

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE DISCREPANCY  
BETWEEN CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND EXTERNAL SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN  
ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN  
GRADE 12**

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**This thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of**

**Master of Education (Education Policy Studies)**

**Stellenbosch University**



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**March 2015**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

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**July 2014**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Classroom-based assessment, also referred to as continuous assessment (CASS), is a formal and important part of the evaluation of South African learners. The weight attached to CASS varies according to the levels of grades. More importantly, it is only in Grade 12 that CASS marks of all the learning areas or subjects are combined with external summative assessment marks for a decision of awarding a National Senior Certificate.

Continuous assessment (CASS) is formative in nature. This implies that learners receive feedback on their performance throughout the year. The feedback learners receive ought to prepare them well for the external summative assessment. If learners have been prepared well for the external summative assessment, we would expect their marks to be consistent with their level of achievement in CASS.

However, according to the Department of Education (2003c), having witnessed the first year of CASS implementation in 2001, both national and provincial examination authorities realised that the implementation of CASS was problematic in certain schools. In the analysis of the 2001 and 2002 Senior Certificate examination results by the South African Certification Council (SAFCERT), huge discrepancies were found in certain schools between the raw CASS marks and the adjusted examination marks of the same learners in a number of subjects. The SAFCERT reported that in 2001 a total of 10 182 examination centres supplied CASS marks that were more than 20% above the adjusted examination marks.

This document-based study examines the extent of the discrepancies between learners' CASS marks and the marks they obtained in external summative assessment. It also tentatively suggests possible reasons for the discrepancies. To this end, this study compares scores for CASS marks of English First Additional Language (ENGFAL) to scores for the same learners in the external summative assessment. The documents recording learners' CASS marks come from four schools in Ilembe District, KwaZulu-Natal.

Although my mini thesis focuses on the extent of the discrepancy, my analysis also makes some initial suggestions of some possible reasons for the discrepancies between CASS and external summative assessment marks. These tentative reasons are a lack of teacher knowledge in administering CASS; large classes; the demanding administrative load of teachers; an interest in passing as many learners as possible; not wanting to create tension, especially within small, close-knit communities; and in many cases, generally dysfunctional schools.

My main suggestions for addressing the problem of discrepancies include: providing better in-service training for teachers in regard to their knowledge of subject content and assessment practices; making available to teachers an item bank with samples of assessment questions and tasks; encouraging teachers to become active participants of professional teacher organisations; encouraging greater parental participation in informal assessment; and by establishing assessment committees in schools. In addition, the government could appoint more teachers to reduce overcrowded schools and classrooms, fund the establishment of functional libraries, promote and monitor English as a medium of instruction from as early as the Intermediate Phase.

## **KEY WORDS**

Continuous assessment, external summative assessment, discrepancy, ENGFAL

## **ABSTRAK**

*'n Ondersoek van die Teenstrydighede by Punte vir Deurlopende Evaluering en Eksterne Summatiewe Assessering by Engels Eerste Addisionele Taal in Graad12*

Deurlopende evaluering (DE) is 'n formele en belangrike aspek by die evaluering van Suid-Afrikaanse leerders. Die gewig wat aan DE toegeken word, varieer na gelang van die vlakke van die onderskeie grade. Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat die DE-punte net in Graad 12 by al die leer areas of vakke gekombineer word met eksterne summatiewe assesseringspunte om die toekenning van 'n Nasionale Senior Sertifikaat te bepaal.

Deurlopende evaluering (DE) is formatief van aard. Dit beteken dat leerders gedurende die jaar deurlopend terugvoer ontvang oor hul prestasie. Die terugvoer wat hulle ontvang, is veronderstel om leerders deeglik voor te berei vir die eksterne summatiewe assessering. Indien leerders deeglik voorberei is vir die eksterne summatiewe assessering, sou verwag kan word dat die punt wat hulle behaal by die eksterne summatiewe assessering ooreenstem met die vlak van hul prestasie by DE.

Volgens die Departement van Onderwys (2003c) is daar egter na die eerste jaar van die implementering van DE in 2001 deur beide die nasionale en provinsiale eksamenowerhede tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat die implementering van DE in sommige skole probleme skep. By die analise van die 2001- en 2002-uitslae van die Senior Sertifikaat eksamen deur SAFCERT is groot teenstrydighede by

sommige skole opgemerk tussen die onverwerkte DE-punte en die aangepaste eksamen punte van dieselfde leerders in 'n aantal vakke. SAFCERT het verslag gedoen dat 'n totaal van 10 182 eksamen sentra in 2001 DE-punte verskaf het wat 20% hoër was as die aangepaste eksamen punte.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die omvang van die teenstrydigheid tussen die punte wat leerders tydens DE behaal het en die punte wat hulle in eksterne summative assessering behaal het, te ondersoek. Die studie sal ook tentatiewe voorstelle maak oor die redes vir die teenstrydigheid. Om dit te kan doen, sal ek die DE-uitslae en die uitslae van die eksterne summative assessering van dieselfde leerders vir Engels Eerste Addisionele Taal vergelyk. Die leerders is afkomstig van vier skole in die Ilembe Distrik, KwaZulu-Natal.

Alhoewel my minitese op die omvang van die teenstrydigheid fokus, bied my analise 'n paar moontlike oorsake vir die afwyking tussen DE-punte en eksterne summative assessering aan. Dit kan tentatief toegeskryf word aan: 'n gebrek aan kennis by onderwysers oor die toepassing van DE, groot klasse, die veeleisende administratiewe las op onderwysers, die strewe om soveel as moontlik leerders te laat slaag om nie spanning veral in klein geslote gemeenskappe te veroorsaak nie en oor die algemeen in baie gevalle bloot disfunksionele skole.

My belangrikste voorstelle om die probleem van teenstrydigheid aan te spreek, is om meer insette aan onderwysers te voorsien om sodoende hul kennis van vakinhoud en assesseringspraktyke uit te brei, om 'n item bank met voorbeelde van assesseringsvrae en -take beskikbaar te maak, om onderwysers aan te moedig om aktief deel te neem aan professionele onderwyser organisasies, en om

groter ouerbetrokkenheid aan te moedig by informele assessering om assesserings komitees in skole tot stand te bring. In aansluiting hierby moet die regering meer onderwysers aanstel om die oorbevolking in skole aan te spreek, die instel van funksionele biblioteke befonds en Engels as 'n medium van onderrig van so vroeg as die Intermediêre Fase bevorder en monitor.

## **SLEUTELWOORDE**

Deurlopende assessering, eksterne summatiewe assessering, teenstrydighede, ENGEAT

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude towards my supervisor, Prof. Nelleke Bak, for her guidance, valuable comments and suggestions that enabled me to produce this thesis. Without her, I would not have trodden this challenging path.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Wiseman, my son and to my daughters, Mpumelelo and Samkelisiwe, for their support towards making my studies a success.

Finally, I thank the Spirit who endows us with health, wisdom, compassion and perseverance.

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## **CHAPTER 1: Thesis Overview**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis topic arose from my experience of district moderation sessions for Grade 12 English First Additional Language (ENGFAL). I witnessed that teachers are generally keen to pass learners and are therefore motivated to allocate marks leniently and generously. When final marks for the National Senior Certificate external summative assessment of the learners were released, I observed that they were lower than the achievement in continuous assessment (CASS). I experienced this situation as an intellectual puzzle, which I was keen to investigate. I was interested specifically in the extent of the discrepancies as well in trying to identify and explain possible reasons for the discrepancies between these two sets of assessment in the same subject for the same group of learners.

Inflation of learners' marks is not a new phenomenon or practice. This has been an issue even before the introduction of CASS. I have been an ENGFAL teacher for 24 years and recall that in language assessments, prior to CASS, we had to annually submit oral marks out of 50 for every learner to the Department of Education before the commencement of the external summative assessment. These oral marks were added to the written external examination results to determine a pass or a failure in that particular language. I recall that we had no standard assessment grid to rate learners' achievement, but ratings depended on how the teacher felt about the performance of a particular learner. Those marks, therefore, were allocated without being attached to any formal and meticulous requirements for oral work. Since the introduction of CASS, however, tasks and

activities are required to be undertaken and the manner, in which marks are recorded, is prescribed. There is also an assessment grid for each task.

However, through experience I have realised that there are challenges in the proper implementation of continuous assessment practices. Teachers who have not transformed their assessment practices often exacerbate these challenges. I have also realised that as an ENGFAL teacher, concentration on oral work only receives attention in July, as moderation is due in August. Coupled with large classes and teacher overload, this often leads to allocating marks to learners without a proper assessment.

English First Additional Language requires that learners be assessed in creative writing. In this category, there is often resistance by learners to write and attempts are frequently short and shallow. Owing to large classes, these essays are marked, but teachers seldom provide feedback to learners on how they can improve their writing. Instead, they move on to the next task.

Furthermore, I have realised that as teachers, we generally do not have a clear idea of what constitutes a good essay. We have insufficient knowledge of different approaches to and styles of writing essays. This has been corroborated by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Moderator Report (2009) for English First Additional Language, which indicates that during the 2009 November/December memorandum discussion, it became evident that some teachers who were markers showed that they had no idea of how to approach different essays. I have observed precisely this problem with my colleagues. As much as teachers lack a

thorough understanding of different approaches to essays, they also often lack firm knowledge on how to interpret the grid. This brings 2004 to mind, the year in which I was exposed to assessment by means of a grid. The Subject Advisor summoned us to a venue where we practised assessing essays. It was a challenge to use the grid to assess what the learner had written. It required that the teacher have a good command of the language and consistently relate what the learner had written to the prescribed grid. The main concern at our training was that we differed greatly in our mark allocations. It concerns me that a number of ENGFAL teachers did not attend and experience a training session, since even in our district it only applies to Grade 12 teachers.

I therefore have a sense that many teachers lack assessment skills for the different tasks that constitute CASS. I find it puzzling that while the Department of Education has transformed assessment strategies, some teachers have not received assistance to transform. It is therefore likely that individual teacher assessments contain discrepancies.

Since personal experience and intuitions are not a sound base for a proper examination, this document-based study aims to examine the extent of the discrepancies by drawing on literature and by specifically examining the difference in CASS marks and the external summative assessment marks in Grade 12 ENGFAL. In the following section, a discussion focusing on a more scholarly rationale for continuous assessment will be provided.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Fullan (1991:14) asserts that schools have two primary purposes. The first is to educate learners in various academic or cognitive skills and knowledge. The second is to educate learners in the development of individual and social skills and knowledge required to function occupationally and socio-politically in society. To establish if schools are fulfilling their purpose, it is necessary to determine certain benchmarks together with internal and external information. It is through assessment that such information can be obtained. This implies that assessment is important in education. Learners, having been taught, need to demonstrate that they have acquired knowledge. The quantity and level of knowledge a learner has acquired can be ascertained only through assessment.

Assessments, especially at Grade 12 level in South African schools, provide a sense of achievement to parents, learners and parliamentarians, especially when learners have accomplished good results. It does not only end with attainment. According to Cullingford (1997:11), assessment serves as a “gate entry” into various professions. This implies that learners, having passed Grade 12, are admitted to tertiary institutions and given the opportunity to pursue different careers due to their level of achievement. Reliable assessment is therefore critically important.

In addition to the above, assessment in education is a tool that measures the effectiveness of the curriculum. In South Africa, after 1994, a new curriculum of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) was adopted, which transformed assessment

practices<sup>1</sup>. In accordance with this curriculum, assessment is no longer viewed as a means of sorting learners into failures and achievers. According to Green & Johnson (2010), educators have come to realise the harmful effects of using the judgement approach to assessment that strictly identifies learners in terms of once-off achievement and success. Instead, teachers are encouraged to realise that all learners can learn. This mindset has brought another dimension to assessment. Teachers following the OBE approach use the assessment practices to enhance every learner's learning and to support academic success.

Teachers are expected to work with all learners regardless of their academic level, to kindle a love of learning, a belief that they can succeed and to continue learning. Teachers in this approach to assessment structure their classroom and assessment tasks to nurture mastery of goals by learners. According to Green & Johnson (2010), when learners master goals they focus less on showing how smart they are and more on their desire to understand and master the task before them. They focus on their own learning and improvement over time and less on the judgement of others, thereby developing a sense of independence.

According to Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:iv), continuous assessment is the form in which learners receive on-going feedback on the work they do throughout the year. Van der Berg & Shepherd argue that feedback is an essential element in continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is therefore formative in nature. This implies learners receive feedback on their performance throughout the year. The feedback they receive ought to prepare them adequately for the external

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2011, a new framework, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), has been introduced with the new CAPS implemented in Grade 12 in 2014.

summative assessment. If learners have been prepared adequately for the external summative assessment, we would expect that the marks they achieve to be consistent with their level of achievement in CASS.

OBE has transformed assessment in South African schools. CASS forms an on-going evaluation process of all learners in all learning areas. From Grades 1-3 assessment is 100% continuous. In the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6), the weight attached to CASS is 75%, while in the Senior and General Education and Training (GET) Phase, that is Grades 7-9, the weight attached to CASS at the end of the year is 40%. In Grades 10, 11 and 12, an exit class at the end of the Further Education and Training Phase (FET), continuous assessment comprises 25% of the learning area or subject.

According to Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:3), ideally there should be a minimal gap between CASS marks and marks for individual learners achieved through external summative assessment, since the two assessments test the level of achievement of the same learners of the same curriculum. This means a learner's achievement in CASS should correlate with the external summative assessment. Therefore, if there are major inconsistencies between the two types of assessments it means that there is a discrepancy, which points to a problem of poor signalling. "Inflated CASS marks give students a false sense of security that they are well-prepared for the matric exams, thereby leading to unrealistic expectations and diminished effort ... This indicates poor reliability of assessment, as the examination and continuous assessment should both be testing the same mastery of the national curriculum" (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2008:2). In the

analysis of the 2001 and 2002 Senior Certificate examination results by SAFCERT, vast disparities were found in certain schools between the raw CASS marks and the adjusted examination marks of the same learners in a number of subjects. SAFCERT (2002) noted that in 2001, 10 182 examination centres supplied CASS marks that were more than 20% above the adjusted examination marks. In addition, Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:27) note that in the Senior Certificate examination of 2005, learners from KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga accounted for more than 50% of the unreliably assessing schools in English Second Language, which is now known as English First Additional Language (ENGFAL). Of course, Van der Berg & Shepherd's argument that ideally there should be a minimal gap in CASS marks and external summative examination marks is not so straightforward. Although the same learner is tested on the same content, the context and assessment techniques differ. A learner may have a strong fear of exam writing or a crisis at home could have developed that impacts on the learner's performance. However, the argument of my thesis assumes a *general*, not necessarily direct, alignment between CASS marks and examination marks of groups of learners. My thesis addresses the problem that in the majority of cases, CASS marks in general were much higher than final examination marks. I am therefore looking at trends and patterns rather than at individual learners' language proficiency.

Fullan (1991:15) has argued that new programmes either make no difference, or help improve the situation, or make it worse. For instance, South Africa has adopted a new program of CASS with the intention to improve learner performance. This resonates with the KwaZulu-Natal Moderator's Report (2008)

and its call to improve English proficiency. The KwaZulu-Natal Moderator Report notes that learners begin learning through the medium of English as early as Grade 3. This implies that by the time they reach Grade 12, they should have gained proficiency in the English language. In spite of this, in the November/December 2008 external summative assessment, learner achievement levels showed significant lack of mastery of language skills.

In 2008, 114 466 candidates were assessed in ENGFAL in KwaZulu-Natal and their achievement levels, provided in Table 1 below, were as follows:

**Table 1: Grade 12 Learner Achievement Levels in ENGFAL, KwaZulu-Natal**

	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>CANDIDATES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1.	7	(80-100)	760	0.7 %
2.	6	(70-79)	4 072	3.5 %
3.	5	(60-69)	9 593	8.4 %
4.	4	(50-59)	20 773	18.1 %
5.	3	(40-49)	32 083	28.0 %
6.	2	(30-39)	34 790	30.4 %
7.	1	(0-29)	12 395	10.8 %

The above learner achievement statistics indicate that learners are insufficiently competent in language, with approximately 70% of learners scoring less than 50%.

Moreover, the 2011 and 2012 Annual National Assessments (ANA) results for Grades 1, 3, 6 and 9 revealed disappointing levels of learner literacy. In August

2010, when teachers were on strike, the media showed learners demonstrating and demanding that they all be given 25% upfront in all learning areas. The assumption was that they were aware that they had not completed the tasks that were required for their continuous assessment, but demanded recognition of achievement nevertheless. The implication here is that they did not understand the purpose of CASS.

