaluation tools as well as ensuring the end product of assessment, which is the quality of the examination papers.

#### **4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Involvement of teachers in implementing the assessment policy to improve teaching and learning**

In this sub-theme, the participants responded to the interview question: How do you involve teachers to ensure that assessment practice is correctly done to improve teaching and learning? The findings of this sub-theme distinguish the role played by teachers from the role of the DHs in implementing assessment to improve teaching and learning. The teachers seem to be involved in engaging with the subject content in setting the exam while the DHs are more concerned about monitoring the quality of the examination. The participants said:

*I think one of the responsibilities of teachers is to make sure that assessment is done as we teach. We teach for assessing learners, we don't just teach, we need to assess also. That is how we involve teachers and make sure what is in the assessment is what they have taught the learners. In the foundation phase, in each grade we do have grade leaders. We meet once or twice per term to prepare assessment activities (DH A).*

*We make sure that teachers (uhm ...) the task that you are giving to learners are quality assured by the DHs (Departmental Head). Tasks are done, administered and recorded by the teachers who also set the question papers (DH B).*

*In our cases as Foundation Phase, we meet as the cluster to set question papers so that the question papers can be submitted to the district and be quality assured and come back to our schools, and as the school we administer the task. We make sure that we help teachers to set those tasks as HODs. Before they are submitted to the district as DHs in our cluster, we quality assure those papers and send them to our subject advisors (DH C).*

The quotations presented in this sub-section emphasise the link between the subject taught and the examination given. The teachers seem to be held accountable for aligning the subject content taught and the examination given. This suggests that teaching as perceived by the participants is examination driven. In other words, teaching is done for the purpose of examination. In this study, teachers are also involved in the setting and administering of the examination. This responsibility appears to give the teachers room to identify gaps in teaching and learning which could be addressed in future. Teachers in this study seem to work in teams and also in collaboration with grade leaders, who act as middle managers between the teachers and DHs. The DHs seems to play a management role of ensuring that the set examination is of quality by closely monitoring the whole assessment process. The quality assurance aspect of the leadership role appears to be done in different stages, such as quality check by the teacher, grade leader, DHs and subject advisors, before the paper is submitted to the district. The different levels of quality check imply rigour in the examination process. What is not clear from this finding is the yardstick or benchmark used to measure quality of the examination process as well as the product. The findings in this sub-theme further shows assessment literacy practices of the participants in this study, as described in the conceptual framework.

#### **4.4.2.3 Discussion of theme 2: How teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning**

This theme explored the role of teachers and the DH in learner assessment. Gardner (2012) and Shepard et al. (2017) show that teachers can play a role in assessing learners because they are experienced in teaching and learning, giving them a say on how learners should be assessed as well as addressing the challenges experienced in the assessment process. According to findings from various studies, teachers play a very important role in teaching, learning and assessment (Maharajh et al., 2016, Mbatha, 2016). Teachers' function in the assessment of learners is very important because they create the foundational substructures for the concept of learner assessment with their knowledge and abilities. During assessment, teachers are expected to assist and view learners holistically. Teachers are also expected to be able to recognize the learners who are struggling to perform in a certain way. Therefore, monitoring assists with progress and feedback, which motivates teachers and learners to develop a will to improve their work (O'Farrell et al., 2023).

The teachers in this study played the role of assessing learners to identify the learners who are performing and those who need support to ensure that they achieve the set academic outcomes. Saad, Sardareh and Ambarwati (2013) found that the teachers interviewed in their study played the role of providing learners with feedback from assessment as a way of improving learner performance, because the feedback given promoted the understanding of learners. This means that teachers should have knowledge and skills to be able to resolve problems identified during assessment in their day-to-day teaching and learning (Gardner, 2012; Richmond et al., 2019). Looney et al. (2017) believe that the basis of teachers' role in assessment depends on teachers' knowledge and skills in assessment, hence the use of assessment evidence is central to quality assessment practice. The above literature comparison is consistent with the role played in learner assessment by teachers in this study.

Whereas the teachers focused on assessing individual learners as their role in assessment, the DHs played the role of leading and managing the assessment of learning, including monitoring the quality of the assessment process in planning,

organizing, and monitoring phases. The DHs involved teachers in planning for the assessment to be done. The leading role played by the DH in this study involved teamwork with the teachers in the assessment process. The leadership role of the DHs in this study was evident. The role that the DHs described in this study is consistent with the findings of Ramalepe (2015), which emphasize that school managers and leaders should play the role of monitoring and providing support that leads to the effective implementation of assessment policy. Tolo et al. (2020) also states the need for leadership in facilitating policy implementation, problem solving and staff development for competencies related to policy implementation. In addition, Ramalepe (2015) also echoes the leadership role in policy implementation, which includes policy monitoring and teamwork as well as providing feedback that improves the quality of policy implementation.

The findings of this study show the involvement of the DHs in teaching and planning for assessment. Similarly, the study by Saad et al. (2013) reported that the teachers who participated in the study were not involved in setting the tests; therefore, it seems that the teachers did not know the subject content that was being assessed. The disadvantage of such practices is that the subject content taught by the teacher may not be in line with what is being assessed. According to Wamango (2019), the responsibility and control in developing quality assessment should be part of the role played by teachers. Through quality assurance, teachers are given the authority towards a more balanced method for evaluating learners' learning and achievement.

This study also revealed the different levels at which the quality assurance of learner assessment is monitored, namely from the teacher, Grade teacher, DH to subject specialist. It seems that the teachers in the current study play multiple roles in acting as assistants, enhancers of teaching and learning and quality assurers. The complex role played by the teachers speaks to the view of Sebati (2011), who asserts that, teachers need to understand their role, the influence of their role as well as the constraining factors that affect the process of learner assessment. In another study, teachers regarded their role in assessment during teaching and learning as a way of monitoring and improving learner performance (Saad, Sardareh & Ambarwati, 2013).

These findings continue to emphasize the significant role played by teachers in assessing learner achievement against the expected learning outcomes.

The assessment done by teachers needs to be of a set standard. According to Namanya (2018), standards are set to measure the extent to which assessment goals are achieved, based on what individual or institution wants to achieve. It is not clear from the findings of this study if the participants regarded the standard that they referred to in their response the same as the description of standards presented by Namanya (2018). There was no mention of the standard measure used in the assessment role played by the teachers.

The findings of this study also reveal that other roles of the DH are planning, organizing and monitoring assessment in collaboration with the teachers. Involving teachers in the whole process of assessment management not only keeps the teachers informed of what they should do but also makes them own the assessment process. Tapala, Fuller and Mentz (2021) also report that DHs identify their roles as monitoring, communication, goal setting accountability and role modelling among others. The findings of this study compared to literature shows that the DHs in this study played a more balanced role between their own teachers' responsibilities, managing the assessment implementation with the teachers and taking the leadership role that is required for policy implementation.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: The influences and constraining factors that teachers and DHs experience during the implementation of assessment policy.**

Table 4.5 Research question 3, interview questions, themes and sub-theme

Research question	Interview question	Themes and sub-themes
Research question 3 What are the influences and constraints of assessment policy in teaching and learning?		Theme 3 The influences and constraints of assessment policy in teaching and learning

	<p>What are the influences of assessment policy in teaching and learning?</p> <p>When planning, what influences the choice of assessment strategies you use? Explain briefly.</p> <p>How do you organize the assessment of your teaching subject?</p> <p>What makes the assessment of your subject doable?</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1: The influences of assessment policy in teaching and learning.</p> <p>Category 1: Influence of assessment policy on learners</p> <p>Category 2: Influence of assessment policy on teachers</p> <p>Category 3: Influence of assessment policy in teaching and learning</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: The influences on the choice of assessment strategies in the planning session of assessment done by teachers</p> <p>Sub-theme 3: How teachers organize the assessment of their teaching and learning</p> <p>Sub-theme 4: What makes the assessments doable</p>
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	What challenges do you experience during assessment?	Sub-theme 5: Challenges experienced by the teachers during assessment. Category 1: Stakeholders issues Category 2: Policy issues Category 3: Management issues
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This theme responded to the research question: What are the major influences and constraining of assessment policy in teaching and learning?

#### **4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: The influences of assessment policy in teaching and learning.**

This study explored the influence of assessment policy on teaching and learning. The findings reported below are from the responses of teachers and DHs regarding influence of assessment policy in teaching and learning. Three related areas of influence were identified, and they are presented in the categories that follows.

##### Category 1: Influence of assessment policy on learners

This study found that the implementation of assessment policy seems to influence learners as described in the quotations below.

*...assessment has a positive influence on the learners because it is a way to see if learners understood what was taught (Teacher B).*

*...at the end of the day you as a teacher must see and know where your learners are, whether learners have understood what you have been teaching. It is their duty to see and assess the learners. By assessing learners, they can achieve the outcomes of what they have been teaching (DH B).*

The influence of assessment policy on learners seems to be positive, in that learners themselves can do self-assessment on their performance. Teachers can also use

assessment as a tool that helps them determine what the learners have comprehended from the taught subjects. Assessment appears to be used to check if the set outcomes of teaching a subject has been attained by the learners.

#### Category 2: influence of assessment policy on teachers

The findings of this study also show the impact of assessment policy on teachers. The participants said:

*So, it is important because even with teachers, they cannot just teach and not assess because how are they going to see or reflect on their teaching? (Teacher B).*

*Assessment also has an influence in teachers because without assessment teachers cannot understand where they are doing in terms of the content. Assessment informs the methods of teaching and strategies (DH A).*

*As the teacher you want to see your learners passed. Teachers must do assessment to see whether the learners have performed very well and see if they have taught learners in order for them to achieve what they have been taught by teachers (DH B).*

The above quotation implies that, while teaching, the teachers should also reflect on how they are teaching by checking if the outcomes of the lessons as stated in the policy have been achieved through assessment. The teachers seem to use the policy to check if the methodology or strategy that they are using is effective in delivering the contents of the subject. Apart from the teaching methodology, assessment policy also informs the teachers on the achievement of learning objectives. Through assessment, the teacher can determine what has been achieved and what is yet to be achieved.

#### Category 3: influence of assessment policy in teaching and learning

The findings of this study also illustrate how assessment informs the process of teaching and learning. The influence of assessment policy appears to be the measuring or gauging tool regarding subject content taught by the teacher. The participants said:

*Assessment is for learners and teachers to see the progress in our work. Assessment helps the teachers to evaluate themselves to see how far they are with their work they have already done, and to improve the results of the school by doing extra work (DH A).*

*The influence that assessment has in teaching and learning helps the teachers to see where they and learners are. If learners have not performed well in those tasks because at the end of each and every task teachers have to do question by question analysis. After doing that, teachers can then see which concept was not performed well and start doing intervention plan so that those learners can be supported in order for them to pass (DH C).*

*Assessment must be done so that teachers can see whether they are doing the correct thing to the learners or whether they are not teaching learners, just going to class and not teaching (DH B).*

The findings of this sub-theme reveals that it is through assessment that that teachers are able to determines the progress in teaching and learning in terms of the subject content that has been covered, what has been mastered by the learners and the subject areas that the teacher still needs to revise or repeat in order for the learners to understand what they have been taught. The teachers also use assessment to decide on the necessity for extra classes or remedial classes. The participants in this study believe that it is through assessment that teachers can check if the learners have comprehended what has been taught. This sub-theme speaks to the knowledge base of teachers that appears in the Conceptual Framework - TALiP model (adapted from Xu & Brown, 2016) discussed in chapter 1 of this study. The conceptual framework is conceived on the assumption that teachers should have adequate subject knowledge to be able to effectively use assessments to determine the progress they have made in covering the subject content, as well as evaluating the knowledge gained by the learners, as well as what still needs to be taught.

#### **4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: What influences the choice of assessment strategies in the planning session of assessment done by teachers?**

This sub-theme responds to the interview question: When planning, what influences the choice of assessment strategies you use? The participants said:

*When planning I use lesson plans assessment framework, resources such as textbooks. Also using bloom taxonomy to cater for all the learners with different abilities. We do not plan individually. We share the work as Foundation Phase teachers. In the beginning you will be given a task to do and then all the teachers will sit and discuss the task (Teacher C).*

*As Grade two teachers, we sit down and discuss the tasks that need to be taught in class in each term and do schedules that need to be followed when assessing our learners (Teacher A).*

*I involve teachers by planning together; we sit and plan together the question papers as a team. Looking at quality of papers based on Bloom's taxonomy. I also check the quality of pictures used, font size and what is suitable for the Foundation Phase. We plan together basically as a team (DH B).*

This finding highlights teamwork in planning for lessons and assessment, given that assessment is based on the subject content delivered during teaching and learning. It seems that teachers brainstorm and discuss the planning of the lessons as well as the assessment of what is taught. Planning of the implementation of assessment policy appears to be done in a collective manner with all concerned involved in active participation in the planning activities. The planning is also done using certain structures like the lesson plan framework grounded in Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy seems to be used in teaching and learning as well as in structuring the assessment to provide quality exams. The DHs continues to perform the role of qualitative assurance as the teachers work in collaboration to plan for the lessons that are informed by assessment policy guidelines. The next management phase is organizing which is discussed in the next sub-theme.

#### **4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: How teachers organize the assessment of their teaching and learning**

The question asked in the interview that relates to the following response was - How do you organize the assessment of your teaching subject? The participants said:

*As Grade 2 teachers, we sit down and discussed the tasks that need to be taught in class in each term and do schedules that need to be followed when assessing our learners (Teacher A).*

*By developing assessment framework and strategies, rubrics as the way of providing transparency in an assessment (Teacher B).*

*We normally get assessment frameworks and develop assessment plans according to those assessment frameworks and we also use Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) as well (DH B).*

The above quotations indicate that the organisation of implementation of assessment policy includes collaborative teamwork and agreed upon schedules. The organisation of assessment incorporates the use of structured assessment tools and frameworks like rubrics and ATP. The motivation for using structured assessment tools such as rubrics is that it promotes fairness and transparency in how the assessment is done. This means that the structure and the process of organising the assessment of learners is a collaborative effort of the teachers, which possibly enables uniformity in the structure and quality of assessment given to the learners. It becomes possibly easier to control the quality of assessment given to the learners when teachers work as a team in the process of organising for the assessment.

#### **4.4.3.4 Sub-theme 4: What makes the assessments doable**

The assessment tasks should be done in a way of accommodating all the learners' abilities to enable them to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts, knowledge and skills. This is one of the responses from the participants to the question: What makes assessment doable?

*Uhm... by simplifying a lesson and keeping the due dates for submissions for example sometimes I fail to mark all the learners' exercise books, but I give the assignment in time as expected. Yes, I do get assistance from my DH on how the assessment should be done. The DH helps a lot (Teacher C).*

Most of the participants did not answer the question precisely, apart from Teacher C, who suggested that teachers need to understand the lesson and manage the time well to be able to give and mark the assignments on time. The leadership and support given by the DHs also seems to make the assignment doable. What could have also made the assessment doable, although not mentioned by the participants, was teamwork. When work is shared the burden becomes lighter make the task more doable.

#### **4.4.3.5 Sub-theme 5: The challenges experienced by the teachers and DHs during assessment.**

The researcher in this study was curious to explore the possible challenges experienced by the participants during assessment. The challenges that the participants in this study identified seem to be related to issues regarding the stakeholders, policy implementation as well as management issues. The following categories illustrates that challenges experienced by the teachers during assessment.

##### Category 1: Stakeholders issues

In this study, the participants talked about learner absenteeism and lack of parental involvement as challenges that teachers experience during assessment.

*Absenteeism, some of the learners are being absent during assessment time, like when they are writing tests some learners become absent so when I ask for a letter or sick note from parents, I don't get it, so it becomes difficult for that teacher to allow that learner to write test. As you don't understand as to why the learner was absent on that day. No other challenges I have with assessment except the ones that I have mentioned (Teacher C).*

*The challenge is that our learners are not assisted by their parents, even if we give them work to be assisted by parents to improve the results of the school, parents don't participate. Only a few teachers take part in the assessment of the learners. This practice put teachers in difficult situation. Teaching is a two-way stream. Learners are expected to be assisted both at school and at home. If I give learners homework as a teacher, I'm expecting the work to be done at home. If the parents cannot assist, it puts me on the spot. I cannot move or improve the results at the end of the term (Teacher B).*

*Some of the challenges I experience during assessment are learners who are very slow in completing their task and the absenteeism due to illness. When learners are absent, I give them a task again. I contact the parent and find out why the learner was absent then if the learner was absent during the lesson I firstly re-teach and then assess (Teacher A).*

Learner absenteeism is a challenge that the participants identified in this sub-theme. The reason for absenteeism could be that learners do not take assessment seriously and as part of learning process. It is also possible that the rules and regulations for learner assessment need to be enforced and the learners as well as parents should be aware of such rules and abide with them. It is also likely that there is poor or lacking communication between the teachers and the parents regarding the importance of the assessment process. The lack of response from parents when learners are absent during examinations implies the deficiency of parental commitment in supporting learners during the assessment period or the ignorance of the assessment policy regarding examination processes. The other challenge mentioned by the participants is the absence of post assessment support from parents. The quotations suggest that teachers expect parents to be involved in the education of the learners during the pre-assessment period, which involves helping the learners in doing homework as well as doing revision in preparation for the exams. During the assessment period, the parents play the role of ensuring that learners prepare and sit for the exams. While in the post-assessment phase, in which learners are expected to use the examination results to work toward improving the future results of the learners, parents are expected to

support the learners. Although the teachers expect a partnership role with the parents in implementing assessment policy there is a likelihood that the parents do not perceive such a relationship with the teachers. The assumption of the parents could be that the role for teaching, learning and assessment is the work of the teacher, and they have no role to play in it.

## Category 2: Policy issues

The participants perceived assessment policy as a useful tool for teaching, learning and learner assessment. However, when teachers do not understand the policy, its implementation becomes a challenge. In this study, the participants narrated the challenges related to policy during assessment as follows:

*Some educators don't understand assessment especially with the CAPS policy. Some went to training for a week and that was it. No follow up was done after that to see if they have understood CAPS or if they are implementing it. So, teachers have that problem to implement (DH A).*

*So, teachers have that problem to implement. As a result, anything that we need to do we must always go back and refer to the policy document for guidance. Some will tell you that their classes are overcrowded, and it is difficult for them to reach every learner (DH B).*

The findings in this category highlight the gap between policy and implementation. The participants expressed the inability of some teachers to implement the assessment policy (CAPS), due to lack of comprehensive knowledge of the policy as well as lack of training on CAPS. It means that CAPS needs more training time for teachers to become competent in implementing the policy. It appears that short-term courses are not sufficient in covering the knowledge and skills needed to implement the policy. Overcrowding of the classes is a policy issue since there are a number of learners recommended by the Department of Education that are required to be in one classroom. Overcrowding could therefore be caused by an inadequate number of classrooms or the limited number of teachers and not necessary misunderstanding of

the policy on learner-teacher ratio. When the learner-teacher ratio in the classroom is over the recommended ratio, applying the assessment policy becomes a problem.

### Category 3: Management issues

One of the responsibilities of the DH is to monitor teaching, learning and assessment. This study identified time management as an obstacle in implementing assessment policy.