I have also observed that during CASS cluster moderation sessions for creative writing, i.e. essays for ENGFAL, many teachers tend to be too lenient. While they mark, they even state that they need not fail learners even if this is required. Teachers' leniency, therefore, affects learner achievement because the marks are adjusted after moderation. In addition, they generally do not provide learners with opportunities to re-write assessments to improve their CASS tasks, instead they move on to the next task. Such a practice would imply that learners do not receive any feedback from their teachers regarding ways to improve their work.

In cluster moderation of CASS marks, not all learners' scripts are moderated. Instead, each school submits only 10% of their essays. This set comprises the highest, average and lowest achievers. The significance of this is that learners may achieve levels which do not reflect their true achievement as marks are moderated based solely on 10% of the class. On the other hand, external summative assessments measure individual learner performance. Therefore, it can be deduced that the reason for the inconsistencies between the CASS and external summative assessment marks indicate discrepancies in assessment.

Assessment is an area of the learning and teaching process that is as problematic as it is important. This study is relevant because it examines how prevalent the discrepancies between CASS and external assessment in ENGFAL are and suggests possible reasons for the problem. In addition, the study suggests some tentative solutions to address these discrepancies. As Fullan (1991:15) argues, policy makers and teachers need to establish whether new assessment approaches are improving or hindering the teaching and learning process.

### **1.3 Research Aims**

The study examines the discrepancies between marks learners achieve through continuous assessment and marks they achieve in the external summative assessment. The focus will be on Grade 12 English First Additional Language since this is the only class in South African schools where CASS is combined with external summative assessment marks for a single purpose, that is, decision-making that warrants a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 4 certificate.

The study also examines possible reasons for the discrepancies between CASS marks and external summative assessment marks. Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:3) argue that there should be a correlation between marks of the two assessment types since they both assess the same curriculum, which should prepare learners for the end of the year assessment through constant feedback. However, as I noted, even in an ideal world, a direct alignment will be unlikely because of the different contexts that may impact on performance. If feedback

does not take place, it is assumed the effective implementation of CASS is defeated.

It is also envisaged that suggestions from this study will be useful to:

- The Department of Education, which is involved in policy making, whole-school evaluation and the overall conduct of the Senior Certificate examinations
- Subject advisory services that plays a key role in the moderation of CASS
- Educators who are involved in the implementation of CASS.

#### **1.4 Literature Overview of Assessment and CASS**

The new assessment policy aims to realise the general aim of assessing learners in OBE namely for growth, development and support in order for them to progress (Department of Education, 2002a:3).<sup>2</sup> To achieve this aim, a variety of methods, tools and techniques must be utilised (Department of Education, 2002a:5). It also requires that assessment be conducted on a continuous basis and should form an integral part of teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2006:8).

There are various ideas that support continuous assessment as an evaluation system. Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:111) argue that the introduction of continuous assessment appears in most cases to fall within certain broad aims, which are interrelated. The authors point out that continuous assessment enhances the validity of assessment but argue that once-off, formal examinations are not a good test of pupil achievement. Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:111) further argue that continuous assessment allows learners who do not

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<sup>2</sup> This study was undertaken at the time when OBE was still the curriculum framework for Grade 12. The new curriculum, CAPS, has superseded OBE, and has been implemented in Grade 12 in 2014.

perform well under examination conditions to demonstrate their true abilities in a more relaxed atmosphere. In other words, continuous assessment assesses some skills that cannot be measured in a formal written examination. This resonates with Israel (2005:1420) who argues that continuous assessment enables assessment of communication, logical thinking and creativity skills and helps to assess those skills a “once-off” examination cannot adequately assess and that learners who are assessed in a relaxed atmosphere are likely to perform better.

Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:111) further mention that in some cases continuous assessment may consist of a series of written tests. It is a general aim of continuous assessment to assess and report on a wide range of learner achievement. It therefore includes a wide variety of approaches. Among these are projects, essays, oral tests, practical tests, portfolios, assignments, interviews, questionnaires and teacher observation. Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance note that continuous assessment covers a far wider range of skills than traditional written examinations and these skills may span cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains and emphasise the development of higher-order skills. These authors maintain that the validity of learner results is increased by assessing over a protracted period and by maximising the range of educational approaches to assess required objectives.

Furthermore, Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:111) point out that continuous assessment helps to align curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. A correlation between what is assessed and changes in values is established while the concept of an assessment-linked curriculum develops. The introduction of continuous

assessment may require an emphasis on education that relates to a broader context. Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:112) claim further that continuous assessment reduces a great deal of the undesirable consequences that arise from external examinations and that its introduction is related to a concern regarding the quality of educational provision. Continuous assessment may serve as “the canary in the cage” – in other words, it may be an early warning sign of a teaching and learning process going awry. Another key factor cited by these authors is that continuous assessment provides feedback of assessment data about individual learners and about curricular effectiveness.

Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:45) hold that the assessment of learning in the classroom, by teachers and learners, is an integral component of the teaching and learning process. These authors argue that much of assessment is subjective, informal, immediate, ongoing and intuitive, as it interacts with learning as it occurs, monitoring learner behaviour, scholastic performance and responsiveness to instruction. They suggest that since the function of continuous assessment is primarily formative, on-going teacher observation of learners and classroom assessment involving questioning and dialogue, the marking of homework and the use of portfolios is essential. They use the term “classroom assessment”, which in this case is synonymous with “continuous assessment.” Classroom assessment occurs during learning rather than when learning is presumed to be complete. It is designed to improve the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Its role is to determine the learner’s level of knowledge, skill or understanding, diagnose problems, enable decisions about the next instructional steps and to evaluate the learning that has taken place during a lesson.

For Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:45-46) the key strength of this type of assessment by teachers is its focus on performance. It does not decontextualize knowledge and skills. Instead, it provides evidence of learners' learning in "authentic" settings. It also allows an assessment of the learner's ability to think critically, cooperate, solve problems and to communicate. The authors state that classroom-based assessment can contribute substantially to advancing learning and understanding. In addition, Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:46) assert that classroom-based assessment evaluates appropriateness of methodologies, textbooks and classroom organisation and guides teachers in matching the curriculum to the needs and abilities of their learners. Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990) similarly point out that classroom assessment may be used to evaluate the relevance of the curriculum.

Klenowski (2002) avers that assessing a portfolio can be considered an integral aspect of teaching and learning and may include a range of methods for monitoring and evaluating learner performance and attainment. Assessed tasks in a portfolio can include formal written tests or examinations, practical and oral assessments, evaluation of classroom activities, marking of performances, profiles, target setting and self-assessments. One may describe and understand this type of assessment as an interpretive process. This means that interpretation of learners' learning is based on evidence of learners' written, oral and creative language skills. The inferences drawn from these observable learner skills facilitate decisions about their progress and development and can be used to support and predict future learning.

Sounding a cautionary note, Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:46) point out that evidence exists that proves the quality of classroom assessment practices may be deficient in a variety of ways. Problems that have been identified include poorly focused or formulated questions, a predominance of questions that require short answers involving factual knowledge, the evocation of responses that involve repetition rather than reflection and a lack of assignments or activities designed to develop learners' higher-order cognitive skills. The authors refer to a Kenyan study that involved an investigation into the important elements of assessment. The study found that in many lessons, teachers failed to ask their learners any questions at all and when questions were asked, they were closed. A closed question requires a simple yes or no response and does not facilitate the development of higher-order cognitive skills.

In similar vein, Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:115) aver that teachers may lack expertise and experience in applying continuous assessment strategies. In many instances, the quality of classroom tests may be below standard, which tends to negate assessment validity gains, which was one of the aims of CASS. Teacher workload may increase substantially owing to teachers having to assess learners' work continuously. The authors (1990:115) however, note that evidence has emerged from studies undertaken in England that shows teachers are prepared to put in the necessary effort if they perceive the benefits to themselves and their learners.

Another argument advanced by Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:116) is that if continuous assessment involves project work, there may be an overload on learners undertaking projects in several subjects simultaneously. Moreover, learners from relatively wealthy contexts may hold an advantage in that they have easier access to resources needed to complete projects competently, whereas learners from impoverished contexts have no or limited access to resources. A further argument cautioning against continuous assessment is that administration of continuous assessment within the school may prove complicated. For example, one needs to consider the course of action when learners are absent on the day an assessment is written or when a learner transfers from one school to another. Dealing with normal aggregation and weighting of marks also presents a challenge. Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990:116) claim there are several possible sources of unreliability in school-based assessment including administrative errors, conscious or unconscious teacher or assessor bias and doubts concerning the originality of the assessed work.

Continuous assessment is a formal and important part of the evaluation process of all South African learners in Grade R-12 (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2008). This entails that teachers evaluate learners during teaching and learning. Teachers judge a learner's performance, rate it and record a mark. At the end of the school year, the teacher adds the marks to determine the learner's progression to the next grade. As stated previously, in Grade 12 the weight attached to CASS is 25% per learning area to which is added the remaining 75% from the external summative assessment.

Literature focusing on CASS in South Africa reveals firstly, according to Le Grange & Beets (2005:115), that changes in South African policies including assessment policies after 1994 found teachers ill prepared for new demands placed on them. Secondly, the lack of facilities and resources with which to conduct assessment affects the quantity and range of evidence of achievement (Johnson, 1998; and Combrinck, 2003). According to Johnson (1998:401), “the historically white schools were clearly much better resourced than schools catering for African or Coloured learners.” In a South African quality assurance study conducted by the Department of Education (1999:vi), it is reported that, “the effectiveness of teaching and learning has been found to be related to certain minimum inputs such as textbooks and libraries.” This means that schools that are better resourced are in a position to deliver more effective teaching and assessment activities than schools that lack resources.

In a study of whether teachers are able to develop a portfolio of assessment evidence, Johnson (1998) reported that many South African teachers had no history of developing portfolios of learners’ work and that the collection of evidence was particularly challenging. According to Baker (1994:58), one of the challenges facing educators in the development of portfolios is determining which forms of assessment are most useful for which educational purpose. Clearly, if educators have not been trained effectively to implement CASS, they would certainly experience difficulty in compiling a portfolio with the required evidence of learners’ work.

Literature also indicates that the implementation of CASS in large classes is a challenge (Johnson, 1998; and Combrinck, 2003). In South Africa, the Department of Education (2002e) reports that large class size is making the implementation of CASS difficult especially with respect to the assessment of projects and attending to the varying language requirements of learners.

According to Levin (2008), most societies have profound inequalities and problems, which affect the effectiveness of schools. Levin (2008:50) maintains issues of poverty, poor housing, racial discrimination, too many low-wage jobs, the consumption of unhealthy food and lack of adequate health care, make it harder for children to benefit from their education. Levin further maintains that if our basic social institutions are unequal, we must expect that inequality will be reflected in educational outcomes. In South Africa, there are many challenges emanating from ingrained inequality such as the high levels of poverty, poor quality of teaching and learning and the assessment thereof. These factors typically exacerbate the predicament of the historically disadvantaged. Levin (2008:66) further argues that some institutions have ingrained patterns of belief and behaviour that are widely accepted as normal and natural, no matter how poorly they work. Therefore, according to Levin, if there are new initiatives to be implemented, and those initiatives are different from theories and beliefs of teachers, the challenge is that teachers may restructure their beliefs or domesticate the new curriculum to fit into their old beliefs. Weber (2006), in support of this notion, argues that change will not be realised if teachers' knowledge and competence remain unchanged. Weber (2006:8), similarly argues that new ideas often fail to take root in teaching practices because they are seldom reinforced in the immediate work environment

of learners and teachers. Given the rapid and substantial change in the South African School curriculum between 1996 and 2005, and again in 2013, it is therefore not surprising that teachers are struggling.

From the aforementioned statements, one can deduce that South Africa has experienced a number of challenges with the introduction of CASS. Therefore, this study aims to examine the discrepancies between CASS and external marks. This study is informed by the findings of the National Forum for Learner Performance (NFLP), that indicate that many schools compile CASS marks just prior to the start of the final examination. The Department of Education (2003c) also highlights a perception among certain teachers that CASS is an activity separate from the daily teaching and learning activities. Again, according to the Department of Education (2003c:6), “some teachers, from their experience will be stricter than others, others will be more lenient, others may not have the necessary experience to know what is expected of them, and yet others may not even conduct assessment but still provide some mark.” Boinamo & Van der Walt (2008) similarly argue that some schools in South Africa are so dysfunctional that one cannot accept assessment as a true reflection of learner attainment.

Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:3) point out that in the 2005 November/December National Senior Certificate external assessment there was a significant disparity between the levels of achievement of learners’ CASS marks in comparison to the external summative assessment marks. The existence of the disparity seems to point to unreliability in one of the two assessments. For example, Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:30) mention that in one school learners attained an average of

85% in CASS and that the same learners achieved an average of less than 30% in the external summative assessment. If the two types of learner assessment do not correlate, the implication is that one of the two assessments is unreliable. Hence, this study aims to establish the extent of the discrepancies and to forward some possible reasons for the discrepancies between CASS and external marks.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

In order for a learner to obtain a National Senior Certificate at the end of Grade 12, the evidence of school-based continuous assessment will contribute 25% to the final decision-making process for each learning area, whereas the external summative assessment component for each learning area will contribute 75% (Department of Education, 2002b:5). Emanating from the above-mentioned breakdown, which highlights how continuous assessment is compiled in order to obtain a National Senior Certificate, I feel it is necessary to examine whether marks obtained by a learner through continuous assessment for promotion and certification purposes are a fair and reliable reflection of the learner's demonstrated achievements. Naturally, a discrepancy between the CASS and external summative assessment mark does not necessarily imply that the problem lies with CASS. There may be problems with the external summative assessment as well. However, since my study focuses specifically on CASS, I intend to examine the extent of the difference between CASS and external summative examination marks and suggest some reasons for the discrepancies.

Since both assessments, namely continuous assessment and external summative assessment test the same curriculum, we expect that learners' achievement in

continuous assessment will be aligned with their achievement in the external summative assessment. However, in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Report (2011) on the external summative assessment, the moderator, from her analysis of English First Additional Language, reported that:

- Learners generally lack the language [English] skill
- Learners have serious challenges with vocabulary
- Sentence construction and grammar evidently pose a serious problem as one struggles to make sense of what the learner is trying to say
- There is a lack of quality teaching and learning
- There is a lack of practice of using the language as the First Additional Language (FAL) by learners.

Fleisch (2008) is also concerned about the reliability of CASS. He argues that in some classrooms in South Africa, learners are subjected to rote learning, absent teachers and teachers who are deficient in subject knowledge and teaching methodologies. In support of Fleisch, Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008) argue that some classroom assessments are weak since they fail to expose learners to the quality and standard the external summative assessment requires from Grade 12 learners. Therefore, these authors hold the idea that many learners are exposed to poor classroom assessment practices.

Christie (2008) also supports this view by asserting that research on post-apartheid classroom practices in poor schools reveals major weaknesses in curriculum and pedagogy. In addition, the 2011 Annual National Assessment for Grades 3-6 has indicated weaknesses in the quality of basic education since

learners scored poorly. Christie (2008:201) further argues that what is evident in some schools is classroom practice that fails to engage learners in work of intellectual quality. These problems, which appear to arise in the lower grades, are carried over to Grade 12 and result in many learners being unprepared for external summative assessment. These concerns clearly indicate that there are challenges in some classrooms in South African schools.

## **1.6 Main Research Question**

The main question that my study aims to answer is:

What is the extent of the discrepancies between continuous assessment marks and external summative assessment marks in Grade 12 ENGFAL?

### **1.6.1 Sub-Questions**

- What is the role of assessment?
- What are the different kinds of assessment?
- What are the main policies regarding assessment for Grade 12 ENGFAL?
- What are the reasons for introducing CASS?
- How do CASS marks compare with external summative assessment marks?
- What are some possible reasons for the discrepancies between CASS and external summative assessment marks?
- How can we strengthen the role of CASS?

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

In this sub-section I am going to look first at the general methodology of evidence-based research and an instrumental case study as these will throw light on the specific methods I will use.