*Also, the time given is not enough because they must follow the ATP, and the ATP has got a timeframe. So, this does not favour all the learners as some of the learners especially in Foundation Phase are struggling with their work, the pace is very slow. Even if you try to do intervention during afternoon classes it becomes futile as most of the learners are very tired to learn by that time (DH B).*

*When it is time for us to administer the task or school base task, sometimes you may find that the photocopy machine that we are using at school is not working. We would be told that the ink is finished. Sometimes if you want to administer the task you may also find that the papers are not there. Sometimes the principal will tell you that the machine is not working, and it becomes so difficult for teachers sometimes administer the task in time because of the machines that we are losing at school. Sometimes they may tell you that the machine is broken. So that are challenges that we get in our school (DH C).*

There are several issues that the participants in this study narrated regarding the use of time. The first issue was that the timeframe stated in the policy does not accommodate slow learners. Although it seems that some teachers try to create time to help the slow learners' catch-up with others, the learning capacity of the said learners remains a challenge. This finding implies that "one time framework fits all policy" is not sensitive to the needs of slow learners, thus creating a problem as to whether the teacher should focus on completing the syllabus or supporting the slow learners by providing for them extra time to catch-up with other learners. This issue of slow learners could create another problem which is – how do the teachers manage other learners while concentrating on slow learners?

The problems that are caused by shortage of ink and printing paper fall under stationery, which should be what the school management should buy in advance through proper planning for examinations. Machines that are not working or broken machines imply inadequate management of machines in the school or the lack of funds to keep the machines running. Thus, there is a possibility of negligence or lack of resources to service the machines. In such cases, the management should consider exploring alternative ways of printing the examination papers to be able to administer the exam in the set timeframe. The printing process of the assessments can be time consuming if arrangements are not made in advance for printing the examination papers, more likely in an alternative venue, in the case of non-functional printing machines.

#### **4.4.3.6 Discussion of theme 3: The influences and constraining factors that teachers and DHs experience during the implementation of assessment policy**

This theme explored the influence the assessment policy in teaching and learning as well as the learner assessment processes. Sebate (2011) and Namanya (2018) report that assessment policy may influence classroom practices if teachers use the principles of the policy to enlighten teaching and learning. According to Cheng et al. (2017), the policy on assessment stipulated by the government should be used to facilitate curriculum implementation as well as assessment practices. The findings of this study shows that assessment policy has a direct influence on the learners who can do self-reflection to gauge their own performance from the assessment feedback. The teachers in this study also seemed to depend on assessment policy to ascertain learners' comprehension on the subject content taught in class. This is because the teaching and learning process involves the construction of knowledge as well as complex thinking skills on the subject taught, which contributes to learner performance (Koh et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2022). The efforts put by teachers to identify and support slow learners, as indicated in this study, is encouraged in literature, for example, a study done by William (2011) reports that teachers are effective when they can identify and support struggling learners.

Apart from reflecting on the performance of the learners, assessment policy also influences teacher self-evaluation against the set teaching outcomes. The assessment policy determines the subject content, teaching methodology as well as the strategies used by the teachers to assess the learners. This finding echoes the assertion made by Brown (2017) that the way in which teachers perceive education policy influences how they behave in implementing the policy. The study also found that assessment policy influences the teaching and learning process when teachers do assessment to determine what the learners have comprehended, what needs to be redone and to determine the necessity for additional time to teach certain topics to increase learner understanding. When learners can do self assessment from the feedback they get from their teachers, learners may be motivated and their self esteem increased (Pattalitan, 2016). Alternatively, James (2016) is of the opinion that when learners are struggling with a particular concept or activity, teachers need to consider using other teaching methods and strategies to improve learner understanding and capability. Xu and Brown (2016) as well as White and Delaney (2019) also suggest that teachers need to be able to analyse, carry out a diagnostic assessment and identify the challenges that may exist that deter learners from good performance. The findings of this study suggest that learners with learning difficulties should be given specific attention by the teachers. Such support needs careful planning and the use of interventions that can improve the performance of the learners. Bertram (2011) also expresses the view that teachers become more knowledgeable and skilled about teaching and learning because of the assessment they do on what they have taught.

Assessment policy also seems to influence the strategies used in the planning process of the assessment done by teachers. The participants in this study highlighted the importance of planning in the implementation of assessment policy. The participants were of the understanding that through planning they can design and manage assessment effectively. Looney et al. (2017) assert that assessment planning ensures that teachers can focus on assessment goals by aligning the learning and assessment objectives. This alignment of learning outcomes and assessment assists teachers to have a broad picture of the learners' learning and be able to choose appropriate assessment methods.

This finding of the current study also highlights teamwork as a planning strategy for lessons and assessment based on the subject content delivered during teaching and learning. It seems that teachers in the current study brainstorm and discuss the planning of the lessons as well as the assessment of what has been taught. Planning of the implementation of assessment policy appears to be done in a collective manner. The study done by Fuentealba (2011) found that it was important to involve teachers in the planning sessions of assessment so that they become part of it and accept it. In the South African context, CAPS has been regarded as a top-down policy approach since teachers were not included in the development stage of the assessment policy (Maharaj, 2018). This makes the inclusion of teachers in the planning of the implementation phase crucial.

The findings of this study also revealed that planning of the implementation of curriculum policy is also done using and certain structures like lesson plan framework, blooms taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy seems to be used in teaching and learning as well as in structuring the assessment to provide quality exams as explained by the participants in this study. Elsewhere in the literature, Jones et al. (2019) as well as Brown et al. (2019) assert that, for successful implementation of curriculum assessment policy, teaching and learning strategies need to speak to the required changes. In this study, the management of assessment policy included the organisation of implementation of assessment policy.

The participants in this study described the process of organising assessment as a collaborative and teamwork effort among the teachers and the DHs that focuses on agreed upon schedules. The organisation of assessment incorporated the use of structured assessment tools and frameworks like rubrics and ATPs. The motivation for using structured assessment tools such as rubrics was that it promoted fairness and transparency in how the assessment is done. Bertram (2011) is also of the opinion that, through assessment, teachers become proficiently knowledgeable with teaching and learning practices. Involving teachers in the organizing process may lead to teachers gaining organizational skills as well as identifying and using resources in a logical manner.

Monitoring is one of the mechanisms used to manage assessment in most primary schools. As stated in the CAPS document, it is the responsibility of the DH to assist teachers in planning, organizing and monitoring the implementation of assessment policy (DBE, 2011). Most of the participants in this study indicated that monitoring is one of teachers' responsibilities in assessment. Some participants believe that monitoring during the teaching and learning process is crucial. The findings of this study show that assessment is taken seriously to ensure that the quality of assessment given by the teachers is to assist and view learners holistically. It means that learners who are struggling are easily recognized and are assisted in improving their performances. During the process, teachers and learners are usually motivated to develop and improve their work, which is teaching and learning (Gover et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that it becomes easier to control the quality of assessment when teachers work as a team in the planning and the implementation of the process. Teachers working as a team facilitate the selection of relevant and appropriate forms and types of assessment strategies that suit the capabilities of different learners (DBE, 2011; Koh et al., 2012; Looney et al., 2017). The consideration of a variety of assessment modes arises from the use of variety teaching and learning methods (Shepard et al., 2017; William, 2011). This means that teachers must ensure that learners are clear with learning goals before the process of teaching, learning and assessment. Therefore, teachers' involvement in organizing and structuring the assessment policy implementation makes a meaningful input to the assessment process. This finding means that, during the process of organising for assessment policy implementation, teachers may need to ensure that all the principles of assessment are adhered to.

This study further identified several challenges that had negative influence on the implementation of assessment policy. One of the challenges identified by the participants in this study was learner absenteeism during assessment, as well of the lack of parental support during the learner assessment process. The absenteeism of the learner during assessment could have been because of lack of interest in learning or in the value of assessment education. Furthermore, there is also a likelihood of the

lack of parental support to the learner as well as parental engagement with the teachers during the assessment period. A study done by Deslandes and Rivard (2013) found that parents with low economic status may not be competent to assist teachers in learner assessment due to their low education level, limited competency and lack of motivation to be involved in monitoring the progress of the learners. In addition, the study (Deslandes & Rivard, 2013) also suggested that educated parents are in a better position to discuss with the teacher's assessment strategies to be able to assist learners. From the school perspective, there is a possibility of lack of enforcement of the requirement of school-based assessment processes that explains what is expected from the stakeholders in terms of pre-assessment, assessment and post-assessment commitment. A good relationship with parents is important as teachers can share information about their children's learning and assessment. Deslandes and Rivard (2013) indicate that some teachers used various strategies such as sharing pamphlets, monitoring homework and organizing workshops to get parents involved in assessment of learners and monitor their progress. Both teachers and parent should use the information shared and assist learners in improving academic performance (Pattalitan, 2016).

The findings of this study also highlight the gap between policy and implementation. Some of the participants expressed the inability of some teachers to implement the assessment policy (CAPS) due to lack of training. In a study done in South Africa, Letshwene and du Plessis (2021) found that some teachers lack competency and confidence in implementing the new assessment policy. Maharaj (2018) and Ramabulana (2017) also found that there are teachers who struggle to implement CAPS due to inadequate training in the knowledge and skills required for implementation of the policy. Ramabulana (2017) and Maharaj (2018) further recommend professional development that focuses on the critical elements for a successful implementation of the assessment policy. It means that CAPS needs more training time for teachers to become competent in implementing the policy. More particularly, there should be continuous training for novice teachers who need clear guidelines and goals on assessment content and assessment process (Saad et al., 2013). It appears that short-term courses are not sufficient in covering the knowledge

and skills needed to implement the policy. Apart from professional development issues, the participants in this study expressed their concern about overcrowded classes which goes against the required learner-teachers ratio as a challenge to successful implementation of assessment policy.

There are several issues that the participants in this study narrated regarding the use of time. The first issue was that the timeframe stated in the policy does accommodate slow learners. Letshwene and du Plessis (2021) found that one of the problems in the implementation of CAPS was inadequate time to complete the syllabus. Fuentealba (2011) also found that assigning adequate time for doing assessments for a variety of learners is a challenge for teachers in the implementation of the assessment policy. Although in this study some of the participants shared with the researcher the strategies they used to create extra time to support the slow learners, the learning capacity of the said learners could not be resolved, given the limited extra time.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: How to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy**

Table 4.6 Research question 4, interview questions, themes and sub-theme

Research question	Interview question	Themes and sub-themes
Question 4 What can be done to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy?	What can you say about the standard of assessment in your school according to assessment policy?	Theme 4: How to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy  Sub-theme 1: Views of standard of assessment according to assessment policy

	<p>As a SAT member please explain how teachers are assisted to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy?</p> <p>What assistance do teachers need to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy?</p>	<p>Sub-theme 2: How DHs assist teachers to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy</p> <p>Sub-theme 3: The assistance that teachers should receive to be able to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy</p>
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This theme explores the kind of assistance that teachers received from the DHs and what else needed to be provided to help teachers achieve the standards of assessment done according to the assessment policy. The responses of the participants are presented in the three sub-themes that follows.

#### **4.4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Views of the teachers and DHs regarding standard of assessment according to assessment policy**

The views of the participants presented in this sub-theme show that the understanding of the standard of assessment according to the assessment policy differs. While some of the participants equate standard measures to time management in teaching, exam preparation and administrating of assessment, others regard the standard of quality as subject content level of teaching, learning and assessment. Thus, the mention of Blooms Taxonomy. The participants said:

*The standard of assessment in my school is good because all tasks are done on time, and we attend workshops to enhance our teaching and learning. So, we have also had deadlines for submissions, which is why I said it is good (Teachers C).*

*The standard of assessment in my school is good because when we assess in our school, we always use Bloom Taxonomy (Teacher B)*

*As a SAT committee we tell our teachers to prepare their tasks in time. We also tell the teachers to set their question papers on time. We also see to it that the papers are there to be photocopied. We make sure that the photocopied machine during the exam time is always working so that we may not find ourselves having not administer the task according to the timetable of the teachers, because we do our tasks according to the timetable of the school (DH A).*

The above quotations shows that some teachers comprehend the application of the standard of assessment according to assessment policy as being able to work within the timeframes stated in the policy in terms of teaching, examination preparation as well as assessment process. This seems to be a limited understanding of the standard of assessment. Other participants related the standard of assessment to the application of the different level of the assessment of the subject content taught. The different understanding of what the standard of assessment means shows that there is a likelihood that, in some school teaching, learning and assessment is more comprehensive than in other schools in which teachers focus more on teaching, learning and assessment being done in time rather than going into details regarding what is taught and the level of knowledge gained by the students, which can be assessed using a taxonomy.

#### **4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: How DHs assist teachers to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy**

This sub-theme presents the kind of assistance that the DHs give to the teachers so that they can meet the set standards of assessment that agree with the assessment policy. Here is what the participants said:

*As a DH I do organize the in-service training to assist especially the novice teachers. If I'm also experiencing challenges, I consult my seniors to assist (DH A).*

*At my school we do teacher development where we form small groups called PLCs. We usually look for teachers with expertise in a particular subject and those teachers*

*will try to develop others. If within the school, we don't have that. We will go outside to other schools and form PLCs to the neighbouring schools and that's where we share ideas looking at the policy (DH B).*

*Also, something is that the PAB attend the Departmental meetings, and we write in our feedback forms challenges we encounter in our classroom concerning our teaching practice. So, the district can also do follow ups, organizing w workshops based on the challenges (DH C).*

*... the assessment is moderated by DHs and again by the facilitators to see that the standard of assessment is good (Teacher A).*

It seems that DHs plays a mentoring and supporting role to the teachers in the form of professional development in the individual schools as well as networking with other schools. The findings in this theme suggest that the DHs also experience challenges and occasionally seek assistance from their seniors. While in this quotation it is not clear who were the seniors to DHs, in another quotation the DHs seem to conduct professional development courses within the school premises. Other support received by the teachers and the DHs involves networking with other schools for professional development in matters relating to the implementation of the assessment policy. The findings of this study also reported that there are platforms in which the teachers do their needed assessment concerning learner assessment and they expect the Department of Education to appear to provide guidance through training opportunities. Despite the teachers' expectations of support as well as the current support being given to teacher, as shared with the researcher, what seems missing in the teachers' experiences of support and assistance from the assessment policy makers, who could be in a better position to explain to the teachers what is expected from them in providing assessment that is of standard according to the assessment policy. There seems to be an absence of a clear meaning of standard of assessment policy which may result in teachers implementing the policy in different ways.

#### **4.4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: The assistance that teachers need to be able to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy**

This sub-theme focuses on the assistance that the teachers expected to be given, yet not received in some cases. The teachers said:

*Yes, yes, assessment tasks I think should be discussed by the cluster and be simplified by supervisors. I understand assessment policy so far (Teachers C).*

*I think teachers should be provided with important materials that can help them to introduce new strategies to conduct the expected results (Teachers B).*

*In my opinion the teacher must be given the assessment framework to follow to make things easier to set the assessment. We are given assessment framework and ATP (Annual Teaching Plan) to go through it to make easier for us to do assessment (Teacher A).*

The comments of the DHs are as follows:

*... if maybe the teacher does not understand the concept, we see to it as the SAT committee that if there is teacher in the school that master's that concept and we have teachers who don't understand that concept. Then we help them to understand that concept because there are teachers who have not majored with certain subjects but teach those subjects. Teachers who have expertise in those subjects are asked to assist those who are struggling. They sit together in order to learn and understand from the ones who knows better. They are assisted when going to the class to teach what is supposed to be taught (DH C)*

*We sit together as teachers and then some teachers will be willing to help, or we can maybe change that teacher who does not understand the concept or the subject and put the correct teacher to teach that subject. We don't want to see ourselves with learners failing the subject because the teacher is a barrier to the subject (DH A).*

The findings of what should be done to help teachers achieve the standards of assessment stated on the assessment policy includes collective discussion to obtain a common understanding of the assessment task expected to be performed by the

teachers. The findings suggest a need for resources that teachers can use in assessment tasks. This implies a possible gap in terms of materials for doing assessment tasks. The above quotations acknowledge the need to use the ATP (Annual Teaching Plan) as a framework for doing assessment.

The DHs highlighted the need for peer support in terms of developing the knowledge and skills that teachers need to do assessments. The support also include sharing the understanding of certain subject content matter in cases where some teachers struggle to grasp the comments. Such support may require a school environment that encourages team work and peer support based on mutual respect. The goal of providing such support should be clear and well managed by the DHs.

#### **4.4.4 4 Discussion of theme 4: How to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy**

The views of the participants, which reflect their understanding of the standard of assessment according to the assessment policy, differed in this study. Some of the participants associate standard measures with time management during teaching, exam preparation and administrating of assessment. Other participants related standards of assessment to the quality of the subject content, focusing on the different levels of comprehension of what is taught and assessed. Bloom's Taxonomy was used as a tool to differentiate the levels of learners' understanding of what has been taught. This finding relates to the findings of a study done by Ajjawi, Bearman and Boud (2021) which highlighted that the standard of assessment may not be easily understood by the teachers and learners because of the influence of sociocultural factors and the context of assessment which may affect the activities being assessed. The researchers (Ajjawi et al., 2021) also acknowledge that a set standard of assessment can be used to determine the quality of subject content taught as well as setting the least level of achievement that can be shared and used year after year. What this discussion means is that there should be a clear and shared understanding of the concept of standard of assessment to be used by the teachers to make assessment a meaningful exercise. In the study by Saad et al. (2013) done in Iran, teachers used several assessment methods to enhance the quality of assessment and reduce

possible bias in the process of assessment. While regarding a set standard of assessment that defines the quality to work expected from the teachers and the learners, Malinga, Jita and Bada (2021) report that, since many teachers in their study worked on their own lesson preparation, there is a possibility that the quality of the lesson and teaching material could be questionable, due to lack of standard quality criteria. In such cases, close monitoring of the achievement of the expected quality of assessment is vital.

This theme also reported the role that DHs play in assisting teachers in implementing assessment policy. This study found that DHs mentor as well as support teachers in the career development on matters regarding implementation of assessment policy, through internal training as well as networking with teachers in other schools. In their study of leadership capacity of secondary school science DHs, Malinga, Jita and Bada (2021) found that the narratives of the DH taking up the role of developing, monitoring and supporting teachers in lesson preparation teaching and learner assessment were absent. This creates a gap in the implementation of the assessment policy and possibly more research should be done on how to close the leadership and management gap in cases where the DHs have a heavy workload. Malinga, Jita & Bada (2021) confirms that the role played by DHs to assist teachers may be limited since DHs are also teachers and are expected to do administrative duties in addition to their teaching responsibilities. These findings show that the DHs in the current study perform multiple duties in their role as leaders and managers in curriculum implementation, which includes assessment.

This study also found that the participants, both DHs and the teachers, believed in peer support, learning and development to be able to achieve the standard of assessment as in assessment policy. This finding is in line with the assertion made by Malinga, Jita and Bada (2021) that in schools, teachers work individually in preparing and delivering lessons as well as doing their own set assessment. In doing so, there is a possibility that the quality of the lesson and teaching material could be questionable in terms of the standard of quality that is expected. The situation is

worsened with the lack of monitoring structures put in place to ensure quality by providing the needed support.