Johansson (2004) holds that the main components of empirical research are to discover new facts or clarify existing ones through finding evidence and to construct hypotheses or theories. In my study, I do not aim to try to test a hypothesis or construct a new theory, but I do aim to find evidence about the discrepancies between CASS marks and the external summative assessment marks in English First Additional Language. I aim to collect my evidence mainly through documents, including official policies and mark sheets. It has been highlighted in my literature review that CASS marks have a degree of unreliability so this implies it is known that there are some discrepancies between CASS and external summative assessment marks. In this study I aim to make this discrepancy clearer. One of the main purposes of research is, according to Johansson (2004), to make intelligible previously known facts and this is also supported by Mouton (1996:29) who argues that research is the pursuit of valid knowledge (the epistemological dimension). I therefore want to outline the extent of the problem of the discrepancy in ENGFAL and to start suggesting possible reasons for the low correlation. Of course, each of these reasons would warrant a study of its own, but as a preliminary step, I want to flesh out in the confines of this minithesis the charge that there is indeed a problem.

In order to analyse the discrepancies, I need to clarify also the concept of assessment. This clarification entails the theoretical framework in terms of which I will conduct the study. Concepts also introduce a perspective: a way of looking at empirical phenomena. Through concepts the perceptual world is given an order and coherence that could not be perceived before conceptualization (Johansson, 2004:6). Mouton (1996:115) argues that concepts acquire new meaning when they become integrated in a theory in the social sciences. The fact that concepts acquire meaning within a conceptual framework such as a theory, a model or a typology, has led philosophers of science to refer to such concepts as theoretical concepts or constructs.

Concepts do not stand in isolation, they are limited. The network of conceptual links creates systems or theories. Theories themselves can be classified according to their scope, their function, their structure and their level. In my study, the concept “assessment” will be looked at; and as a concept, it is also located within a network of concepts. For the purposes of my study, I will interpret the concept of “assessment” as a concept of variable, i.e. something that can be measured. (There are, of course, different ways to interpret the concept of “assessment”, but for the purposes of my study I have adopted the interpretation best suited to my study aims.)

Johansson (2004:7) holds that there are different types and different levels of theorising. He classifies the different levels of theorising from high to low. In a high level of theorising, concepts are combined to form a new theory; at a lower level of theorising, concepts provide a framework for predictions; and yet at a

lower level of theorising, concepts provide a taxonomy in terms of which phenomena can be classified, and at a the lowest level of theorising, concepts organise and summarise empirical observations. I will examine the network of assessment concepts at a low level of theorising in order to measure and summarise the discrepancies I identify.

My study will draw on various authors' conceptualization of assessment (chapter 2) and will analyse the CASS marks of my four selected schools (chapter 4). A form of conceptualizing is to give a definition. I will thus draw on various operational definitions to help me understand how assessment is conceived in the official policy documents. Johansson (2004:8) notes that an operational definition lays down the meaning of a term by referring to a certain operation or method.

I will therefore aim to use the definitions of CASS and external summative assessment as concepts of variable to help me measure the discrepancies between the two sets of marks.

My method for collecting evidence will draw on the following main sources: policy documents, teachers' mark sheet and the national external summative assessment mark sheets. Therefore, it is primarily a document-based study. It is not a primarily qualitative study, in that the scope of the study precludes an investigation of teachers' practices, interpretations and own conceptualisations of assessment. However, in order to contextualize the teachers' mark sheets, I am going to use a limited, inductive case study approach.

According to Johansson (2004:31) the case study approach is influenced by American pragmatism. The online Stanford Encyclopedia (section 1) identifies the core of pragmatism as a method of clarifying the contents of hypotheses by tracing their practical “consequences”. Pragmatism is thus primarily an activity of inquiry which, on the approach championed by Dewey, holds that there is no sharp dichotomy between theoretical and practical judgments. Pragmatists see themselves as making a “return to common sense”. The process of inquiry upheld by Dewey is one whereby we first of all recognize that there is a problem, and that we try to understand the problem by describing its elements and identifying their relationships, or networks with other concepts. The *description* of these elements is in itself a tool and object of investigation, thus bridging the “divide” between theoretical beliefs and practical considerations. The case study appears within a variety of research traditions such as sociology, ethnography and biography and within spheres of practical activity.

The real world of assessment is complex and messy. Given the limited scope of my thesis, I will not try to analyse how teachers use and understand CASS, but I will start by describing the problem of discrepancies, and will describe elements of the complex problem by looking at the empirical evidence of four schools’ CASS mark sheets to describe, identify and measure what the discrepancies are. Of course, a full case study would include this as well as many more variables in the complex whole. However, my unit of analysis within this whole is the recorded assessment marks – both the mark sheets for CASS and the schedules from the National Department of Education assessment.

My small case study will be an inductive study in that I will identify a number of facts, uncover evidence in an attempt to find a pattern. I will therefore proceed in an inductive way in that I make general observations derived from limited evidence. To strengthen these generalizations, much more empirical evidence would need to be collected.

My attempt here is modest and humble. I want to suggest some potential patterns. Mouton (1996:77) notes that in an inductive argument, genuine supporting evidence as expressed in the premises can lead only to probable conclusions. So my small case study enables me to make only tentative suggestions of possible reasons for the discrepancies, and offer only speculative solutions. Johanssen (2004:32) asserts that a case is a phenomenon of some kind that emerges in a limited context. In this study I examine the limited recorded marks in the complex of overall assessment.

According to Stake (1998) a case study is more a choice of objects to be studied than a specific methodological choice. As noted, my object of study comprises the CASS marks of four schools and the external summative assessment recorded marks. However, teachers' recorded marks need to be placed in context. In order to clear up some queries and to gain access to the external summative assessment marks, I met informally with teachers who made their marks available for my study. I did not interview them in any formal, systematic way since there was no set of questions to be asked of each of them. Instead, I talked with them informally as my professional colleagues to verify the marksheets and to talk through any queries I had about the actual recorded marks.

In an instrumental case study, i.e. a case study used to illustrate and contextualize conceptual descriptions in an attempt to identify or solve a practical problem, the choice of a case is of great significance. My four schools are, of course, not a representative sample. Instead, they provide the embedded context of the recorded marks which serve as a base for comparison. In my experience as an ENGFAL teacher of 24 years, the phenomenon of CASS marks since 2001 being on average higher than the external summative marks is typical. This has been reported by Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008). It was exactly this observation over many years of being involved in an ENGFAL cluster that motivated me to undertake this study.

To enable my examination of the discrepancies between the two assessment types, I selected four schools with similar economic and geographical status. All the four schools are in quintile one, however they do differ in terms of learners enrollment and number of classrooms. Two of the schools have smaller ENGFAL teacher-learner ratios whilst the other two have bigger ENGFAL teacher-learner ratios. I did that in order to compare larger classes to smaller classes. I also selected these schools for pragmatic reasons because they are located in areas that are readily accessible for me and because I am familiar with the broad social context in which they function. These schools are in the Ilembe District, KwaZulu-Natal.

After selecting these schools, I approached the principals, informed them of the rationale for, and aim of my study. I requested their permission to draw on their schools' 2011 CASS grids and schedules and to speak informally to their ENGFAL teachers in case I had points of clarification I wished to raise about the mark schedules. Following ethical protocol, I assured the principals that although I intended to use their schools' statistics I would not disclose their identities. I explained to them that for purposes of confidentiality, I would use pseudonyms. I also committed to providing them with my study findings.

Once the four principals had granted their permission, I met with the English First Additional Language teachers. We scrutinized each school's CASS grid and compared it to the external summative assessment schedule. My discussions with teachers were not interviews. However, I required their contributions when I examined their CASS marks so they could add background, respond to my queries and explain their calculations. One of the reasons I wanted to meet with teachers was to verify that the marks schedules I was going to use were in fact complete and accurate lists of the CASS marks. This study is thus essentially an interpretation and analysis of literature, policies and formal mark schedules.

In summary, my study is a document-based study informed by a pragmatist approach that describes the problem by adopting a limited, inductive instrumental case study to contextualise the description of the problem and highlight the relationships of the elements.

## **1.8 Chapter Outline**

The study will discuss assessment, its role, different kinds of assessment, the main policies regarding assessment for English First Additional Language in Grade 12 and the role of UMALUSI. It will also highlight some reasons for the introduction of CASS. The study will further compare CASS marks with external summative assessment marks and finally will suggest ways to strengthen the role of CASS. In this chapter, I briefly outlined my personal background as an ENGFAL teacher and my interest in assessment. I presented a brief literature overview of assessment and CASS as well as noted selected concerns of CASS in South Africa. The chapter furthermore articulated my main research question, followed by a brief description of my theoretical approach and method of inquiry

In Chapter 2, I shall provide an overview of assessment. This implies that I shall define assessment and highlight why it is needed in an educational setting. I will again discuss the principles that should govern assessment which according to this study includes reliability, validity, relevancy, transferability and fairness. In this chapter I shall also outline the main reasons for assessment and in this study these include motivating learners to learn, improving educational quality, and making teachers accountable for certification and selection. The chapter will also discuss assessment practices. In conclusion, the chapter will focus on continuous assessment and highlight its purpose and means of collecting evidence, which includes observation and test-based assessment as well as self, peer and group assessment. A brief discussion on recording and reporting of assessment, the use of rating scales, task lists and rubrics will follow.

Chapter 3 will address South African Education Policy concerning assessment and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The focus will be Further Education and Training (FET) Grades 10-12. In addressing the NCS, I shall discuss how the curriculum has progressed since 1997, a period after the attainment of democracy. I shall also discuss principles upon which this New Curriculum Statement was built. The chapter will further explain the outcomes-based approach to assessment and explain why CASS was adopted as an assessment strategy in South African schools. Thereafter, I shall focus on the assessment policy for English First Additional Language for Grade 12. The discussion will include learning outcomes and assessment standards, programme of assessment, promotion and certification as well as the role of UMALUSI in the assessment. The chapter will conclude by discussing some further policy developments, which have been adopted in order to strengthen assessment in South African schools and in turn strengthen CASS.

In chapter 4, I shall focus on the discrepancies that exist between CASS and summative assessment marks. To do this, the chapter will commence with an explanation of the difference between CASS, namely marks accumulated throughout the year through assessment tasks like projects or oral work, and marks learners achieve by means of a once-off external summative assessment. It is assumed that marks learners achieved through CASS will be aligned with their levels of achievement in the external summative assessment. To achieve this, I shall compare learner achievement in CASS to the levels of learner achievement in external summative assessment in English First Additional Language of four schools in Ilembe District, KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter will outline achievement

levels as well as rubrics that are meant to be used in allocating learner achievement levels in different assessment tasks throughout the year. In tabulated format, the chapter will compare learner achievement levels in CASS and external summative assessment. Findings from the disparities that exist between the two types of assessment will lead to the discussion of possible reasons for the discrepancy that this study aims to address.

The final chapter will focus on ways to improve CASS in South African schools, given the challenges highlighted in Chapter 4. The final chapter will outline specific measures educationists recommend to strengthen CASS marks, thereby assisting to minimise discrepancies. I begin the chapter by highlighting that continuous assessment, when administered properly, has the potential to improve learner performance as well as teacher interactions, since it directs learning, helps learners to achieve by providing feedback and thus improves learner achievement. This implies that when it is administered properly, learner achievement in CASS will tend to correlate with achievement in external summative assessment. This chapter will further point out that, as much as CASS has the potential to improve learner levels of achievement, it also holds disadvantages. This implies that if CASS is to improve learner achievement it needs to be strengthened. As a result, the chapter will conclude by discussing some suggestions for strengthening the role of CASS in teaching and learning.

## **CHAPTER 2: Understanding Assessment**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, assessment will be defined. Its purpose, tools and the generally used assessment forms in English First Additional Language will be discussed. Some challenges related to assessment, including continuous assessment, will also be examined and discussed. To do this I will draw on some key authors and group their ideas under main headings that will serve as a framework for my later chapters.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend educational institutions (pre-schools, schools, FET Colleges and Universities). The state plays a major role in allocating the required resources to the educational institutions and ensuring that quality education is provided. Teachers teach and guide learners, while learners are expected to learn so they may achieve their best results and develop their potential.

Teachers and learners communicate through verbal interaction, written exercises, formal and informal tests, assignments, projects and homework. These means of communication help teachers to monitor their learners' progress. They should motivate learners to improve where there is weak work and slow progress and praise learners who make satisfactory progress. Parents communicate with teachers at school to acquire information about their children's performance through progress report cards, personal visits to school and the school's parent meetings.

From the above, one can gather that assessment is a medium of communication between parents, teachers and learners regarding their performance at school. This brings me to discuss what then do we understand when we talk about assessment.

Cullingford (1997) asserts that the concept “assessment” in education is not new and claims it is what educators have always been involved in. However, assessment has played a far more important role in South African education since the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) (Sieborger & Macintosh, 1998). Assessment in OBE is associated with change and improvement in the way learning takes place. Assessment must motivate learners to improve on past performances. This can be achieved by using results positively (Sieborger & Macintosh, 1998:13). Assessment must be viewed as an integral part of the learning process.

## **2.2 What is Assessment?**

Madaus, Russel & Higgins (2009:37) claim that the concept “assessment” in education refers to a tool used to obtain a sample of what a student knows or can do systematically. Cullingford (1997:8) defines assessment as that which is concerned with measuring student performance during or following a programme of study. In other words, performance indicators are used to indicate the level of knowledge and skills attained by learners after they have completed an educational task or activity. Dietel, Herman & Knuth (1991:1) define assessment as any method used to gauge the knowledge learners have acquired up to certain point.

From the aforementioned definitions, one can deduce that assessment is a measurement of a learner's knowledge. This means that when we refer to the concept "assessment," we actually imply measurement, which normally is interpreted in terms of a "pass" or "fail."

However, with the implementation of the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) Act of October 1995, assessment moved away from the traditional approach to an alternative approach that is seen to have greater educational value in terms of the kind of teaching and learning it encourages. As a result Le Grange & Beets (2005:12) hold that the word assessment is derived from Latin which originally means "to sit beside." According to them assessment indicates a much deeper involvement of a teacher in the development and progress of the learner which includes guidance, recognition of the learner's context (physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural, economic), reflection on own practice and continued support as he/she walks besides the learner on the road to achieving the expected outcomes.

The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12 (DBE 2011c:3) defines assessment as a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners. From these one can also generalise that assessment is not just a test activity but a process through which teachers make decisions about learner levels of achievement. In other words, assessment is a process used by teachers to know whether learners are performing according to their full potential

or are making progress towards the required levels of performance. If assessment has this important requirement about learners' levels of achievement and performance it is obvious that it should be based on valid principles. What then are valid principles of assessment? The Draft document of the National Curriculum (Department of Education, 2002d:43) stipulates that the principles that frame assessment should be transparent and democratic, clearly focused, integrated with teaching and learning, based on pre-set criteria of the assessment standards, used with a variety of instruments, allow for expanded opportunities for learners, be learner-paced and fair, flexible, valid, reliable, consistent and authentic.

Below I will explain the most important of the principles.

a) Assessment should be reliable

Trice (2009:29) believes that assessment reliability "is the extent to which an assessment accurately measures what it was designed to measure, the extent to which error is eliminated from the assessment process." This is supported by Weidemann (2006:83) who asserts that reliability means a test should measure what it sets out to measure and not something else. However, Trice (200:29) also acknowledges that no test is completely reliable; it may be assumed that teachers will have a one to two percent error margin on something even as straightforward as grading multiple-choice tests. On the other hand, for Alderson et. al (1995:6) reliability in an assessment is measured by the extent to which test scores are consistent. This means that if candidates, after writing a test today, were to write the same test at a later stage, they would achieve similar results assuming no

change in their ability. This is what my study focuses on: it is based on the assumption that since learners during the year are exposed to CASS activities that prepare them for the final external summative assessment, their scores in CASS and external summative assessment ought to be consistent.

The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD, 2004:1) states: “If a particular assessment were totally reliable, an assessor acting independently using the same criteria and mark scheme would come to exactly the same judgement about a given piece of work.” However, I have observed that during our cluster moderation sessions for English First Additional Language using the same criteria we never arrived at the same judgement on our school’s pieces of work. It is also stated that learning outcomes and assessment criteria should be explicitly given to learners when the task is set to achieve reliability. Again from my observation this gave rise to a concern for me because most learners do not understand why they are given tasks to do.

b) Assessment should be valid

Henning (1990:89) avers that validity refers to the appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure of what it is purported to measure, a view shared by Bailey (1998:2). Seeking validity in the truth of the test and its relation to what it is intended to test, Davies distinguishes five forms of validity (1990:21,23), namely, face, content, construct, predictive and concurrent validity. And Alderson et. al (1995:172), making a similar distinction, differentiate three main types, namely, internal (face, content, response), external (concurrent, predictive) and construct validity.

Following Davies (1990:23,24) and Alderson et al (1995:176,177), face validity is established with reference to the appeal of a test to lay judgment; while content validity is established with reference to professional judgment, usually that of a teacher or a tester, real (for achievement testing) or imagined (for proficiency testing) or of the theory or model (for aptitude testing). Response validity refers to test-takers' responses to test items in a growing range of qualitative techniques like self-report and self-observation; whereas predictive validity refers to the predictive force of a test, like proficiency tests, and construct validity refers to how well you translated your ideas or theories to the assessment. Finally, concurrent validity refers to a criterion already at hand, usually another test, which may be a parallel version of the criterion test or a simplified version thereof.

Based on these five forms, Davies (1990:24) developed the following matrix for the establishment of the relation between test purpose, test use and test validity.

**Table 2: Establishment of the Relation between Purpose, Test Use and Test Validity**

TEST PURPOSE	TEST USE	TEST VALIDITY
To measure progress	Achievement	Content
To evaluate programme	Proficiency	Predictive/ concurrent
To investigate learning	Aptitude	Construct
To illuminate syllabus	Diagnostic	Content

However Le Grange & Beets (2005:115) argue that applying these validity types has also been constrained by practical difficulties. I will discuss these in more detail in section 2.5.

c) Assessment should be relevant and transferable

One of the main points of criticism against teaching methods prior to Outcomes-Based Education is that learners often learnt by rote and were unable to apply what they had learnt to other contexts. A lack of transferability remains a major obstacle in the language classroom. Learners often question the relevance of reading many prescribed works. In addition, the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD, 2004:1) argues that when devising assessment tasks, teachers and assessors should ensure that these tasks address the skills learners are required to develop. Language items are taught without any reference to their possible use in real situations; for example, the teaching of the passive voice according to the structural approach.

d) Assessment should be fair

Fairness in an assessment exists when it:

- Is appropriate
- Is personalised
- Is natural and flexible
- Can be modified to pinpoint specific abilities
- Functions at the relevant level of difficulty
- Promotes rapport between an examiner and student.

Given the above broad outline of what assessment is and ought to be, the reasons for assessment will be examined next.

### **2.3 Why are the learners assessed?**

According to Guskey & Marzano (2003), assessment contributes to learning and will always affect learners and learning. It is further mentioned by these authors that assessment forms the basis for decisions that teachers make about what to teach, to whom, what to communicate to parents and promotion to the next grade. It also provides the basis upon which learners make sense of personal accomplishment, feelings of self-worth and willingness to engage in the academic work of schools. Assessment therefore defines consolidation of learning and affects the development of enduring learning strategies and skills. Ultimately, it influences the value that learners attach to education.

Weideman (2006:82) notes that tests are used at tertiary institutions for placement. This implies a test is used to channel studies. Apart from channelling students, Weideman argues that it could be used for diagnostic purpose wherein he mentions that a test should be a reliable measuring instrument to determine what level and nature of intervention is required by a student on entrance to a tertiary institution.

Within a South African context the general aim of assessing learners is for growth, development and support in order to progress (Department of Education 2002a:3). The National Protocol on Assessment (2011c:3) adds that assessment should provide an indication of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner.

The above is also supported by Grosser & Lombard (2008:43) who aver that through assessment processes learners should develop the skills and understanding they need to contribute to and participate in the world of further education and training and work. This also implies assessment should improve and promote learning.

If assessment has this measure of impact, it stands to reason that it deserves careful attention so that it supports rather than hampers learning. In the following I am going to discuss these purposes.

a) Motivation

One of the primary purposes of assessment is to motivate learners to learn. Butler & McMunn (2006:159) assert it is important that the classroom environment should promote learning. This implies that in the classroom, there should be assessment activities that motivate learners to learn. Butler & McMunn (2006:159) further state that the following factors may motivate learners to learn:

- Involving learners in their own assessment
- Matching assessment strategies to student learning
- Considering thinking styles and using assessment to adjust the classroom environment and enhance learning.

These authors claim that poorly constructed assessments may hamper learner motivation to learn. They further claim that learning takes place inside the minds of learners and that they learn if they are willing to engage in the material. If not, it is

assumed learners are unable to learn. It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to encourage engagement by creating learning opportunities and motivating learners.

Butler & McMunn (2006:161) state that motivation is a learned construct, therefore teachers can teach learners motivation.. Brophy's (1987) definition of motivation as cited in Butler & McMunn (2006:161) states that learner motivation to learn "is an acquired competence, which is developed through general experience. It is stimulated directly through modelling, communication of expectations and direct instruction or socialisation by significant others, especially parents and teachers." It follows that if motivation is a learned competence, then instruction and assessment can be structured to foster this competence.

Kohn (1993) as cited in Butler & McMunn (2006:162), maintains that if teachers wish to have classrooms of motivated learners, they need to change their classroom management styles, routines and strategies. Drawing on Kohn, Butler & McMunn appeal for an environment where content is flexible, where learner and teacher needs are acknowledged and call for a collaborative climate for learning in which all participants are involved as well as flexibility in instruction and assessment to meet the individual needs of learners. In this way, assessment may contribute to learner motivation, which teachers strive to foster.

Finally, Butler & McMunn (2006) argue for a self-worth theory of achievement. In their argument, they draw on Covington (1984), who contends classroom achievement is built on a foundation of protecting learners' sense of worth or personal value, which depends to a large extent on their accomplishments or

performance. According to Butler & McMunn (2006:163), the quality of performance is a result of both ability and effort. They argue that research has demonstrated that learners perceive ability as a primary contributor to achievement and that effort appears to supersede ability as a main source of reward and satisfaction, only in an environment where learning for its own sake is the goal.

This therefore suggests that the most important task of the teacher is to instruct learners in ways that will prevent a preoccupation with existing ability from interfering with their motivation to learn. To accomplish this, teachers need to use non-competitive learning structures that increase the number of intrinsic rewards available to learners, so more learners experience achievement and a sense of self-worth. Butler & McMunn (2006:163) hold the view that competitive structures should be avoided since they promote egoistic or social comparative orientation.

b) Educational Improvement

Assessment at national level is used to describe the learner's achievement in the education system. It is also envisaged that assessment plays a role in improving educational quality. This means that the information obtained from an assessment regarding the strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and skills that learners acquire may play an important role in informing policy-making and decision-making in allocating resources (Klenowski, 2002). According to Satterly (1981), assessment provides relevant information to curriculum developers, textbook writers and politicians.

Madaus et al. (2009:30) similarly argue that assessment provides objective measures of learners' learning and documents deficiencies in the educational system. This implies we can only detect the quantity of knowledge learners have gained through assessment. It may also provide an indication of whatever is malfunctioning within the educational system. Cullingford (1997:11) maintains that assessment ensures educational standards are maintained and indicates whether standards are falling or rising. For example, in South Africa, people have voiced concern regarding falling standards while assessment has revealed it may be due to poor literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, statistics released in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reviews (2008) testified to declining standards in Grade 12 results. This could possibly cause high learner dropout at tertiary level of education, especially during the first year of study. Coetzee & Johl (2008:26) aver that approximately 20% of learners at tertiary institutions from formerly disadvantaged schools are not functionally literate. In an attempt to raise standards, South Africa has introduced various interventions such as the National Strategy for Learner Reading. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have initiated Readathon campaigns and reading weeks are being promoted at schools. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has introduced Annual National Assessment (ANA) for Grades 1, 2, 3 and 9, an initiative to improve learners' literacy, numeracy and writing skills.

Madaus et al. (2009) view external summative assessment as both a system of monitoring and a vehicle of change that may be used to dictate the ends of the instructional system and to improve teacher behaviour and classroom instruction. This implies external assessment monitors and assesses teacher interactions in

classrooms. It reveals effective and ineffective teacher interactions and dictates changes needed in classrooms. It is for these reasons that Klenowski (2002) points out that for policymakers, assessment has progressed from a means of obtaining information about learners and education systems to being a key strategy for improving student learning and educational quality.

c) Accountability

Cullingford (1997) explains that much effort and money is devoted to assessment to establish if money spent on the education system is generating the desired outcomes. By implication, the public hold teachers accountable by means of assessment.

Éamon De Valera, the late Prime Minister of Ireland, as cited in Madaus, Russel & Higgins (2009:15) stated:

“If we want to see that a certain standard is reached, and we are paying the money, we have the right to see that something is secured for that money. The ordinary way to test it and try to help the whole educational system is by arranging our tests in such a way that they will work in a direction we want.”

This means politicians and the public want to be assured of their public investment in teaching and learning. To this end, external summative assessment serves as an accountability tool that ensures value for expenditure of taxpayer's money. It

therefore may be deduced that the logic behind external summative assessment is to hold teachers and learners accountable for the State's money.

d) Certification and Selection

Another purpose of assessment mentioned by Cullingford (1997) is that of vocational education. Cullingford (1997:11) argues that assessment is used to sort learners for entry into trades and professions, thereby ensuring minimum standards for occupational practice are achieved. This "entry gate" function requires a considerable degree of central (national and increasingly international) control of assessment and therefore of the curriculum. This view is also shared by Weideman (2006:82). An example is a Grade 12 or National Senior Certification examination that South African learners undertake at the end of the FET phase.

The Green Paper in Education (Department of Education, 1998b:46) specifies that assessment is used to select or certify and has a summative function. It is used for developmental purposes and has a formative function. The Green Paper (1998b:46) adds that at the macro-level, assessment must provide reliable and valid information regarding learner achievement and competency. This will ensure legitimacy and currency of qualifications, such as the Senior Certificate Examinations with future employers, Higher Education institutions and the public in general. At the micro-level, assessment needs to be developmental and formative and provide guidance to learners through appropriate evaluation and feedback. Learners should be able to progress in their own learning with meaningful feedback from teachers. The discussion in the following section focuses on the purpose of continuous assessment.

What we see from this section is that there are multiple reasons for assessment. The main motivation for the exit examination which I will discuss in chapter 4 is one of formal certification.

#### **2.4 How are the learners assessed?**

Le Grange & Beets (2005:115) assert that calls have been made for more authentic ways of assessing learning and for assessment to become integral to teaching and learning processes. In other words, “authentic ways of assessment” implies learners need to be part and parcel of their assessment. By this they need to know what to achieve and how well to achieve it. According to the Department of Education (2002:12) when this is clear, we can start the process of learning that should build a collection of evidence that we have achieved the outcomes.

The Department of Education (2002:12) further mentions that the evidence we collect of this must be reliable. That implies that evidence collected in other ways or by other educators should generally give us the same results. In addition, the evidence we gather through assessment should be valid, that is, it should directly address the aspects of learning that we seek to assess. Because each assessment cannot be totally valid or reliable by itself, we should make decisions that are based on more than one assessment. This is the principle behind continuous assessment (Department of Education, 2002:12). What then is continuous assessment? In the following I shall briefly explain what CASS is.

### Continuous Assessment (CASS)

According to Dietel et al. (1991), methods of assessment are determined by beliefs about learning. Early theories of learning assumed that after basic skills were acquired by rote, they could be assembled into complex understandings and insight. However, evidence from contemporary cognitive psychology indicates that all learning requires that meaningful learning be reflective, constructive and self-regulated. In keeping with contemporary theories about learning, a trend in assessment is to deviate from traditional tests to alternative assessment, the so-called authentic or performance assessment. This includes a variety of strategies such as open-ended questions, hands-on execution of experiments, computer simulations, writing in many disciplines and portfolios of learners' work over time. As a result, in the South African educational context there is an increased emphasis on continuous assessment and portfolio work.

Continuous assessment was introduced partly owing to complaints that it was unfair and unnecessarily stressful to examine learners on a single occasion or over a short period where luck regarding the question played a particularly significant role in achieving success. Klenowski (2002), argues that if assessors or teachers take learner performance into account over a longer period and in a variety of situations, it is possible to obtain a more representative view of their capabilities than in the context of an examination. Israel (2005:1420) contends continuous assessment provides for assessment in a less stressful manner than under examination conditions. Further, continuous assessment is important since it assesses those attributes, values and skills that a "once off" external assessment cannot assess. An additional advantage of continuous assessment is

that it encourages steady application throughout the course and does not penalise learners unduly for one or two pieces of poor work. Continuous assessment encourages development of a variety of problem solving skills, which inhibit the need to develop examination tricks (Satterly, 1981:59).

The Department of Education (2002c:12), explains that continuous assessment often abbreviated to CASS is an assessment strategy that bases decisions about learning on a range of different times throughout the learning process. The document further mentions that CASS involves assessment activities that are spread throughout the year using various kinds of assessment methods such as tests, exams and projects and assignments. The different pieces of evidence that learners produce as part of continuous assessment are collected into a portfolio. According to Isreal (2005), CASS enables learners to learn in different ways, to know and maximise their learning styles, and to provide proof of their knowledge in different ways. In addition, CASS provides teachers with an opportunity to assess whether their teaching is in fact effective.

According to the Department of Education (2002e:12) continuous assessment focuses on the ongoing manner in which assessment is integrated into the process of teaching and learning. Teachers get to know about learners in an informal way through their day to day teaching, through questioning and observing learners interact with one another. In later chapters, I will look more closely at the reasons for CASS and the marks for certification of the exit examination. In chapter 4 and 5, I will address some of the problems and possible solutions to the discrepancies

that I have identified. This brings me to directly answer how evidence is collected in assessment activities.

#### **2.4.1 Collecting Evidence for Assessment**

There are various methods of collecting assessment evidence. Currently the National Senior Certificate examination includes the following methods, namely, observation-based, test-based, task-based or performance assessment, and self, peer and group (Department of Education, 2003b:50 and Department of Basic Education, 2011c:77). These assessment methods are discussed in turn.

##### a) Observation-Based Assessment

The observation-based assessment method tends to be less structured, allows teachers to record different kinds of evidence for different learners at different times, and often is based on tasks that require learners to interact with one another in pursuit of a common solution or product (Department of Education 2003b: 50). Observation should be intentional and conducted with the help of an appropriate observation instrument. Oral assessment may be in the form of prepared or unprepared speeches, reciting poetry or debates where teachers observe classroom discussions focusing on particular topics.

##### b) Test-Based Assessment

The Department of Education (2003b: 50-51) notes that test-based assessment is structured and enables teachers to gather the same evidence for all learners, in the same way and at the same assessment opportunity, creating evidence of learning that is verified by a specific mark or score. Tests and examinations

remain an important part of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) because they provide reliable evidence of knowledge learned, on the precondition they are used correctly. However, they do not generally provide reliable evidence of the development of practical skills, values and attitudes – these are more reliably assessed through observation.

c) Task-Based or Performance Assessment Methods

These assessments show the extent to which learners can apply the skills and knowledge they have learned to unfamiliar contexts or contexts outside the classroom. Assessment activities are structured and although evidence collected from different learners may differ, the evidence should show if learners are able to choose effectively, which part of their learning is needed to solve a problem or task, whereafter they use that learning to complete the task successfully. This approach relies on the professional judgement of the teacher in assessing the performance of learners against a set of pre-established criteria, which need to be described in advance in rubrics or task lists. The continuous assessment portfolio falls in this category (Department of Education 2003b: 51).

d) Self, Peer and Group Assessment

In self, peer and group assessment, the outcomes and assessment standards are transparent. Learners know what is expected of them and can therefore play an important role in assessment by assessing their own work (self-assessment) or by assessing one another's work (peer assessment), prior to submitting it for formal examination. The ability to work in groups effectively is one of the critical

outcomes. Assessing group work involves assessing the extent to which learners work effectively as a group (Department of Education 2003b:50).

How is evidence of learner performance recorded and reported? The next subsection discusses this.

#### **2.4.2 Recording and Reporting of Assessment**

Recording and reporting involve the capture of the required data (Department of Education, 2003b:51). It is often difficult to separate the different methods of recording from methods of evaluating (or marking) learners' performances (Department of Education, 2003b:51). Rating scales, task lists and rubrics are types of recording instruments currently in use.

##### **a) Rating Scales**

The Department of Education (2002c:15) contends a rating scale is a system where either a symbol such as A or B, or a mark such as 5, 10 or 50%, is defined in detail. Traditional marking, assessment and evaluation used rating scales but they often failed to provide descriptive detail. Consequently, it was challenging to determine learners' strengths and weaknesses in terms of intended outcomes. Bachman (1990:36) suggests that when developing a rating scale, the point on the scale should be defined typically in terms of either the types of language performance or levels of abilities considered distinctive at different scale points. The different points must be defined to represent distinct levels or bands clearly. The more levels there are, the more precise the rating scale. Below is an example of an oral rating scale stated in Bachman & Palmer (1983:3).