#### **4.5. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The chapter presented the research findings of this study. The biographical data of the participants is included in this chapter. The findings are aligned with the research questions and discussed in themes and sub-themes. Verbatim quotations are included to support the findings and echo the voices of the participants. The next chapter winds up the study by providing summary of the findings, limitations and delimitation; it concludes the study and provides implications.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The findings of this study and relevant literature comparison are discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the findings and insights drawn from the research on teachers' understanding of assessment in connection to assessment policies are presented in the chapter. Based on the study's objectives and the research questions, this chapter presents the summary of findings, the conclusion drawn from the findings of the study and the recommendations. The researcher also presents the delimitations as well as the limitations of this study. In the next section, the researcher shares with the readers her research journey.

### **5.2 REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY**

My research journey started in the year 2020 when I registered for my master's degree. I had hoped that I would complete the degree at least by the year 2022. This dream did not happen as I had anticipated. At the beginning of my studies, everything seemed to be going well accordingly to the MOU work plan that I signed with my supervisor, but things changed during COVID 19 pandemic. Online classes were introduced as per the instructions, as people were no longer allowed to gather in groups. Colleges were closed; that meant that there were no consultation sessions with my supervisor for guidance in the progress of my studies. Everything was to be done online. This was a problem for me as I was not used to online presentations but with the help of my supervisor, I eventually made it and passed my first semester requirements.

During the second semester I was supposed to prepare for my proposal presentation, but I was delayed as my late supervisor Dr Malatji had to be hospitalized several times and I could not prepare the proposal in 2020. The delay in the progress of my studies made me defend my proposal a year later in 2021. I passed the proposal defence and as I was about to apply for research ethics approval to be able to start data collection, unfortunately my supervisor passed on and I also contracted the Corona virus. It was

a double blow for me, because I had to deal with the grief of losing my supervisor, with whom I had developed a good relationship as a student and also had to deal with the after-effects of the Corona virus. During this period, I lost concentration for several months and it was then that I was assigned to my new supervisor, Dr Ogina.

Unfortunately, I could not explain my situation to her, as I did not want to burden her with my problems, hoping to get help from a therapist. Even though I went for counselling, it took a toll on my studies as my concentration span was affected and it was a struggle for me to concentrate on my studies. I would like to give thanks to Dr Ogina for not giving up on me even though we never met in person; we communicated telephonically and through social networks. With her assistance, I was able to continue with data collection even though it was not as easy as I had anticipated. I had to do some of my interviews telephonically due to the restrictions of corona virus.

It took me longer to finish the data collection process, even though the time for doing the interviews was flexible. Some participants were not available at the scheduled times due to some contextual factors. Other participants would cancel at the eleventh hour and requested me to reschedule the interview for a later date. The reason for most rescheduling was that the participants were busy during the day. Of those who opted to be interviewed after hours, most were struggling to have time for the interview as they had to take care of their family members.

I finally completed data collection and had to do analysis which was not easy as I had to think critically but could not focus due to my condition. I had a lot of other issues that disrupted my process of data analysis. After being stagnant in the process of data analysis, I am so grateful that my supervisor encouraged me to continue to work on the dissertation to completion. She would regularly send me emails to check on my progress and pushed me to continue working on the findings of the study and to complete the study. I am grateful to have a supervisor like Dr Ogina who always encourages me not to give up.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this section, the researcher presents the summary of the research findings which are aligned with the following research questions:

- How do teachers describe assessment in relation to the Assessment Policy?
- How do teachers view their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes?
- What are the influences and constraints of implementing assessment policy in teaching and learning?
- What can be done to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy?

By answering this question, the research study achieved the following objectives:

- To establish how DHs and teachers describe assessment in relation to the assessment policy.
- To explore the views of DHs and teachers regarding their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes.
- To identify the influences and constraints of implementing assessment policy in teaching and learning.
- To determine what can be done to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy.

#### **5.3.1 Teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to the assessment policy**

This study showed that participants understand the assessment policy as a system, resource or a guideline that assists teachers on what to teach and assess. Some participants understood assessment as a systematic process in which teachers are guided on what knowledge and skills to teach and assess. Assessment policy is also used as a resource because it includes teaching and learning materials that can be used by teachers. The DHs perceived the assessment policy as a tool for planning as

well as obtaining feedback of the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the words spoken by the participants indicate the understanding of CAPS as a policy that clearly outlines guidelines regarding teaching, learning and learner assessment. It seems that CAPS provides a very specific way of achieving learning outcomes. Furthermore, according to the participants in this study, CAPS specifies learning content for each assessment standard, methods of teaching and examples of good teaching practices. CAPS includes pre-determined and prescribed instructional activities which seem to emphasise a content-driven learning approach with little room for encouraging learner critical thinking and creativity in the teaching and learning process.

Apart from the understanding of assessment as a tool, the participants in this study also associated assessment and assessment policy with improving teaching and learning. The participants considered assessment as a way of determining learner progression as well as the content of the subjects to be taught. This means that, according to assessment policy, the feedback from assessment done can be used in enhancing teaching and learning. The participants' responses indicated that policy provides all the information needed to ensure quality teaching and learning. In order to further explore the participants' understanding of the concept of assessment, the researcher asked the participants to explain their understanding of the difference between assessment and grading. This study shows that there was varied understanding among the participants of the difference between the concepts of assessment and grading. Some participants talked of assessment as a way of determining the extent to which the learners achieved the set learning objectives. Other participants regard assessment as a continuous ongoing activity that is part of teaching and learning. The participants associated grading with formative and summative evaluation. The researcher further explored the participants' knowledge base on the difference between formal and summative assessment.

The participants presented their understanding of formative assessment as continuous evaluation of learner achievement during the teaching and learning process, while summative assessment was perceived as learner evaluation that is

done after a period of time to evaluate the learning that has occurred during a certain period.

### **5.3.2 Teachers views of their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes**

From various studies, it is clear that teachers play a very important role in teaching, learning plus assessment (Maharajh et al., 2016, Mbatha, 2016, Pang, 2020). The role that teachers play in assessment is very important because teachers are able to create the foundational sub-structures against which the knowledge and abilities of the learners are evaluated. This theme explored the role that the DHs and the Foundation Phase teachers play in learner assessment. The study found that the role of teachers and the role played by the DHs in implementing assessment policy differ. While teachers are concerned with assessment to determine the academic progress of the learners and identify the learners who are lagging and need support, the DH played the role of managing the assessment process and providing leadership. The teachers in this study adopted an empathic and supportive attitude towards struggling learners while at the same time ensured that the principles stated in the assessment policy were adhered to.

The management role enacted by the DHs included the different steps of management such as planning, organizing, leading and controlling or monitoring. The DHs seem to use assessment policy to plan for teaching and learning as well as learner assessment. The leading role of the DHs involves encouraging collaboration with the teachers in shaping the examination content as well as the approaches used to assess learners. In the controlling phase of the management process, the role of DHs in assessment focused on monitoring the quality of assessment process, which includes the product being quality examination. The teacher seems to be engaged in the management process which starts with the planning process and continues through to the examination delivery, following policy guidelines.

The findings of this study showed that the participants appreciated CAPS as a policy because the document stipulates the planning process of learner assessment. The CAPS guides teachers on what to teach, assess and when to assess. CAPS also

informs teachers on what to be done with the outcomes. Apart from being involved in the planning and executing of examination process, the teachers are also responsible for accounting for the relevance of the examination to the subject content taught. The findings of this study shows that the teaching and learning process as narrated by the participants is examination driven. Teachers are also expected to be able to use the examination and examination results to identify the gaps in the subject content already covered and use the knowledge for future lesson plans.

Some of the grade teachers in this study also play a mid-management role, which helps the DHs in monitoring the assessment processes. The assessment checks seem to pass through the grade teacher followed by the DH, who then sends the exam to subject advisor who then submits the papers to the district office. The different levels of quality monitoring seem to add thoroughness to the quality assurance exercises in the implementation of assessment policy. What I find lacking in CAPS as explained by the participants is the standard quality measure used at the different levels of the examination process, which includes the feedback on the strategies teachers can use to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Such measures should be commonly agreed upon and structures of monitoring the standards stipulated in the policy.

Regarding the question on the role played by teachers in implementing assessment to improve teaching and learning, it seems that the teachers ensure that the subject content taught is what is assessed. It means that teachers are expected to ensure that there is alignment between teaching and assessment. This approach to teaching and learning is exam driven. The downside of such an approach is that it limits the critical thinking and creativity abilities of both learners and teachers.

The findings of this study revealed rigour in exam quality checking, which seems to be done at different levels. The quality check starts with the teacher whose exam is checked by the grade leader who sends the work for quality check to the DH. What remains a gap in this finding was the benchmark for quality checks. It was not stated in this study what the participants used to check the quality of assessments given to the learners.

### **5.3.3 The influences and constraining factors that teachers experience during the implementation of assessment policy**

This theme explored the factors that influence the assessment policy and constrains. The findings of this study show how assessment policy influences learners, teachers as well as teaching and learning. Assessment seems to encourage the learners to do self-study in their learning. Furthermore, assessment was used by the teachers to establish what the learners had comprehended or understood from their teaching. Teachers in this study also talked about how they were able to use the outcomes of assessment in improving the academic performance of their learners. Apart from developing the learners, teachers used assessment to determine the extent to which they have attained the learning objectives as well as reflecting on their teaching to identify possible changes that should be done to fulfil the set learning objectives of the subjects in future lesson plans.