- 0 – 1: Extremely limited vocabulary, no cohesion, poor oral skill
- 1 – 2: Limited vocabulary, little cohesion, poor oral skill
- 2 – 3: Moderate vocabulary, moderate cohesion, moderate oral skill
- 3 – 4: Extensive vocabulary, excellent cohesion, excellent oral skill

b) Task Lists

Task lists or checklists consist of discrete statements ticked off to describe a learner's performance in a particular task (Department of Education, 2003b:52).

c) Rubrics

Rubrics are a hierarchy of standards with benchmarks that describe the minimum level or standard of accepted performance for each criterion (Department of Education, 2003b:52).

Having discussed what and how assessment should be conducted does not mean it is a straightforward activity more especially because this is a human exercise, it has challenges. The idea put forth by Le Grange & Beets (2005:1203) supports this, wherein they argue that efforts to transform assessment practices in schools depend crucially on the kinds of pre-service and in-service education programmes made available to teachers.

In the next subsection I will look at some challenges in assessment practices.

## 2.5 Problems with Assessment

Assessment of learner performance is not without problems. Wragg (1997) argues that even carefully conceived forms of assessment may go awry from time to time. This implies assessment has pitfalls. Problem-areas encountered in assessment are discussed in turn.

### a) Validity

Wragg (1997:11) claims not all assessments are valid, as they do not always measure what they are intended to measure. An example could be a Natural Science test written by learners who are not yet proficient in reading and writing skills. Learners whose primary language differs from the language used in the test could be confused. The result would reflect achievement in language rather than in Natural Science. However Le Grange & Beets (2005:115) also argue that validity has also been constrained by practical difficulties resulting from the way teaching and learning occur in many education systems.

### b) Reliability

An assessment may fail the validity test and be unreliable too. For example, different markers may score it differently or it could produce different results on different occasions. Van der Horst & McDonald (1997) claim that in an observation-based assessment, observers are notoriously unreliable since they may assess subjectively. In addition, learners behave differently when they know they are being observed.

c) Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Wragg (1997:12) is of the opinion that if learners view assessment as the final adjudication of their competence, they may believe they are limited in what they can achieve and simply close their minds to further learning or perform below their capabilities. Young learners find it difficult to elude being labelled and may be influenced by what adults say about them. It may lead to stereotyping, whereby teachers automatically categorise learners as certain types of achievers, rather than freshly assessing them each time.

d) Measuring the Measurable

Wragg (1997:12) asserts that assessment may focus on aspects that are measured easily instead of on important aspects. For example, in a music lesson, a teacher may be interested in finding out if learners know what the musical term “andante” means rather than in assessing their music appreciation or understanding of music. Yet, many music teachers hope the learners they teach will show a lifelong interest in performing music.

It is unfortunate when an assessment measures the straightforward and neglects to measure anything problematic. A related issue is that teachers, especially those who need to cope with large classes, may resort to tests that are easily administered and marked, such as using standard multiple choice questions. Broadfoot et al. (1992:8) argue that in administering continuous assessment, the overload on teachers is real since continuous assessment demands that teachers spend more time assessing and marking.

e) International Comparison

International comparisons of achievement are afforded extensive prominence in the mass media, the assumption being that international academic achievement captures the essence of a country's success or failure. According to Wragg (1997:12) a multitude of problems exist in international comparisons. Wragg first mentions that it is extremely difficult to draw up parallel samples in any comparison. Wragg further claims that some countries have a selective system while others do not. Most tests cover a narrow curriculum, for example, with focus solely on Mathematics and the results are generalised not only to Mathematics but also to the entire education system, for example, South Africa.

f) Politics

Wragg (1997:12) notes that education departments spend substantial sums of money on education. Consequently, they are bound to come under public scrutiny. The problem with this is that assessment of learners, progress and learning becomes a political issue, particularly when the ruling party tries to defend its record and opposition parties attack it.

As an overview of assessment, I will therefore hold that assessments have outcomes, which may be beneficial or innocuous. Too little or too much assessment, or a teacher who neglects to provide feedback on assessment, may demotivate learners. Broadfoot et al. (1992), conclude that assessment appears to be one of the most compelling factors influencing education.

Furthemore, Broadfoot et al. (1992:9) argue that assessment must affect teaching if it is to raise standards. It will affect forward planning through its results and its process, since opportunities need to be provided to gather information about skills and understanding and to provide feedback to learners. Assessment will also affect on-the-spot decisions in response to learners' reactions and initiatives, requiring reflection to determine implications for long-term planning. Reliable and valid assessment is necessary as it influences teaching and learning positively. The positive influences, however, depend on teachers having skills to gather the required information, the understanding of the direction and nature of development and the time for reflection and planning. Broadfoot et al. (1992:9) argue that at the present rate of change, the majority of teachers do not possess these skills and their strategy for survival is to assess learners in a mechanistic manner. They switch from a "teaching" mode to an "assessment" mode of operation to keep learners busy so they can concentrate on giving special tasks to a small group. In other words, in some instances classroom work is becoming the continuous administration of pseudo-assessment activities.

According to Broadfoot et al. (1992:1-2), solid evidence shows assessment can inhibit learners' learning and depress their motivation, particularly when standards are set beyond their reach. This becomes especially pertinent when failure labels are assigned to learners. They further point out that problems are often exacerbated when assessment is undertaken for two purposes that create tension in the kind of results and reporting they demand. This is especially true of assessments that attempt to combine a formative purpose designed to support

student learning and a summative purpose designed to compare and judge learners (Broadfoot et al., 1992:2).

Broadfoot et al. (1992:9) also draw attention to the fact that the challenge of assessment becomes an almost impossible task as more of the subjects are elaborated into multiple statements of attainment. These authors further note that the negative aspect of this is that the enormity of the task will lead to cynicism about the whole process of assessment and the positive value of carrying out formative assessment will be lost.

The consequent narrowing of learners' opportunities presents a danger and there are indications, according to Broadfoot et al. (1992:9), of a shift in the role of the teacher, from helper to judge, and in the class ethos from co-operative to competitive. One reason for this circumstance is the speed of introducing new curriculum and assessment procedures, which do not allow teachers to develop or extend their skills, only to adopt survival strategies. This is especially pertinent to teachers in South Africa who appear to be trying cope with ambitious curricula and large numbers of learners per class.

Van der Horst & McDonald (1997:191) argue that a large percentage of time is required to conduct valid and reliable assessment. Authentic assessment may also require resources and effort on the part of the teacher, which presents a problem for many teachers in under-resourced schools. Careful planning is necessary to ensure tasks are effective, criteria for completion are clear and learners have access to the sources they need (Van der Horst & McDonald,

1997:191). Evaluating learner performance on authentic assessment is more complicated than counting correct answers on an objective test. In many cases, teachers rely on their professional judgment without much external guidance for setting performance standards and criteria.

Teachers' assessment of learner performance must have a high degree of reliability and should be standardised across different times, items and markers. Assessment practices should demonstrate a high degree of validity and accurately measure aspects of learning that teachers assessed. Therefore, to ensure a high degree of validity and reliability, decisions regarding learner progress must be based on more than one assessment, which is also an underlying principle of continuous assessment (Department of Education 2003b: 49).

In conclusion, this chapter has explained various definitions, principles and practices of assessment. It has clarified the reasons why teachers need to assess learners. Methods of assessment as well as forms of assessment and their aims, especially CASS, have been discussed. The chapter concluded with a discussion focusing on various problems related to assessment.

### **CHAPTER 3: South African Policy on Assessment**

Prior to 2001, Grade 12 assessment in all provincial departments was based solely on an external summative examination that learners wrote at the end of the academic year. Learners who passed this examination were awarded a Senior Certificate. Teachers assessed learners during the year by means of homework, classwork, class tests and assignments. However, marks attained in these assessment activities were excluded from the final examination for promotion purposes. In general, the focus of these activities was on the acquisition of content knowledge rather than on developing critical thinking, values and problem solving abilities of learners.

According to the Department of Education (1998b:8-9) the Senior Certificate examinations had shortcomings. These included that:

1. It was not designed to create coherent qualifications to careers;
2. It did not provide mechanisms for lateral movement;
3. It did not provide mechanisms for redressing historical inequality;
4. It was based on the list of school and technical subjects, which were outdated and restrictive;
5. Outdated teaching methods did not engage learners in active learning;
6. Assessment was concerned with completion of syllabi rather than acquisition of knowledge, skills and values;
7. Assessment was based on rote learning, which does not enable learners to apply knowledge to new situations;
8. The Senior Certificate examination seemed an ineffective predictor of success in higher education; and

9. Employers did not regard results of the Senior Certificate as effective indicators of work-related competence.

### **3.1 Why Outcomes Based Education?**

To address the aforementioned concerns, a shift occurred from a content-based to an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. Jeevanaretham (1998) argues that the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa was in response to international trends in educational development precipitated by an increasing concern about the traditional form of education. This is supported by Christie (2008) who argues that one of the motivations for introducing OBE in South Africa was that the new democratic South African government wished to be seen as delivering on its promise concerning education.

According to Van der Horst & McDonald (1997:3), the aim of an outcomes-based curriculum was to provide equity in terms of educational provision and to develop learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This is indeed the heart of outcomes-based education. The implication is therefore that by shifting from a content-based to an outcomes-based curriculum, South Africa was attempting to meet the demands of its society.

In October 1997, the Minister of Education promulgated a new national curriculum policy. As a result, in terms of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, an outcomes-based curriculum was published in the Government Gazette (No. 18490, October 31, 1997), that all schools were obliged to implement. Authorities named the curriculum Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). The Department of

Education introduced it at Grade 1 in 1997. It precipitated a change in the focus of education. Whereas the previous curriculum focused on completing a syllabus, OBE focused on the achievement of outcomes. Van der Horst & McDonald (1997) describe OBE as an approach to education, which requires teachers and learners to focus their attention firstly on the desired results of each learning process. These desired results are referred to as “learning outcomes” and learners need to demonstrate that they have attained them during the process of teaching and learning. The National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10-12, (General) Overview (2003a:7) defines an outcome as “a statement of an intended result of learning and teaching. It describes knowledge, skills and values that learners should acquire.”

These outcomes have also been articulated in the Department of Basic Education (2011c:5). The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 as a result, aims to produce learners that are able to:

1. Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
2. Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community.
3. Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
5. Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.

6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Throughout their education, the learners work towards achieving the critical and developmental outcomes. Each learning area has a set of specific outcomes, which helps teachers to assess if learners have achieved the stipulated outcomes for the subject or learning area. In addition, the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (2011c:4) serves the purposes of:

1. providing access to higher education;
2. equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfillment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country;
3. facilitating the transition of learners from education instructions to the work place; and
4. providing employers with a sufficient profile of a learner's competencies.

According to the Department of Education (2003a) there are several principles guiding the implementation of the National Senior Certificate. These principles have been more fully articulated in the National Curriculum Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2011c:4-5). Following is the discussion of these principles.

### **3.2 Principles of the NCS Grades R-12**

Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;

Active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths;

High knowledge and high skills: the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved at each grade are specified and set high, achievable standards in all subjects;

Progression: content and context of each grade shows progression from simple to complex;

Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: Infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 is sensitive to the issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors;

Valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution; and

Credibility, quality and efficiency: providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries.

Other advantages of outcomes-based education noted in a publication by Shuter & Shooter (no listed authors, 2003:8) include that it is:

1. Learner centred: It approaches learning from the learner's point of view and attempts to make learning understandable, accessible and relevant. The teacher is a mediator to guide and facilitate the learners.
2. Learner responsible: Learners take responsibility for their own learning. OBE requires learners to know what is required of them and to take responsibility for gathering evidence to prove that they have achieved the outcomes. It encourages independent, lifelong learning.
3. Social: It places value on communication, leadership and teamwork skills developed in group work and the need for learners to develop and test their ideas in discussions and debate. It encourages respect for other persons, races, languages, religions and points of view.
4. Activity Based: Learning occurs through active involvement in activities, which teachers specially design to help learners discover meaning and build understanding. It encourages independent and creative thinking and questioning.

Despite these commendable characteristics, there was much criticism of the curriculum.

According to Christie (2008:200), the new National Department of Education launched an outcomes-based curriculum of mixed origins, which was hastily implemented on the basis of short in-service courses for teachers. Academics

such as Jansen (1998) harshly criticised Curriculum 2005 and its OBE link, arguing that the policy was symbolic, did not engage with actual classroom conditions, and was bound to fail.

The curriculum development processes which underlie Curriculum 2005, and the wide range of terminology it uses, suggest that it was not well conceived theoretically. There is, according to Christie (2008:200), little evidence that its designers engaged in any deep way with curriculum debates around construction, interdisciplinary learner-centeredness and so on. Whereas the original design concept of OBE was derived from Australian debates, the new South African designers consulted William Spady whose concept of OBE was very different.

A key problem was that the curriculum documents provided outcomes statements, but no specified content or pedagogy. The framework was complex and full of difficult terminology, but gave no guidance on what to teach, or how. Public statements and documentation talked about changes in pedagogy and assessment, but gave no real guidance on either aspect. Teachers were provided with short and inadequate in-service courses in preparation for a completely different classroom practice (Christie, 2008:200).

The curriculum also failed to include elements of re-dress in the curriculum. There were no materials for teaching against racism or sexism and there was no recognition of the very different circumstances in which teachers would be implementing the new curriculum. According to Christie (2008), this resulted in well-trained and well-resourced teachers' ability to use the freedom given by the

curriculum to teach in the same way as before. Christie further argues that poorly trained and poorly resourced teachers were not given enough support to provide lessons of high quality. Criticisms led to a review in the curriculum.

In 2000, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed in a process led by educationist and scholar Chisholm, and the Revised National Curriculum Statement was issued in 2002. This curriculum has been revised and amended and forms the basis of South Africa's National Curriculum Statements until 2012 when the new Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was phased in.

Changes in the curriculum necessitated changes in the way learners are to be assessed. In the following I am going to discuss what the Revised NCS assessment policy expects from the teachers with regards assessment.

### **3.3 The Outcomes-Based Approach to Assessment**

According to Burger et al. (2008:xxvi), the outcomes-based approach to education brought changes in the way we view assessment. In the past, assessment was not regarded as an integral part of the teaching and learning cycle, but rather as a tag-on at the end of a period of teaching (Assessment Guidelines, not dated:1). Assessment in the National Curriculum Statement is not done at the end of the learning process but it is part of teaching and learning (Assessment Guidelines, not dated: 1). This implies teachers in planning should consider at all levels what it is that they will assess.

The Assessment Guidelines further stipulate that assessment in an outcomes-based education does not refer simply to activities such as class tests. Instead assessment is a process. It is the process of discovering information about a learner's performance and then making decisions about the learner's performance and about the teaching methods the teachers employs, based on what he/she discovers. Assessment in an outcomes situation involves gathering and organizing information. Information gathered is called "evidence of learning". This information helps the teacher to review what learners have achieved and thereby informs the decision the teacher takes. It also helps to show the teacher whether learners are performing according to their full potential and whether they are making progress towards the required performance levels, outlined in the Assessment Standards of the National Curriculum Statement.

According to the National Curriculum Statement, assessment should achieve at least one of its purposes, namely,

1. Develop learner's knowledge, skills and values;
2. Identify the needs of learners;
3. Enable teachers to reflect on their practice;
4. Identify learners' strengths and weaknesses;
5. Provide additional support to learners;
6. Revisit or revise certain sections where learners seem to have difficulties;
7. Motivate and encourage learners;
8. Provide information or data to a variety of stakeholders; and
9. Demonstrate the effectiveness of the curriculum or a teaching strategy) (NCS Assessment Guidelines, not dated:1).

The above listed purposes are linked to different types of assessment. The following are different types of assessments a teacher could use to collect evidence of learning

### **3.3.1. Baseline Assessment**

Baseline assessment is used to establish what learners already know and can do and provides a measure against which a learner's progress can be gauged. It also helps in planning activities and developing learning programmes. It is extremely useful when an educator receives a new group of learners whose language proficiency levels are not recorded or with whom the educator is unfamiliar.

### **3.3.2. Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment is a crucial element of teaching and learning. It monitors and supports the learning process with constructive feedback. Stakeholders use it to acquire information on the progress of learners. Trice (2000:7) maintains that formative assessment is largely an evaluation of teaching and shares with diagnostic assessment an emphasis on teachers' accountability in developing appropriate instruction and less emphasis on evaluating individual learners. An example in classroom practice would be process writing for the portfolio.