The theme also explored the factors that influence the choice of assessment strategies in the planning session of learner assessment done by teachers. Working in teams or using collaborative work influenced how assessment was done. During the planning session, teachers engaged in brainstorming sessions followed by discussion on planning of what should be taught as well as the assessment strategies to be used. In such collaborative teamwork, ideas are generated that add value to the process of planning the teaching of the subject as well as the assessment methods to be used. This study also revealed a close link between what the teachers taught and what was assessed. The planning sessions seemed to be well structured using Bloom's Taxonomy to inform the different content delivery levels as well as learner assessment. Lesson plans were made considering the team members' input and discussion. Problems emerging from such sessions have been resolved with the contribution of all the team members.

The management process that followed planning in the implementation of assessment policy involved organizing the structures to be used in the process of implementation of the policy. The teamwork used in planning continued in organizing structures and schedules for teaching and assessment. Agreed-upon lesson plan structures were

used for teaching while in doing assessment, frameworks like ATP and rubrics were used. The participants explained that the reason for structuring the assessment strategy was to be fair and transparent in doing the assessment. Fairness and transparency were to be achieved when the agreed-upon organizing structures and schedules were used by the teachers. The teachers also seem to work in teams to ensure quality teaching and learning as well as quality assessment procedures. One of the teachers believed that, for assessment to be doable, teachers must have good command of the subject content as well as the assessment policy. The issue of time management which came up elsewhere in this study seemed to be important for the success of the implementation of assessment policy. The leadership provided by DHs and the support that they gave to the teachers made the implementation of the assessment policy doable.

The participants in this study experienced several challenges that were perceived as barriers to the implementation of assessment policy. One of the challenges was learner absenteeism during the assessment or examination period. When learners are not in school to be assessed it becomes difficult for the teachers to assess them in the post examination period. Teachers in this study expected parents to cooperate and communicate with them in ensuring that they assist learners during the pre-assessment period by helping them with homework. During the assessment period, the parents are expected to ensure that learners attend school to do the assessment or examination. The findings of this study also indicated that in the post assessment phase, teachers assumed that parents would collaborate with them in using assessment feedback to improve the performance of the learners. The collaboration that the teachers expected from the parents was not realised in this study. A possible reason could be that the parents are not fully aware of the role that they should play in assisting learners and teachers in implementing the assessment policy. It is also likely that there could be a lack of communication regarding what the teachers expect from parents or the lack of cooperation from the parents due to various reasons.

Another challenge that the participants mentioned is the lack of competency to implement the assessment policy as a result of inadequate training on the knowledge

and skills needed to implement CAPS in the South African context. Although the participants mentioned a lack of competency in the implementation of CAPS, there were no suggestions of what can be done to change the situation. Overcrowded classes were also mentioned as a barrier that contributed to effective implementation of assessment policy as it was not possible for the teachers to attend to every learner. The existence of large classes in some schools is a cause of many problems in schools such as discipline, inadequate resources, etc., that have direct impact on the academic achievement of learners. School-based challenges like the inability to print the examination papers due to the breakdown of the printers was also experienced in some schools. These are challenges related to management of school resources that have impact on the implementation of the curriculum as a whole, including the assessment policy.

#### **5.3.4 How to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment according to assessment policy**

The views of the participants presented in this sub-theme shows that the understanding of the standard of assessment according to the assessment policy differs. While some of the participants equate standard measures to time management in teaching, exam preparation and administrating of assessment, others regard the standard of quality as the subject content level of teaching, learning and assessment. Thus, the mention of Bloom's Taxonomy. This finding suggests that, although there is a policy that guides the assessment process, there is a need to explore and share a common understanding among the DHs and the teachers regarding what is considered as standard of assessment and how it should be implemented in the different school contexts. The context in which the standard of assessment applies should be considered since different schools have different types and amounts of physical, material and human resources.

The question also explored the role played by the DHs in supporting teachers to achieve the standards of assessment according to assessment policy. The DHs in this study seemed to perform an active role in mentoring and supporting teachers in their school-based professional development initiatives as well as in collaborating and

networking with other schools. This shows a teamwork spirit from the DHs and the teachers, as well as the ability to learn and support each other based on mutual trust on matters regarding the implementation of assessment policy. The findings of this study also show the expectation from the teachers and the DHs that the Department of Education should provide professional development support to facilitate the implementation of assessment policy by the DHs and the teachers. There was no mention of the conversation between the curriculum designers and the curriculum implementers that could bridge the gap between policy design and policy implementation which seems to exist, according to the findings of this study. The lack of common understanding of what the standard of assessment policy consists of means that there could be a gap in knowledge sharing between policy designers and policy implementers. What was mentioned as a challenge is parental involvement, which could possibly play a role in achieving or limiting the assessment standards.

#### **5.4 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

In any research study, there are delimitations that the researcher is expected to acknowledge (Yin, 2016). Delimitations are the elements of the study set by the researcher to limit the work and serve as boundaries to be able to achieve the objectives of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first delimitation is the boundary that the researcher set on the problem statement. There are many problems related to assessment and the policy on assessment, but the researcher decided to concentrate on establishing how the DHs and the teachers understand assessment as a concept and the assessment theory followed by issues regarding the implementation of the policy. The process of policy formation is not part of this study.

The researcher limited the theoretical background of the study, to focus on learner assessment and assessment policy and other issues and policies were not included in this study. There are many research approaches such as quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method, grounded theory among others. The researcher in this study decided to follow a qualitative approach because the primary objective of this study was to explore how teachers and DHs understand and implement assessment and assessment policy. This main research question required generating in-depth data

with a nuanced explanation of the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The qualitative approach was flexible in allowing the research to prompt for clarification and in-depth data that could have not been possible in other approaches, such as a quantitative study.

The sample in this study includes the DHs and the teachers who are directly responsible for doing assessment and implementing the assessment policy. Other teachers are not included in the study. The focus of this research is only on the Foundation Phase and the levels of primary or secondary education. The learners, school principals, parents and other stakeholders are not included in this study because they are not directly involved in assessing learners. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which enabled the researchers to choose participants that had experienced the phenomenon under study. The study does not cover the use of random or other type of sampling as the researcher considered the techniques not suitable for this study because of the likelihood of not selecting participants who had information to answer the research questions.

The researcher limited the sample to three schools that were within the chosen district and easy for the researcher to access in terms of transportation. Given that the total sample of the participants in this study is only six (6) participants, the researcher is unable to claim that the findings of this study represent how DHs and teachers in the district implement assessment policy. However, the findings of this study provide insights that could generate interest in doing wider study on the learner assessment and the implementation of assessment policy

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations, as described by Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), are issues of a research study that are regarded as weaknesses in the process that the researcher has no control over. All studies have limitations, including well-planned studies because limitations could arise in the theoretical or methodological aspect of the study as well as the difficulties that the researcher may experience in fieldwork (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020). The authors (Akanle et al., 2020) further explain that

setting out the limitations of the study to the reader communicates the circumstances under which the research was done and authenticates the findings, giving the readers an opportunity to view the findings of the study within the research context described. Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) also states that well described limitations of the study enable readers to interpret findings and generalise from them appropriately.

The researcher in this study adopted the approach given by Akanle et al. (2020), which states that clarity on the limitations guides and gives the readers information about the study rather than demonstrates the threats to and weaknesses of the study. This study was of limited scope such that the researcher cannot with certainty say that data saturation was realized.

The research design is a case study which is opened to alternative explanation of the research findings. The findings related to the unit of analysis of the case study, which is the understanding and implementation of assessment policy by DHs and teachers, may or may not be similar to such other cases. Due to the small sample size, the researcher did not attempt to generalize the findings of this study to a population outside the sample involved in this study.

Time for data collection was a limiting factor because the data was generated at a period when the teachers were busy with other school activities, such that the time allocated for the interviews was suggested by the participants. It was also challenging to make interview appointments with some of the participants, especially the DHs, due to their busy work schedule and unexpected school meetings. Some of the interviews were done telephonically at a period when there were load shedding power cuts, which was problematic as some networks were not working during load shedding. Another possible limitation of using interviews whether face-to face or telephonically is that some participants may answer the questions to please the researcher and not to accurately describe what is happening. Alternatively, the participants could have withheld some information about their views and experiences from a desire not appear ignorant about the topic under study (Morris, 2015). Recognizing this possible weakness of the methodology, the researcher did follow-up interviews hoping to build

on trust that could give the participants freedom to provide more information on the interview questions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

This study set out to determine how teachers and DHs in the Foundation Phase understand assessment in relation to assessment policy and how they describe their role in assessment, including the influences and constraints they experienced in the implementation of assessment policy. This study found that the DHs and the teachers understand assessment and assessment policy in different ways. The study shows their different conceptions of assessment and assessment policy. This means that assessment is a complex concept that needs clear and shared understanding besides implementation. The participants in this study gave different accounts of assessment, one of which was the notion of assessment as a tool that is used in determining the progression of the learners as well as identifying the learners who are not performing well. The feedback from doing assessment is thus used to determine the kind of support that should be given to under-performing learners so that they can achieve academic goals. Assessment was also conceived of as a measure that determines what teachers can do to improve in teaching and learning in general. Concepts that are associated with assessment such as grading, formative and summative assessments are described in different ways, demonstrating the lack of common understanding of the concepts that may lead to common practices of assessment. Furthermore, assessment policy is described as a system that gives guidelines to teaching content, methodologies, the resources for teaching and learning in addition the type of assessment to be done. In this study, the South African policy (CAPS) is used as a tool for planning, organizing and monitoring teaching and learning process. CAPS, according to the participants in this study. It also provided guidelines for assessment through the specified learning outcomes.

This finding highlights the relevance and usefulness of assessment policy in the process of teaching and learning. As active implementers of assessment policy, teachers in this study took on the role of improving teaching and learning based on the feedback from assessment. The feedback from assessment is also used by the

teachers to identify learners who need academic support. The role played by the DHs in assessment was stated as management of the process and providing leadership. The different yet related roles played by the DHs and the teachers show a need of collaborative relationship and shared structure for the implementation of the assessment policy. This study highlights the importance of assessment policy in teaching and learning as the policy that influences the teaching and learning subject content as well as the methodology used by the teachers. Learners also benefit from the assessment policy by being able to do self-assessment. Structures like lesson plans, frameworks like ATP and rubrics stipulated in the assessment policy appeared to provide transparent and accountable procedures of doing assessment as well as quality teaching and learning.

Like other policies, the implementation of assessment policy is not free from challenges. In this study, the challenges seemed to be experienced during the pre-assessment, during assessment and post-assessment periods. In the pre-assessment period, the parents failed to be involved in helping learners with the homework and revision expected by the teachers. During the assessment period, learner absenteeism was a common problem, while in the post-assessment period the anticipated collaboration between teachers and parents in using assessment feedback to improve the performance of the learners was absent. The challenges identified in this study go beyond training teachers to become competent in implementing assessment policy to working closely with parents in the three phases of assessment to ensure successful implementation of the policy. This implies that space must be created for parents to be made aware of their supportive role in learner assessment.

In this study, there was a lack of common understanding of what constitutes the standard of assessment. The conception of “standard of assessment” was presented as time management of assessment schedules, the quality of subject content and the level at which the assessment was done. The absence of agreed-upon meaning of the concept of standard of assessment implies the need for more research to identify possible gaps in the assessment policy document. Parental involvement in teaching and learning and in assessment seems to be a key finding in this study, which suggest

that there is a gap in the policy document that gives guidelines of how to adopt parents to be part of the stakeholders responsible for implementing assessment policy.

## **5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS EMANATING FROM THE FINDINGS**

The researcher makes the following recommendations from the findings of this study on how Foundation phase DHs and teachers understand assessment in relation to assessment policy, how they view their role in assessment in improving teaching and learning outcomes as well as the challenges experienced.

### **5.7.1 Recommendations on teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy in teaching and learning**

- The Department of Education curriculum assessment policy makers ought to consider providing continuous professional development workshops to establish and ensure that there is a commonly shared understanding of the concept of assessment and the assessment policy guidelines.
- The subject specialist from the Department of Education should conduct workshops and seminars on subject specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Such professional development workshops may be done in clusters to give teachers from different schools an opportunity to discuss the challenges they experience in implementing assessment policy, as well as success stories that could lead to benchmarking the implementation of assessment policy.
- During the assessment workshops, concepts like assessment, grading, formative and summative assessment should be clarified and an agreed upon clarification of the concepts be done through explanation of the activities involved in each of the concepts.

### **5.7.2 Recommendations on teachers' views of their role in assessment during teaching and learning processes**

- In this study, teachers played the role of identifying struggling learners and assisting them to improve their learning performance. The researcher recommends that the Department of Education should consider creating a

position of teacher assistants or tutors to help teachers in providing support to slow and struggling learners that they identify through the assessment process. This is because teachers have a lot of other responsibilities and may not have enough time to assist struggling learners.

- Schools should also conduct workshops at school level or have inter-school seminars in which the DHs and the teachers work as a team in discussing the processes of managing the implementation of assessment policy.
- To enhance the role played by the DHs as managers of teaching and learner assessment, the DHs should be aware of the management processes of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. The Department of Education with the assistance of subject specialist from the Department should conduct workshops and seminars on courses that covers the different management processes.
- From the findings on the role of the participants in evaluating the quality of assessment given to the learners, the Department of Education ought to have clear benchmarks for the quality of assessment. Benchmarks that will focus in inclusivity where teachers will be able to develop assessments that will cater for all the learners' cognitive levels with different durations. . The benchmark can be derived from the teamwork participation of the subject teachers in subject-specific workshops and seminars organized by subject specialists from the Department of Education.
- The subject specialists in collaboration with the teachers may structure the different levels of quality assurance, setting specific standard measures in the implementation of assessment policy. Ensuring that every teacher is trained to develop different assessment and intervention strategies in order to assist all the learners including even those that are struggling. Also ensuring that the assessments are aligned to assessment policy.

### **5.7.3 Recommendations on the influences and constraining factors that teachers experience during the implementation of assessment policy**

- It is essential that a need analysis should be done by a subject specialist from the Department of Education and the teachers before organizing the departmental workshops and seminars on the management of the implementation of assessment policy. This is because different schools may require different professional development needs.
- The DHs at school level also need to do a SWOT analysis with the teachers to determine the needs to be addressed in the school-based workshops on the management of implementation of assessment policy. Such context-based training may closely address the development needs of the teachers regarding the implementation of assessment policy.
- Schools ought to establish clear rules and regulations for learner assessment and share with all the stakeholders (learners, parents, teachers and others). The policy should state the responsibilities of the learner, teacher and parent in the pre-assessment, during assessment and post-assessment period of the assessment process.
- The School Management Team (SMT) need to ensure that all the stakeholders, especially learners and parents should abide by the school-based rules and regulations for learner assessment. The school management should also clearly include the consequences for noncompliance with the assessment rules and regulations in the school-based assessment policy.
- The findings of this study suggest that the Department of Education, through a diverse platform, ought to continue developing the knowledge and skills of teachers to be able to implement CAPS effectively.
- The policy development team from the Department of Education should work closely with teachers to determine the time frame for assessment policy implementation that incorporates the needs and the capabilities of slow and struggling learners.
- Other challenges like printing of the examination papers should be addressed by the school management team in the planning phase of the assessment

process to ensure that printers are operational, and the required stationery is available for the purpose of assessment. In cases where there are no printing facilities, the affected schools should consider alerting the Department of Education and also make arrangements with neighbouring schools to get the examination papers printed in time for the assessment.

- Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) should consider having regular meetings in which the topic of discussion should include the school-based strategies to be used in involving parents to provide learner support both before assessment and during the assessment and post-assessment phases.

#### **5.7.4 Recommendations on how to assist teachers in meeting the standard of assessment set in assessment policy**

- Policy specialists in the Department of Education should provide forums in which to discuss with the DHs and other teachers the concept of “*Standard of assessment*” to come up with a common understanding of what the concept entails as well as the criteria of standard measurement.
- The DHs should network with other DHs from different schools and have shared workshops in which they support and learn from each other. Teachers can also form academic networks to share and develop each other. Such networks can be within the school or be done in collaboration with different schools in clusters.
- The researcher also recommends that there be programmes developed by the Department of Education that can help teachers to understand and apply the standard of assessment as stated in the assessment policy.

#### **5.7.5 Recommendations for future research**

The following are suggested as potential research topics for future research, considering the study's limitations and findings:

- Exploring how the use of technology may enhance the ability of the teachers in implementing the assessment policy in schools.

- How the rights of teachers to be professionally developed should include their ability to implement assessment policy effectively.
- Establishing the appropriate level of assistance to be provided for the teachers who are engaged in assisting slow and struggling learners to improve in their academic performance.
- Future fieldwork on learner assessment and the implementation of assessment policy requires large-scale studies using quantitative methods like questionnaires to complement the qualitative research methodologies used in exploring teachers' understanding and implementation of assessment policies.

## **5.8 A FINAL WORD**

This study provided the researcher with an opportunity to reflect on the assessment and implementation of assessment policy in schools. There seem to be assumptions that teachers are capable of effectively assessing learners based on their understanding of the assessment policy and practices. The finding of this study suggests that teachers need a lot of support in having a good comprehension of the policy as well as implementation structures. What the researcher also found intriguing in this study is the role that parents can play in supporting both the learners and the teachers in the assessment process, in terms of their involvement during pre-assessment, during the actual assessment period and during post-assessment phases in the assessment process. There are many gaps in learner assessment and the implementation of assessment policy that need further research.

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
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: ETHICAL APPROVAL

 UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA		<b>Faculty of Education</b>	Ethics Committee 7 July 2022
<p>Dear Mrs DK Nkosi</p> <p>The application for ethical clearance for the research project described below served before this committee on 15 June 2022:</p>			
<b>Ethics Protocol No:</b>	EDU149/21		
<b>Principal investigator:</b>	Mrs DK Nkosi		
<b>Student/Staff No:</b>	17306087		
<b>Degree:</b>	Masters		
<b>Supervisor/Promoter:</b>	Dr TA Ogina		
<b>Department:</b>	Education Management and Policy Studies		
<p>The decision by the committee is reflected below:</p>			
<b>Decision:</b>	Approved		
<b>Comments:</b>			
<b>Period of approval:</b>	Two years		
<p>The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.</li> <li>2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.</li> <li>3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application, together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of investigator,</li> <li>• Research methods any other aspect therefore and,</li> <li>• Participants.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.</p> <p>Best wishes</p>  <p>.....</p> <p>Prof Funke Omidire Chair: Ethics Committee Faculty of Education</p>			

## APPENDIX B: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

#### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	13 July 2022
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2022– 30 September 2022 2022/305
Name of Researcher:	Nkosi D.K
Address of Researcher:	18 Rooidoring Street Estherpark Kempton Park
Telephone Number:	083 299 7660
Email address:	nkosikate69@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Teachers' understanding of Assessment in relation to Assessment Policy.
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	3 Primary schools
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni South

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to the research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

*Making education a societal priority*

#### Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
Tel: (011) 355 0488  
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

## APPENDIX C: LETTER REQUESTING ADULT'S PARTICIPATION



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

To the principal

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Informed consent for participation in the research study

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Duduzile Nkosi. I am a student at University of Pretoria, in the faculty of Education. As part of the degree, I am required to conduct research and write a report on my findings.