### **3.3.3 Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment forms the backbone of the National Senior Certificate. This form of assessment provides an overall picture of a learner's competence or progress at any given time, for example, at the end of a learning activity, unit of

learning, cycle, term, semester or year. Teachers need to plan for summative assessment and implement a variety of assessment strategies because according to Trice (2000:7), summative assessment is an important component of grading.

#### **3.3.4. Diagnostic Assessment**

According to Trice (2000:7), teachers implement diagnostic assessment to discover the causes of learning barriers. It assists teachers in finding support strategies or in identifying if a learner needs professional help or remediation.

#### **3.3.5. Systematic Assessment**

Systematic assessment asks the question: “How effective is the education system?” It is thus an external way of monitoring the education system by comparing learners’ performance to National indicators of learner achievement. It involves monitoring of learner attainment at regular intervals, using nationally or provincially defined measuring instruments. This form of evaluation compares and aggregates information about learner achievements so that it can be used to assist in curriculum development and in evaluating teaching and learning. For the General Education and Training Band (GET), Annual National Assessments (ANA) are conducted at Grades 1, 3, 6 and 9 (Assessment Guidelines p.2).

### **3.4 Assessment of English First Additional Language (ENGFAL)**

Since curriculum and assessment cannot be separated, assessment of English First Additional Language at Grade 12 has also undergone fundamental changes. The English First Additional Language Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 10-12 requires teachers to have daily or informal assessment

and to draw up a Formal Programme of Assessment which comprises tasks that will be undertaken throughout the year and marks attained on those tasks are recorded for promotion and certification purposes. (DBE 2001c:77).

Since my thesis is concerned with discrepancies between these marks and marks of the external summative assessment my focus is now going to be on the assessment of English First Additional Language. In 2001 Prof. Kader Asmal announced that all learners exiting the FET phase will have to accumulate marks in the form of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment or school-based assessment counts 25% whilst the external summative assessment counts 75%, and together this determines a pass mark for a learner in each and every learning area or subject.

Continuous Assessment in ENGFAL is school-based. Continuous assessment implies that the teacher undertakes assessment activities intermittently during the year, using a variety of forms of assessment. Each form of assessment the teacher uses is a different strategy for collecting the evidence of learning. This will ensure a fair representative sampling of the learning outcomes and assessment standards covered.

Since the purpose of assessment in the National Curriculum Statement is to gather information about the learner's development, assessment is integral to teaching and learning. Teachers in this case depend on assessment to improve their practice, assessment should therefore be continuous.

Learning is also a continuous process and learners learn in different ways and at different places. Teachers can get a good picture of the learner's development if the learning process is assessed on an ongoing basis, both formally and informally.

Continuous assessment covers all the outcomes-based education principles and ensures that assessment:

1. takes place over a period of time and that it is ongoing;
2. supports the growth and development of the learners;
3. provides feedback from learning and teaching;
4. uses strategies to cater for a variety of learner needs (language, physical, psychological, emotional and cultural); and
5. allows for summative assessment (Department of Education, 2002:49).

CASS is made up of two different, but related activities, namely, informal daily assessment and formal programme of assessment. The assessment of language skills should be integrated (Department of Education, 2011c:77). In the following I will discuss the different but related assessment activities.

#### **3.4.a) Informal or Daily Assessment**

This refers to a daily monitoring of learners' progress. This is done through observations, discussions, practical demonstrations, learner-teacher conferences, informal classroom interactions (Department of Education, 2011c:77). Informal assessment should be used to provide feedback to the learners. It also informs the teacher of what to teach and how to teach. This is also supported by

Chappius & Stiggins (2002:40-43) who are of the opinion that classroom assessment that provide accurate descriptive feedback to learners and involves them in an assessment process can improve learning. The marks learners obtain in an informal assessment are not recorded for promotion and certification purpose. Teachers, learners themselves or peers may assess since in outcomes-based education not only teachers are involved in assessment of the NCS learning areas. Assessors include the learners assessing themselves, peers (pairs and groups), teachers, parents, caregivers, external examiners and moderators. According to the Department of Education (2011c:77) involving learners in assessing their work allows them to learn from and reflect on their own performance. On top of that reflection is seen as the vehicle through which learner development can be effected and monitored (Gwele, 2001:93).

#### **3.4.b) Formal Assessment**

Formal assessment tasks refer to “an assessment activity or activities that is/are designed to assess a range of skills and competencies” a learner has acquired (Republic of South Africa, not dated:7). This according to the Department of Education (2011c) shows how well a learner is progressing in a grade or a particular subject.

Formal assessment tasks are marked and formally recorded by the teacher for progression and certification purposes. All formal assessment tasks are subject to moderation for the purpose of quality assurance and to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained.

Here follow three tables that show how CASS marks fit into a formal programme of assessment.

**Table 3: Overview of formal Assessment Grade 12**

<b>Formal Assessment</b>		
<b>During the Year</b>	<b>End-of-Year Examination</b>	
<b>25%</b>	<b>75%</b>	
<b>School Based Assessment (SBA)-</b>	<b>End-of-Year Examination Papers</b>	
<b>25%</b>	<b>62,5%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
	<b>Written examinations</b>	<b>Oral assessment Tasks: Paper 4</b>

Table 3 illustrates the weighting of CASS in the overall assessment of a learner in ENGFAL. Tables 4 and 5 give details of how that 25% of CASS is made up of several assessment tasks.

**Table 4: Overview of programme of assessment requirements Grade 12**

<b>Programme of Assessment</b>			<b>External Examination</b>
<b>SBA per Team</b>			
<b>Term 1:</b>	<b>Term 2:</b>	<b>Term 3:</b>	<b>Term 4:</b>
1 Written Test	3 Tasks	1 Trial examination comprising	1 External Examination comprising
+	+		
3 Tasks	1 Mid-year examination comprising	3 Papers:	3 Papers:
		Paper 1 – Language in context	Paper 1 – Language in context

	3 Papers:  Paper 1 – Language in context  Paper 2 – Literature  Paper 3 – Writing  OR  Written Test	Paper 2 – Literature  Paper 3 – Writing  OR  Written Test  +  1 Task	Paper 2 – Literature  Paper 3 – Writing  OR  Written Test  +  Paper 4 – Oral
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**Term Mark (Terms 1-3)**

- Each term, add raw marks and totals and convert to % for term mark.

**SBA Mark:**

- Add raw marks and totals for formal assessment tasks from term 1 to term 3 and convert to 25%.

**External Examination**

- Convert Paper 1 to 20%,
- Convert paper 2 to 17,5%,
- Convert Paper 3 to 25%,
- Convert Oral mark (Paper4) to 12,5%

**Table 5: Formal Programme of Assessment Tasks**

<b>TERM 1</b>	<b>TERM 2</b>	<b>TERM 3</b>
<b>150 MARKS CONVERTED TO 100</b>	<b>350 MARKS CONVERTED TO 100</b>	<b>350 MARKS CONVERTED TO 100</b>
<u>TASK 1</u> 30 MARKS WRITING : –argumentative essay -Assessment tool: Rubric	<u>TASK 6</u> 30 MARKS WRITING – TRANSACTIONAL - reference;	<u>TASK 11</u> 20 MARKS ORAL : Literature – 3 <sup>rd</sup> genre presentation(10) and reading (10)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- information;</li> <li>- visual;</li> <li>- and multimedia text</li> <li>- Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment tool: Rubric</li> <li>- Skim and scan text for information;</li> <li>- Summarise main ideas in text</li> <li>- Read aloud</li> </ul>
<p><u>TASK 2</u> 30 MARKS LITERATURE: 1<sup>ST</sup> Literacy Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research project</li> <li>- Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 7</u> 30 MARKS LITERATURE: 2<sup>ND</sup> Literature Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research collage</li> <li>- Assessment tool : Rubric</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 12</u> 30 MARKS WRITING – TRANSACTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reference</li> <li>- information</li> <li>- visual</li> <li>- and multimedia text</li> <li>- Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>
<p><u>TASK 3</u> 10 MARKS ORAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prepared speech / unprepared speech;</li> </ul> <p><u>Research:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- based on current issues</li> <li>- Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 8</u> 10 MARKS ORAL</p> <p>Interview; debates or forum discussion;</p> <p><u>Research:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- based on current issues</li> <li>- assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 13</u> 50 MARKS CONTROL TEST 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- comprehension / language / literature</li> <li>- Assessment tool: Marking memorandum</li> </ul>
<p><u>TASK 4</u> 70 MARKS CONTRAL TEST 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- comprehension language / literature</li> <li>- Assessment tool: marking memorandum</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 9</u> 30 MARKS WRITING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discursive or expository essay</li> <li>- Assessment tool: Rubric</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 14</u> 250 MARKS PREPARATORY EXAMINATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- paper 1 (75) - 2hours;</li> <li>- paper 2 (75) - 3hours;</li> <li>- paper 3 (100) - 3hours</li> </ul>
<p><u>TASK 5</u> 10 MARKS ORAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structured listening activity</li> </ul>	<p><u>TASK 10</u> 250 MARKS MID YEAR EXAMINATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- paper 1 (75 marks);</li> </ul>	

-Assessment tool: Rubric	- paper 2 (75marks); - paper 3 (100 marks)	
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From Table 5 it is obvious that 11 tasks out of 14 tasks are in the form of pen and paper testing. In Grade 12, three tests totaling 115 marks are suggested, together with one mid-year assessment and one preparatory assessment, which each count out of 250. The stipulated total for CASS tasks in Grade 12 is 900 marks. However, this makes up only 25% of the final promotion. This requires a lot of marking on the part of a teacher. That is one reason why some scholars like Broadfoot et al (1992) argue that some teachers perceive CASS as a real overload.

When we look at the number of tasks teachers are expected to assess one is tempted to assume that feedback is not timeous because some classes have a great number of learners. Apart from being timeous one is again tempted to assume that learners do not get the chance of revising the work until they have mastered it when classes are large. To support this, Van der Berg & Shepherd's findings (2008) show that some learners get to matric examinations underprepared.

According to the Department of Education (2002b:15), the CASS evidence of all learner performance in tests, assignments, investigations and projects should be stored in a portfolio. Teachers accumulate and retain learners' work over a period to provide visible proof of the development and improvement of achievement, as well as the skills, abilities and dispositions learners acquired (Department of Education, 2000b:11). Barootchi & Keshavarz (2002:281) argue that portfolio

assessment informs learners how well they are developing their skills, knowledge and dispositions and how they can develop further. Portfolios aim to afford learners the opportunity to take charge of their own learning and to assume ownership of it. Learners realise assessment forms an integral part of learning and provides them with profiles of their emerging skills. This assists them to become increasingly independent learners (Ellery & Sutherland, 2004:100).

The outline and details of the November examination papers in Grade 12 are the same as those in the midyear and September examinations for Grade 12. In addition to Papers 1, 2 and 3, the marks accumulated in oral tasks throughout the year constitute Paper 4 and make up 50 of the 300 marks in the external end of year assessment (See Table 6 below).

**Table 6: External End of Year Assessment**

<b>PAPER</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MARKS</b>
1	Language and the interpretation of creative and transactional texts	75
2	Literature	75
3	Writing	100
4	Oral task	50
	<b>TOTAL FOR EXAMINATION</b>	<b>300</b>

**Table 7: Suggested Format for Examination Papers 1-3**

<b>PAPER</b>	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>MARKS</b>		<b>TIME</b>
<b>LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT</b>	A: Comprehension	30	75	2hours
	B: Summary (the passage should not come from the comprehension text)	10		
	C: language structure should be assessed in context using a variety of texts;	35		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learners should identify and explain the impact of techniques such as the use of font types and sizes, headings and caption etc.;</li> <li>- learners should identify and explain the purpose, structure and language use of reports procedures, explanations, descriptions, exposition, etc. across the curriculum</li> </ul>			
<b>LITERATURE</b>	A: Poetry- seen and unseen (contextual questions) Seen = 15 Unseen =10	25	75	3hours
	B: Novel- Essay questions or contextual questions	25		
	C: candidate must attempt ONE ESSAY question and ONE CONTEXTUAL question from either Section B or Section C	25		
<b>WRITING</b>	A:Essay – Grade 12: narrative, descriptive, reflective, argumentative, discursive or expository (300-350 words)	40	100	3hours
	B: One text-transactional texts	30		
	C: Two text- reference; information, visual and multimedia text (2x15)	30		

### 3.4.c) Moderation of oral tasks

The above internally assessed oral tasks are externally moderated. Moderation of oral work begins at cluster level. The teacher responsible for each school brings five learners' work comprising work of the top learner, a range of three learners from the middle scoring range and one low scoring learner who scores no less than 33%. A panel of teachers assesses the work. Moderation of listening, prepared and unprepared speaking and reading skills, is performed. According to Coetzee & Johl (2008), research shows that in many instances, the oral marks

submitted are too high. They caution that the teachers often admit that they “load” or increase marks to enhance learners’ chances of attaining higher marks at the end of Grade 12. Coetzee & Johl (2008) add that there is also a desktop moderation at provincial and district levels, whereby schools’ averages are compared to their performance in the previous year’s examination, with a discrepancy allowance of between 7% -10%.

In an attempt to standardize assessment practices and allocation of marks, the Subject Assessment Guidelines set out the internal or school-based assessment requirements for each subject and the external assessment requirements. In addition, the National Protocol on Assessment for schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R-12) (2005b), an addendum to the National Senior Certificate, was developed to standardise the recording and reporting procedures for Grades R-12. This protocol came into effect in January 2007 and provides a regulatory framework for the management of school assessment records and basic requirements for learner profiles, teacher and learner portfolios, report cards and schedules. The Learning Programme, Learning Area and Subject Assessment Guidelines provide information and direction on the implementation of this protocol. In addition, the Department of Education (2011c) introduced the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This curriculum was introduced in schools at the beginning of 2012 for Grade 10 and in the Intermediate Phase and in 2014 for Grade 12. This document combines the two National Curriculum Statements for Grades R-9 and Grades 10-12. It builds on the previous curriculum and informs, aiming to provide clear specifications of what teachers ought to teach and learners need to learn each term. It again provides a

framework for the management of school assessment, records the basic requirements for learner profiles, teacher profiles, report cards, record sheets and schedules. The policy document focuses on assessment policy for both internal assessment comprising School-Based Assessment and Practical Assessment Tasks where applicable and the end-of year examinations.

### **3.5 Promotion and Certification**

A learner must achieve a rating code of at least two (elementary achievement: 30 - 39%) in First Additional Language to be promoted at the end of Grade 10 and 11 and for certification at the end of Grade 12 (Department of Education, 2005c). The Department of Education has developed assessment guidelines to help teachers and examiners to translate the policy. This implies teachers in the classroom do not assess randomly but follow the guidelines. In Chapter 4, I shall examine the assessment guidelines for ENGFAL.

### **3.6 The Role of UMALUSI in the Quality of Assessment**

Prior to June 2002, UMALUSI was referred to as the South African Certification Council (SAFCERT). It was responsible for determining the credibility of the Senior Certificate examination and issuing of qualifications. The credibility, reliability and validity of the Senior Certificate was enhanced by the appointment of external moderators by SAFCERT to moderate the examination question papers of all the provincial examining bodies. With the promulgation of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act No. 58 of 2001 (GENFETQA), SAFCERT was transformed and became known as UMALUSI.

The core function of UMALUSI is to maintain the integrity of and confidence in the system. This includes the quality of school-based assessment, the quality assurance of external examinations and the marking and capturing of marks. UMALUSI monitors the implementation of continuous assessment and verifies the quality and standard of the assessment tasks. It is also responsible for the moderation of all Senior Certificate examination question papers.

In addition to the above-mentioned functions, UMALUSI plays a critical role in ensuring CASS marks of learners do not deviate drastically from the examination marks. This is achieved by effecting statistical moderation to all continuous assessment and examination scores. It is perceived as an essential tool to address the validity and reliability of the continuous assessment marks and to ensure that the quality and standard of the Senior Certificate examination is unaffected by the inclusion of CASS marks (Department of Education, UMALUSI, 2002a).