The title of my study is **“Teachers understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy to improve teaching and learning outcomes”** The purpose of this study is to determine how primary school teachers understand and view the role of assessment during teaching and learning processes. The information gathered in this study could inform teachers regarding assessment issues and the assessment policy in order to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

We would like to request your permission to conduct the above-mentioned research at your school and use the data confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies. Due to COVID-19 and to minimise the spread of infection, the research may be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

Participation in this study will be voluntary. The principals and teachers as participants have the right to withdraw and decline this invitation without penalties. As the principal, if you allow your educators to participate in this study, you are kindly requested to sign the attached consent form, declaring that you permit your educators to participate in this project. Since participation is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards. If you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact me or my supervisor on the following:

Nkosi Duduzile Dr Ogina

0832997660 0719288098

Email: [nkosikate69@gmail.com](mailto:nkosikate69@gmail.com) Email: [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

**Declaration of consent**

I, the undersigned, give permission for the above-mentioned researcher to conduct his/her research with sampled educators in my research.

Principal signature date

---

Researcher signature date

---

## APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

To the participant

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Informed consent for participation in a research study

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Duduzile Nkosi. I am a student at the University of Pretoria, in the faculty of Education. As part of the degree, I am required to conduct research and write a report on my findings. The title of my study is **“Teachers’ understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy to improve teaching and learning outcomes”**. The purpose of this study is to determine how primary school teachers understand and view the role of assessment during teaching and learning processes. The information gathered in this study could inform teachers regarding assessment issues and the assessment policy to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Due to COVID-19 and to minimise the spread of infection, the research will be conducted online or through various other media. Therefore, in this study telephonic interviews will be used to collect data. The interviews will take about 30 minutes per participant. The interview will be done after school hours at your own convenient time and place. The information

gathered during the interviews will focus on teachers' understanding of assessment to improve teaching and learning.

Since participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind. You will be requested to give consent to be interviewed as well as for recording the interview to capture your responses accurately. You will not be asked for information that will disclose your identity or the identity of your school. The findings of this study will be utilized only for academic purposes and a summary of the findings will be provided to you on request.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purpose, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

If you agree to participate in this research, kindly sign the attached consent form, declaring that you are willing to participate in this research study and that you understand your right to withdraw from participation without any penalties. If you have question regarding this study, you can contact me or my supervisor on the following:

Duduzile Nkosi

Dr Ogina

0832997660

0719288098

Email: [nkosikate69@gmail.com](mailto:nkosikate69@gmail.com) Email: [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

Declaration of concern

I, the undersigned, willingly agree to participate in the above-described research. I have carefully read the information contained in this letter. I agree to answer all the questions.....

Educator signature date

Researcher signature date

## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Interview Questions (Teachers)



Faculty of Education

<p>Biographical questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please tell me about yourself.</li> <li>2. How long have you been teaching in this school?</li> <li>3. How long have you been teaching in Foundation Phase?</li> <li>4. What is your highest qualification?</li> <li>5. How many learners do you have in your class?</li> <li>6. Which subjects are you teaching?</li> </ol>
<p>What is teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy to improve teaching and learning in Primary schools?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. What is your view regarding assessment policy?</li> <li>8. What can you tell me about assessment in relation to assessment policy?</li> <li>9. Have you been trained to implement the current amendment Curriculum and assessment policy Statement (CAPS)? If no, how are you handling the assessment?</li> </ol>

<p>How teachers view the role of assessment during teaching and learning</p>	<p>10. Please tell me, what is your role in assessment during teaching and learning?</p> <p>11. What do you do to assess learners in your teaching subject?</p> <p>12. What do you understand about Assessment for Learning (Formative) and Assessment of Learning (Summative)? Explain briefly.</p>
<p>What are the major influence and constraining factors of teachers' implementation of assessment</p>	<p>11. When planning, what influences the choice of assessment strategies you use? Explain briefly.</p> <p>12. How do you organize the assessment of your teaching subject?</p> <p>13. What makes the assessment of the subject doable?</p> <p>14. What challenges do you experience during assessment?</p>
<p>What can be done to assist teachers to ensure that their teaching, learning and assessment practice meet the standards of assessment?</p>	<p>15. What can you say about the standard of assessment in your school?</p> <p>16. If you struggle to meet the standards of assessment according to Assessment Policy, do you get any assistance?</p> <p>17. In your opinion, what needs to be done to support teachers in doing assessment?</p> <p>18. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about assessment or assessment policy?</p>

## DH Questions

Biographical questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please tell me about yourself.</li> <li>2. How long have you been teaching in this school?</li> <li>3. Which grade are you teaching?</li> <li>4. What is your highest qualification?</li> </ol>
What are teachers understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy to improve teaching and learning in Primary schools?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. What can you tell me about assessment in your school and improving teaching and learning?</li> <li>6. Can you explain the difference between assessment and grading?</li> </ol>
How teachers view the role of assessment in teaching and learning process?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. As a member of School Assessment Team briefly explain your responsibilities towards assessment in your school.</li> <li>8. How do you involve teachers to ensure that assessment practice is correctly done to improve teaching and learning?</li> </ol>
What are the major influences and constraining factors of teachers' implementation of assessment?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Explain the influences of assessment towards improving teaching and learning practice.</li> <li>10. What are the challenges encountered during teachers' implementation of assessment?</li> </ol>
What can be done to assist teachers to ensure that their teaching, learning and assessment practice are aligned?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. As a SAT member please explain how teachers are assisted to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy?</li> </ol>

## **APPENDIX F: SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW**

SCHOOL A Teacher A2 (Departmental head)

Good afternoon mam. Good afternoon. My name is Duduzile Nkosi a student at University of Pretoria. In our previous conversation you agreed to participate in my study. Hope you have read the requirements from the letter of approval and consent form. After the interview, please send the signed consent form to me. The purpose of the study is to find out about teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to assessment policy. So, every answer is very important and is taken seriously in this study. Your school's name and yours will not be mentioned only pseudonyms will be used. Therefore, feel free and relax as we start with the interview. First questions will be about yourself.

**Researcher:** Please tell me about yourself.

**Teacher A2:** My name is A2 (pseudonym). I am fifty-six years old. I have been Head of Department for about six years.

**Researcher:** How long have you been teaching in this school?

**Teacher A2:** Twenty - two years.

**Researcher:** Which grade are you teaching?

**Teacher A2:** Grade three.

**Researcher:** What is your highest qualification?

**Teacher A2:** BEd. (Honours) obtained in UNISA.

**Researcher:** What can you tell me about assessment in your school and improving teaching and learning?

**Teacher A2:** At our school, we do assessment daily in Foundation Phase. We do informal assessment and formative assessment at the end of the term to determine whether learners have understood the work. We also use assessment at the end of

the term for reporting to parents and the learners. Informal assessment is done daily and is not recorded.

**Researcher:** Can you explain the difference between assessment and grading?

**Teacher A2:** We do assessment daily, to me grading is done at the end of the year to summarize everything for the learner to go to the next grade.

**Researcher:** As a member of School Assessment Team briefly explain your responsibilities towards assessment in your school.

**Teacher A2:** As the DH in the department and member of assessment committee, my role is to represent and make sure that assessment in the Foundation Phase is done accordingly. Teach; after teaching the learners we do informal assessment then do formal assessment for reporting and recording.

**Researcher:** How do you involve teachers to ensure that assessment practice is correctly done to improve teaching and learning?

**Teacher A2:** As a teacher, I think one of the responsibilities of teachers is to make sure that assessment is done as we teach. We teach for assessing learners, we don't just teach, we need to assess also. That is how we involve teachers and make sure what is in the assessment is what they have taught the learners. In the foundation phase, in each grade we do have grade leaders. We meet once or twice per term to prepare assessment activities.

**Researcher:** Explain the influences of assessment towards improving teaching and learning practice.

**Teacher A2:** Assessment influences the results. Assessment helps the teachers to evaluate themselves to see how far they are with their work they have already done, and to improve the results of the school by doing extra work. Assessment also has an influence in teachers because without assessment teachers cannot understand where

they are going in terms of the content. Assessment is for learners and teachers to see the progress in our work. Assessment informs the methods of teaching and strategies.

**Researcher:** What are the challenges encountered during teachers' implementation of assessment?

**Teacher A2:** The challenge is that our learners are not fully equipped or their parents, even if we give them work to be assisted by parents to improve the results of the school, parents don't participate. Only the teachers take part in the assessment of the learners. This practice put teachers in difficult situation. Teaching is a two-way stream. Learners are expected to be assisted both at school and at home. If I give learners homework as a teacher, I'm expecting the work to be done at home. If the parents cannot assist, it puts me on the spot. I cannot move or improve the results at the end of the term.

**Researcher:** As a SAT member please explain how teachers are assisted to meet the standards of assessment according to assessment policy.

**Teacher A2:** The district always makes assessment workshops for teachers to help with assessment and to make it more interesting to the teachers. As a DH I do organize the in-service training to assist especially the novice teachers. If I'm also experiencing challenges, I consult my seniors to assist.

Researcher: Is there anything maybe you want to add?

**Teacher A2:** No, I think I have said enough.

**Researcher:** Thank you for your time and to participate in my study.

**Teacher A2:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be part of your study.

Researcher: Thank you.

## APPENDIX G: TII PERCENTAGE

Teachers' understanding of assessment in relation to Assessment  
Policy to improve teaching and learning

By

Duduzile Nkosi

Nkosi dissertation working document 23 November  
2024.docx

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Dr T.A. OGINA 28/11/2024