### **3.7 Some Further Policy Developments**

Owing to ongoing implementation challenges of the OBE approach to education, another curriculum review was conducted in 2009. This led to the formulation of the National Curriculum Statement (CAPS) for Grades R – 12 (Department of Education 2011a). OBE has thus been improved and renamed Schooling 2025. It consists of the Department of Basic Education's Action Plan named Action Plan 2014. The plan comprises the Department of Basic Education's long and short-term goals. The Department of Basic Education hopes to achieve its long-term goals by 2025 and this is therefore called Schooling 2025. Schooling 2025 aims to

improve all aspects of education such as learners, teachers, school principals, parental involvement, learning and teaching materials as well as school buildings and facilities (Department of Education 2011b). The new curriculum affords learners the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue for the first three years of their schooling. English will be taught but will not replace the mother tongue or home language in the early grades. Each grade will have its own programme of study. This will ease the workload on teachers and allow learners to focus on specific projects and assessments (Department of Education 2011b). The Action Plan also focuses on the development of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in each learning area and subject. It will replace Curriculum 2005 as follows:

1. 2012 Implementation in Grades R to 3 and Grade 10
2. 2013 Implementation in Grades 4 to 9 and Grade 11
3. 2014 Implementation in Grade 12

The weighting of School-Based Assessment (SBA), which in this study is referred to as Continuous Assessment (CASS), and the end-of-year examinations are tabulated in Table 8 below as follows:

**Table 8: The Weighting of School-Based Assessment (SBA)**

<b>PHASE</b>	<b>CASS COMPONENT %</b>	<b>END-OF-YEAR EXAMINATION %</b>
Foundation Phase	100	0
Intermediate Phase	75	25
Senior Phase	40	60
Further Education and Training Phase	25	75

The new CAPS curriculum therefore retains the same weighting for Grade 12 as the Revised Curriculum Statement.

### **3.8 Summary**

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the main policy developments pertaining to assessment after 1994. The various guidelines in the policies aim to develop assessments that are a fair and reliable reflection of learners' demonstrated achievement. In Chapter 4, I intend to examine the discrepancies that exist between CASS and external assessment marks.

## **CHAPTER 4: Discrepancies between CASS and External Summative Assessment Marks**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I shall focus on the discrepancies between CASS and external summative assessment marks. I shall begin by highlighting the differences in the two types of assessments. Thereafter, I shall compare CASS and external summative assessment marks of the four selected schools in the Ilembe District, KwaZulu-Natal. I shall finally suggest possible reasons for the discrepancies.

### **4.2 CASS and External Summative Assessment Marks**

Sieborger & Macintosh (1998) claim continuous assessment simply means assessment which takes place occasionally throughout a course or period of learning. Gardner (2006:104), however, assigns more structure to continuous assessment and argues that CASS entails a cycle of activities and that evidence gathered during these activities is interpreted in terms of progress towards the lesson goals, helping the learners to take the next step or leading to the next activity. In this way, evidence of current learning is put back into teaching and learning. According to the Department of Education's Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines, CASS refers to the assessment of tasks and activities that are completed on a daily and/or continuous basis by learners in all the learning areas. The Department of Education's Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines for English First Additional Language (2008) further clarify that continuous assessment consists of a minimum of five forms of assessment, including research, assignments, case studies, projects and tests. As discussed in

Chapter 3, multiple performances of learners in these forms of assessment determine the assessment result for CASS and should be reflected in learners' ENGFAL portfolios.

The Shuter & Shooter Guide (no listed authors, 2005:9-8), given to teachers at schools, advises that continuous assessment should integrate baseline, diagnostic and formative assessment to determine learners' progress. For CASS to be reliable and valid, two of the key principles of assessment, a teacher's judgement of a learner must be generalised across different times and assessment items. A judgement cannot be valid if it is based solely on one assessment or on one method. Therefore, for judgements of a learner's performance to be valid, the judgements must be based on a variety of aspects of learning. Continuous assessment enables decisions about a learner's progress to be based on a range of different assessment activities and events - such as assignments, projects, orals, demonstrations, tests and examinations - that happen at different times in the learning process.

However, as Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2) point out, continuous assessment marks are determined at school level, based on a variety of tasks that are not standardised across schools, and that vary in terms of the level of difficulty and marking accuracy. Even if there is a clear prescribed rubric in terms of which to assign marks in CASS activities, the setting and marking of tasks remain the responsibility of individual teachers. In KwaZulu-Natal schools, underperforming schools write quarterly externally-set assessment tests. Marks that learners attain count towards their CASS. On the other hand, schools that perform from 60% and

above, write their own tests and the results also count towards learners' CASS marks.

In contrast to CASS is the external summative assessment. This assessment assesses the overall achievement of the learner at the end of a significant stage of learning. Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2) note that the external summative assessment is externally set, moderated and marked at a common venue. Further, the panel of examiners discusses the marking guidelines before the process of marking commences and this is carried out to ensure a common standard of marking. In addition, the marked scripts are moderated at the marking centre by senior markers with the intention to minimise marking discrepancies.

A key premise in Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:iv) is that if we intend to evaluate the quality and reliability of school-based continuous assessment marks, we need to compare them to the external summative assessment marks. The authors regard this latter assessment as the "more reliable" standard to assess learner performance as it is externally marked and moderated. Reliable assessment ought to provide test scores that consistently measure a learner's knowledge of what is being tested. This implies there should only be minor differences between external summative assessment scores and continuous assessment scores because the two types of assessment measure the same aspect, which is knowledge of the same curriculum, of the same learner, albeit at different times.

In addition to their general concerns about the reliability and validity of CASS, Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2) further distinguish two types of assessment inaccuracies in the compilation of CASS. These are firstly, assessment leniency, where CASS marks are much higher than external assessment marks and secondly, low assessment reliability, where performance measured by CASS and the external summative examination are weakly correlated.

#### 4.2.a) Assessment leniency

According to Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008), assessment leniency is evident in the significant difference between CASS and external summative examination marks. They claim this would mean that CASS marks have been inflated in a subject. Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2) further argue that when CASS marks are inflated, there exists a danger that this may give learners a false sense of security that they are well prepared for the final assessment, whereas in fact, they are not. This could also elicit inappropriate studying behaviour and thereby lower the final external assessment results even further.

#### 4.2.b) Low assessment reliability

According to Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2), low assessment reliability is evident where performance measured between CASS and the external summative assessment marks correlate weakly. In a case such as this, a learner who attains low marks in the CASS mark, may score well in an external summative assessment, or the opposite could also occur where a learner with high CASS marks obtains disappointing marks in the external assessment. Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2) mention that a weak correlation in a particular school and

subject between the CASS and the external summative assessment marks, indicates a learner is weak in one of the two dimensions of assessment. In this way, CASS does not act as a reliable predictor of the external summative assessment mark. However, as Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2) note, even a high correlation may still not provide adequate information to the learner concerning what to expect and how to prepare for the external summative assessment.

In a well-functioning school, one would expect validity, reliability and alignment between CASS levels of achievement by learners and external summative assessment levels of achievement. Moskal & Leydens (2002) as cited in Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008) argue that reliability refers to the consistency of assessment scores. For example, in a reliable test, a learner will attain a similar score regardless of where the learner completed the assessment, when the response was scored and who scored the response. In an unreliable assessment, a learner's score may vary widely based on factors that are unrelated to the purpose of the assessment.

In order to contextualise the argument with regard to the apparent lack of reliability and validity in CASS, I am going to 1) focus on English First Additional Language (ENGFAL) and 2) draw on four actual examples of schools in KwaZulu-Natal to flesh out the argument.

Ahead of making comparisons, I believe it is important that I explain the promotion and grading requirements in the FET Phase. According to the Department of Basic

Education (2011c), guidelines must be consulted and used to describe learner performance. This implies that there are national codes related to percentages that are used to record and report on learner performance. In this way, the Department of Education attempts to standardise school-based assessment by requiring teachers to use a uniform rubric.

The codes and percentages required for reporting and recording learner achievement for Grade 12 ENGFAL are depicted in Table 9 below, as prescribed by the Department of Basic Education (2011c:87).

**Table 9: The Codes and Percentages Required for Reporting and Recording Learner Achievement for Grade 12 ENGFAL**

<b>RATING CODE</b>	<b>ACHIEVEMENT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MARKS IN PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
7	Outstanding Achievement	80 - 100
6	Meritorious Achievement	70 - 79
5	Substantial Achievement	60 - 69
4	Adequate Achievement	50 - 59
3	Moderate Achievement	40 - 49
2	Elementary Achievement	30 - 39
1	Not Achieved	0 - 29

The next uncertainty teachers may face is how to translate these percentages into the levels of learner achievement. Once more, the Department of Education has provided a common rubric to standardise learner judgement. In English First Additional Language, each sub section has its own rubric. For example, when the

teacher assesses oral work there is a rubric for that. With the other aspects, that is creative essay writing or long and short transactional writing, there are also different rubrics. In the following section, I shall tabulate rubrics for English First Additional Language as they are prescribed by the Department of Education (2008: 50-58).

#### 4.2.c. Rubric for Oral Assessment – ENGFAL (50 Marks)

<b>RC 7 / [A]</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>EXPERT USER</b> Excellent language command Appropriate accurate and fluent Complete topic understanding Interaction appropriate Complete topic understanding Can repair, initiate and sustain communication Captures audience Pace, intonation, emphasis, audibility – good
<b>RC 7 / A+45</b>		
<b>RC 7 / A40</b>		
<b>RC 6 / [B]</b> <b>35</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>VERY GOOD USER</b> Very good language command Complex argument handled well Good audience contact and initiates Has good deal to say and presents fluently
<b>RC 5 / [C]</b> <b>30</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>GOOD USER</b> Good command of language Unobtrusive errors, idiom good Occasional misunderstandings Understands detailed reasoning May initiate, may support opinions Has good deal to say and is interested
<b>RC 4 / [D]</b> <b>25</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>SATISFACTORY USER</b> Satisfactory language command Literal meaning in language Average conversational skills Does have something reasonable to say Contributes and interacts with others
<b>RC 3 / [E]</b> <b>20</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>FAIR USER</b> Fair language user Frequent mistakes

Cannot pick up conversational cues  
 Vocabulary limits conversational ability  
 Mistakes hinder meaning, repetitive  
 Conveys message in spite of errors  
 Keeps going (strategic competence)

**RC 2 / [F]**  
**15**

**30% LIMITED USER**

Great problems in understanding  
 Speech halting and fragmented  
 Relatively passive interaction  
 Tends to be monosyllabic & difficult to follow/comprehend

**RC 1 / [G]**  
**14 (28%)**  
**10 (20%)**

**BELOW 30% EXTREMELY LIMITED USER**

Communication virtually nil  
 Very limited language and vocabulary  
 Monosyllabic and difficult to follow  
 Says very little

There are prescribed rubrics for Assessing an Essay (50 marks), for Longer Transactional Writing (30 marks) and for Shorter Transactional Writing (20 marks). I will give the example of the first rubric here to illustrate the detailed description of how marks ought to be assigned. The rubric is an attempt to attain standardisation – and thus reliability , since the learner’s work ought to be given more or less the same marks if marked by different teachers. The rubric, however, does not avoid subjectivity altogether for what in one teacher’s interpretation may be an “effective” use of language, may differ in another teacher’s interpretation.

**4.2.d Rubric for Assessing an Essay – ENGFAL (50 Marks)**

English First Additional Language Rubric NSC	Lang- uage	Outstanding	Meritorious	Substantial	Adequate	Moderate	Elementary	Not Achieved
<i>Section A: Essay</i> <i>50 marks</i>		<i>Code 7:</i> <i>80-100%</i>	Code 6: 70 – 79%	Code 5: 60 – 69%	Code 4: 50 – 59%	Code 3: 40 – 49%	Code 2: 30 – 39%	Code 1: 00 – 29%
<b>Language</b>		Language and punctuation effectively used, and uses figurative language appropriately. Choice of words highly appropriate. Sentences and paragraphs coherently constructed. Style, tone and register highly suited to topic. Text virtually error-free	Language and punctuation correct and able to include figurative language correctly. Choice of words varied and correctly used. Sentences and paragraphs logical and varied. Style, tone and register appropriate to topic.	Language and punctuation mostly correct. Choice of words suited to text. Sentences and paragraphs well-constructed. Style, tone and register suited to the topic in most of the essay. Text almost error-free following editing.	Language simplistic and punctuation adequate. Choice of words adequate. Sentences and paragraphs may be faulty in places but the essay still makes sense. Style, tone and register generally consistent with the topic requirement.	Language ordinary and punctuation often inaccurately used. Choice of words is basic. Sentences and paragraphs are faulty but the ideas can be understood. Style, tone and register are lacking in	Language and punctuation flawed. Choice of words limited. Sentences and paragraphs constructed at an elementary level. Style, tone and register inappropriate. Text full of errors despite editing.	Language and punctuation seriously flawed. Choice of words inappropriate. Sentences and paragraphs muddled and inconsistent. Style, tone and register flawed in all respects. Text full of errors and

		following editing. Length in accordance with requirements of topic.	Text largely error-free following editing. Length correct.	Length correct.	Text still contains errors following editing. Length correct.	coherence. Text contains several errors following editing. Length – too long or too short.	Length – too long or too short.	confused following editing. Length – much too long or much too short.
<b>Content</b>		Code 7: 80 – 100%	Code 6: 70 – 79%	Code 5: 60 – 69%	Code 4: 50 – 59%	Code 3: 40 – 49%	Code 2: 30 – 39%	Code 1: 00 – 29%
<b>Outstanding</b> Content shows impressive insight into topic. Ideas are thought-provoking. Coherent development of topic, vivid detail. Critical awareness of impact of language. Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a virtually flawless, presentable essay.	Code 7: 80-100%	40 - 50	38 - 42	35 - 39				
<b>Meritorious</b> Content shows thorough interpretation of topic. Ideas are imaginative and interesting. Coherent and logical development of topic. Critical awareness of impact of language. Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a well-crafted presentable essay.	Code 6: 70-79%	38 - 42	35 - 39	33 - 37	30 – 34			
<b>Substantial</b> Content shows a sound interpretation of topic. Ideas are interesting and convincing. Several relevant details are developed. Critical awareness of language is evident. Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a good, presentable essay.	Code 5: 60-69%	35 - 39	33 - 37	30 - 34	28 – 32	25 - 29		
<b>Adequate</b> Content shows an adequate interpretation of topic. Ideas are ordinary and lack depth. Some points or necessary details are developed. There is some awareness of impact of language. Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a satisfactorily presented essay.	Code 4: 50-59%		30 - 34	28 - 32	25 – 29	23 - 27	20 - 24	
<b>Moderate</b> Content ordinary, gaps in coherence. Ideas are mostly relevant, though some are repetitive. Some necessary points are evident.	Code 3: 40-49%			25 - 29	23 – 27	20 - 24	18 - 22	

There is limited critical language awareness. Evidence of planning and/or drafting has produced a moderately presentable and coherent essay.								
<b>Elementary</b> Content not always clear, lacks coherence. Only a few ideas, often repetitive. Sometimes off the topic. General line of thought difficult to follow. Inadequate evidence of planning and/or drafting and essay is not well presented.	Code 2: 30-39%				20 - 24	18 - 22	15 - 19	03 - 17
<b>Not Achieved</b> Content is irrelevant and there is no coherence. Ideas are repetitive and off the topic. No planning and/or drafting. Poorly presented essay.	Code 1: 00-29%					15 - 19	03 - 17	00 - 14

Although these rubrics provide a standardised measure for assessment, certain shortfalls are unavoidable. Fleisch (2008:122) argues that often teachers who teach in poor schools are themselves not fluent readers. This implies they themselves struggle with language. If this is true, some learners will never be assessed accurately and according to the requirements of the rubric. The implication is that teacher assessment of learners' tasks will never fully be objective, and will therefore never fully prepare learners for the external summative assessment, which may account for the differences between CASS and external summative assessment marks. In section 4.4, I shall consider and discuss possible reasons for these differences.

Furthermore, with regard to the reliability and validity of CASS, it is unclear if the teacher is assessing the learner's achievement in relation to his/her own past record of performance. An example would be if Siphon, the learner who normally

fails, delivers a fluent speech. Will the teacher assess Siphos unexpected achievement as “meritorious” or even “outstanding”? On the other hand, is the assessment of the learner in relation to the rest of the class? An example would be Thandi, the learner who comes first in class. Will the teacher automatically assess her as “outstanding”? Is the assessment in relation to what the teacher thinks is the provincial or national level of all Grade 12 ENGFAL learners? It seems, therefore, that notwithstanding the prescribed rubric, CASS is an exceedingly subjective assessment. Of course, to ascertain and explore how teachers understand and use the assessment criteria and rubrics would entail detailed and systematic interviews with teachers. That is a study with a different, but related, focus to mine.

In the next section, I shall compare the number of learner levels of achievement in CASS as opposed to their number in external summative assessment levels. I have included data from the November/December 2011 Assessment for Grade 12 English First Additional Language.

### **4.3 Comparison of CASS and External Summative Assessment Marks in Four Schools**

In this section, I want to *contextualise* the above argument about the problem of reliability and validity of CASS marks and the low correlation with external summative assessment marks. In order to do so, I will use the example of four schools in the Ilembe district in KwaZulu-Natal. In my analysis, in order to minimise the range of variables that can impact on learner performance, I have selected four schools situated in the same geographical region and who draw their

learners from the same socio-economic backgrounds. My choice in selecting these particular four schools was informed by my knowing the district and its teachers and by my having access to the schools and the teachers' mark schedules. As noted in Chapter 1, this is a limited instrumental case study, with the aim to furnish actual examples of the extent and nature of the discrepancies between schools' CASS and external summative marks. I will first give an outline of each school's CASS marks, class size, teacher qualification and teacher experience,, followed by a comparative discussion.

My study does not aim to make generalizations about the discrepancies on the basis of only four schools; for that a much bigger and more rigorously selected sample will need to be drawn in order to ensure representivity. In contrast, my study notes that these discrepancies exist and draws on four schools to see how these discrepancies are instantiated in specific examples, and to tentatively suggest some possible reasons for the discrepancies in these specific schools.

### **School A - Learner and Teacher Information**

- Number of Learners Enrolled for ENGFAL 15
- Teacher Qualifications B. PAED
- Teacher Teaching Experience 7 Years
- Teacher Experience in ENGFAL 6 Years
- Overall Pass Percentage for CASS 100
- Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment 87

**Table 10: School A - Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment**

Achievement Levels Described in Percentage	Grade 12 ENGFAL Levels	No. of Learners in CASS Levels	% of Learners	No. of Learners in External Summative Assessment Levels	% of Learners	Difference in Percentage between CASS and Summative Assessment
80 – 100	7	00	0	00	0	0
70 – 79	6	00	0	00	0	0
60 – 69	5	01	6.6	00	0	6.6
50 – 59	4	05	33.3	02	13.3	20
40 – 49	3	08	53.3	02	13.3	40
30 – 39	2	01	6.6	09	60	53.4
0 – 29	1	00	0	02	13.3	13.3

Note: The CASS pass percentage is 100% but the Summative Assessment pass is 87%. There is a 13 % difference.

In the case of School A, there is a significant difference between CASS and external summative assessment marks. To be precise, the teacher's judgement says there are no learners who have not achieved (level 1), yet the external summative assessment indicates that 13.3% of the class falls within this category. Again, according to the teacher, 6.6% of the class is at elementary level of achievement (level 2), but according to the external summative assessment, 60% of the class is at this level.

The differences are substantial. Although one cannot generalise that marks in CASS were inflated to affect a pass there is a trend of CASS marks being higher than the summative exam. These marks may have given learners the impression that they were well prepared for the final examination, while in reality they were not.

**School B - Learner and Teacher Information**

- Number of Learners Enrolled for ENGFAL 12
- Teacher Qualifications B. PAED (ARTS)
- Teacher Teaching Experience 8 Years
- Teacher Experience in ENGFAL 8 Years
- Overall Pass Percentage for CASS 100
- Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment 100

**Table 11: School B - Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment**

Achievement Levels Described in Percentage	Grade 12 ENGFAL Levels	No. of Learners in CASS Levels	% of Learners	No. of Learners in External Summative Assessment Levels	% of Learners	Difference in Percentage between CASS and Summative Assessment
80 – 100	7	00	0	00	0	0
70 – 79	6	00	0	00	0	0
60 – 69	5	02	16	02	16	0
50 – 59	4	05	42	02	16	26
40 – 49	3	05	42	04	33	9
30 – 39	2	00	0	04	33	33
0 – 29	1	00	0	00	0	0

Note: Pass percentages (i.e. levels 2-7) in both dimensions of assessment are 100%. However, learner levels of performance do not align.

In this example, there is an alignment in marks attained in levels 5-7 and level 1. However, there are assessment discrepancies. More specifically, there are no learners at elementary level of achievement (level 2) in CASS, yet in the external summative assessment 33% of the class is at this level. This implies the teacher was lenient in his/her judgements and appears to have inflated the marks to effect a pass. Assessment reliability is poor, since levels of attainment do not correlate.

**School C - Learner and Teacher Information**

- Number of Learners Enrolled for Grade 12 ENGFAL 60
- Teacher Qualifications S.T.D.
- Teacher Teaching Experience 20 Years
- Teacher Experience in ENGFAL 12 Years
- Overall Pass Percentage for CASS 100
- Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment 100

**Table 12: School C - Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment**

Achievement Levels Described in Percentage	Grade 12 ENGFAL Levels	No. of Learners in CASS Levels	% of Learners	No. of Learners in External Summative Assessment Levels	% of Learners	Difference in Percentage Between CASS and Summative Assessment
80 – 100	7	00	0	00	0	0
70 – 79	6	00	0	01	1.6	1.6
60 – 69	5	03	5	07	11.6	6.6
50 – 59	4	12	20	14	23.3	3.3
40 – 49	3	32	53.3	22	36.6	16.7
30 – 39	2	13	21.7	16	26.6	4.9
0 – 29	1	00	0	00	0	0

Note: Pass percentages in both dimensions of assessment are 100% but levels at which learners perform in CASS do not align with External Assessment levels

Learners at school C fared better in the external summative assessment than in CASS. Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008) point out that some teachers deliberately limit CASS marks to encourage learners to work hard for the final external summative assessment. In this case, CASS marks are an inaccurate reflection of the learners' performance and as a result, assessment could be termed "unreliable."

**School D - Learner and Teacher Information**

- Number of Learners Enrolled for ENGFAL 74
- Teacher Qualifications B.ED (Hons)
- Teacher Teaching Experience 16 Years
- Teacher Experience in ENGFAL 7 Years
- Pass Percentage for CASS 100
- Pass Percentage for External Summative Assessment 62

**Table 13: School D - Overall Pass Percentage for External Assessment**

Achievement Levels Described in Percentage	Grade 12 ENGFAL Levels	No. of Learners According to Levels of Achievement	% of Learners	No. of Learners in External Summative Assessment Levels	% of Learners	Difference in Percentage between CASS and Summative Assessment
80 – 100	7	00	0	00	0	0
70 – 79	6	00	0	00	0	0
60 – 69	5	02	2.7	04	5.4	2.7
50 – 59	4	05	6.7	08	10.8	4.1
40 – 49	3	11	14.8	11	14.8	0
30 – 39	2	56	75.6	23	31.0	44.6
0 – 29	1	00	0	28	37.8	37.8

Note: Whereas in the CASS marks there are 100% passes, in the external summative assessment only 62% of learners passed.

The teacher placed 75.6% of the class at level 2, but according to the external summative assessment, only 31% of the class fall into this category. The teacher's rating also indicated no learners were unable to achieve, as prescribed in rating code 1. Yet, the external assessment reveals that 37.8% of the class is functioning at this level. The likely implication for the ratings is that this teacher's assessments are inaccurate. This difference may be attributed to CASS marks being internally

determined, albeit according to a set rubric. Given that the external summative assessment is externally set and moderated, there is greater validity and reliability. Although this teacher's CASS marks in levels 3-5 align closely with the external summative assessment marks, the main discrepancy is at levels 1-2. Given that 30% is deemed a pass, it would seem that this teacher was reluctant to fail learners. It tells us that some teachers do not record the correct level of learner performance or are reluctant to fail learners, hence the discrepancies.

#### **4.4 Analysis and Possible Reasons for the Discrepancies**

Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:2), argue that continuous assessment marks act as information to Grade 12 learners about how to prepare for the summative external assessment. These authors further state that assessment informs learners with confidence regarding the success they can expect in different subjects. It also informs them of their weaknesses, thus allowing them to prepare thoroughly for the Grade 12 assessment at the end of the year (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2008:2).

However, according to Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:4-9), an analysis of continuous assessment data compared to examination data that was externally set and moderated can illuminate important aspects that relate to teachers' subject knowledge. Van der Berg & Shepherd highlight that teachers with poor subject knowledge are likely to award and record inaccurate assessment marks. In addition, an analysis of CASS and summative external assessment marks may assist in identifying teachers who do not adhere to the curriculum standard. An analysis could further determine where those teachers are located in terms of

province, district or school (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2008). Fleisch (2008) confirms this notion by noting that teachers' weak subject knowledge and misunderstandings of the demands of the curriculum contribute to teaching failure.

The article "Why Schools Underperform" (Clarke, 2011:15) argues that many teachers lack general skills. This implies teachers lack teaching skills and general subject knowledge. According to Clarke (2011:15), possible reasons for educational underperformance include:

1. Teachers do not collaborate;
2. Teachers seldom plan together in subject, phase and grade groups;
3. They seldom observe one another teaching or discuss good practice;
4. Large class sizes impede the delivery of quality education;
5. Teachers experience a lack of resources;
6. Unionism has shifted attention to political activism rather than on actual teaching;
7. Principals and teachers lack in-depth understanding of factors that affect school success and learner performance;
8. Principals are deficient in critical management and leadership experience and skills;
9. Many teachers have poor subject content knowledge and limited pedagogical skills in the teaching of the subject; and
10. There is poor time-on task.

Taylor & Vinjevold (1999) summarise the findings of the Presidential Education Initiative Research Project of 1999, which also highlights teachers' low levels of

conceptual knowledge, their poor grasp of their subjects and the range of errors made in content and concepts presented in their lessons.

The article, “Bunking Teachers Fail Learners” (Macfarlane & Chaykowski, 2011) reports on a study, a three way collaboration between the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Stanford University in the United States of America and the University of Botswana. The study’s findings show that teachers’ poor subject knowledge and their resulting lack of confidence in the classroom are serious barriers to learners’ success. In the same article, the National Spokesperson of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) testified they have admitted that non-completion of the curriculum was a problem, but this happened because teachers were not properly trained (Macfarlane & Chaykowski, 2011).

In the following section, I shall examine reasons for the seeming unreliability and lack of validity related specifically to the allocation of CASS marks as illustrated in my four examples. In Chapter 2 , I discussed the principles of assessment, i.e it should be reliable, valid and relevant. I also discussed the reasons for assesment, i.e. to motivate learners, and to improve their learning through constructive feedback. In the section immediately above, I have touched on some of the general reasons in South African schooling that can possibly contribute to educational underperformance. I will now try to bring these considerations together in an analysis of how these general reasons for educational underperformance may have impacted on the reliability and validity of the CASS mark schedules of the four schools.

#### 4.4.1 Teaching experience and assessment reliability

Gardner (2006) argues that classroom-based assessment is realised owing to the teacher's knowledge and expertise. Therefore, in cases where teacher knowledge lacks, there may be inappropriate and skewed assessment of learners.

When one examines the marks of the four schools, it is noteworthy that the teacher, whose CASS marks differ most significantly from the external summative assessment marks, is the teacher from School A who has the least experience teaching ENGFAL (6 years). Although one cannot draw definite conclusions that this particular teacher has poor subject content knowledge and limited pedagogical skills, there appears to be a correlation between years of teaching experience and the extent of the discrepancy. This is evident in the teacher from School C, who with 12 years of teaching ENGFAL, has only a negligible discrepancy. Teachers from School B (8 years) and School D (7 years) have significant discrepancies regarding the failure rate of the scale, that is, levels 1 and 2. To ascertain if a possible causal connection rather than a mere lack of correlation exists, would require extensive rigorous study of a representative sample. The purpose of this study, however, is merely to draw attention to the discrepancies. My four school examples seem to indicate that years of ENGFAL teaching experience correlate with less discrepancy.

#### 4.4.2 Class size and assessment reliability

Everson (2010:50) notes that for feedback to improve learning, it should be timeous. In crowded classes, it is likely that feedback will not be timeous and will consequently fail to improve learner achievement. Broadfoot et al. (1992) also

refer to overcrowded classrooms that frustrate teachers' efforts to assess accurately and correctly. Kellaghan & Greaney (2004) support this notion by arguing that since some classrooms are overcrowded, teachers fail to exercise proper administration and control of classroom assessments.

Broadfoot, Murphy & Torrance (1990) and the Department of Education (2002e) assert that large classes are making the implementation of continuous assessment problematic, especially regarding assessment of projects. Moreover, teachers who teach large classes are afforded insufficient opportunity and time to address the problem of learners' varying language needs. This may partially explain the discrepancy in marks for School D where the teacher has the largest class (74 learners) and has the largest discrepancy in CASS and external summative assessment marks for level 1. It should, however, be noted that although teachers from School A (15 learners) and School B (12 learners) have small classes, they too show discrepancies, which may result from their lack of experience teaching ENGFAL. It would therefore appear that teacher experience and knowledge of teaching ENGFAL together with large classes may be linked to the extent of the discrepancies.

#### 4.4.3 Teacher beliefs and assessment as motivation

The Presidential Education Initiative Project as cited in Fleisch (2008) confirms the existence of a strong relationship between teachers' subject knowledge, competence, beliefs, and learner achievement. In addition, Butler & McMunn (2006) assert that teachers' beliefs can influence their teaching practices significantly. For example, if a teacher believes that some learners are simply

unable to learn, he/she will not invest a great deal of time teaching these learners. Similarly, if a teacher feels that the only way to motivate students to learn is through grading, it is probable that minimal formative assessment will be performed in that teacher's classroom. Beliefs and practices such as these directly affect the ability of teachers to implement new assessment and instructional strategies. Howie (2005) similarly is of the opinion that poor and inappropriate application of assessment by many teachers may contribute to poor achievement levels.

Fleish (2008:122) further maintains that teachers who teach learners in poor socio-economic contexts tend to hold low expectations of what learners can achieve, since they tend to interpret the official curriculum to support their low expectations. This implies teachers in schools in poor socio-economic contexts may not strive to improve learner achievement and may not strive to provide learners with quality teaching and learning. This notion corresponds with Butler & McMunn's (2006) findings that teacher preconceptions of their learners' abilities directly influences the way they teach. This also corresponds with Fleisch's (2008:122) ideas that it does not mean that every child in a disadvantaged school underachieves, but claims that it is unlikely that learners will be exposed to a curriculum linked to high expectations. Schools A, B, C and D are located in an area that has no learning facilities such as libraries. The area has no electricity and as a result, homes have neither televisions nor radios so the learner population has extremely limited exposure to additional education facilities, other than those provided by their under-resourced schools.

Butler & McMunn (2006) further state that some teachers are reluctant to take responsibility for creating and motivating learning environments. Instead, it may be easier to blame students for their own motivational problems. This type of demotivating situation will be observed when learners sleep in the class, are often absent, are often off-task, or hand in substandard work. Classroom assessment will be poor in situations such as these.

Fleisch (2008:121) argues that irrespective of learners' social networking opportunities, that is, their access to social capital, their general state of health and welfare, or their familiarity with the dominant language of schooling, the underlying or fundamental problem in South African education is what happens inside the classrooms of our nation. Since CASS is classroom-based, it is of critical importance when we investigate the general quality of education. Fleisch (2008:121) further states that teaching failure ranges from the banal, the failure simply to "show up", to the more complex, the failure to use methods that work. Fleisch therefore illuminates key problems within classrooms, namely, absenteeism, under-utilised resources, ineffective teaching methods and weak subject knowledge. These factors impact directly on assessment as a way of motivating learners.

#### 4.4.4. Teacher qualifications and assessment reliability

Fleisch's (2008) argument is supported by Bertram (2006) who conducted a survey to ascertain the actual reading levels of a group of teachers enrolled in a post-graduate programme. The study revealed that 37% of these teachers struggled to read ordinary academic texts. It would seem that teachers with inferior

qualifications have inadequate reading levels, and by implication, poor subject knowledge. This implies that they may neglect to provide sufficient and effective reading lessons in their classrooms, thereby impeding learners' development and contributing to poor assessment, especially in language classes such as ENGFAL.

Teachers will not automatically learn how to integrate new ways of assessments into their daily teaching and learning. In light of this claim, Grosser & Lombard (2008) suggest that teachers need training and development to improve the quality of their lessons and their assessment practices, and thereby improve learner achievement. Grosser & Lombard (2008) further suggest that if teachers are asked to make fundamental changes to their assessment practices, they need to try new practices and to learn new theory, and acquire the skills to implement the new assessment model. Teacher academic training and professional development is thus important. This claim seems to be supported by my examples. The teacher in School A with 6 years experience had significant discrepancies whereas the teacher in School C with 20 years' experience had lower discrepancies. Paradoxically the teacher with the qualification of a B.Ed (Hons) had high discrepancies in her or his group. However, this same teacher has not had many years of ENGFAL experience.

When we scrutinise Table 13 for School D, we observe that this is the only teacher who has a post-graduate degree. It is also the teacher whose CASS marks are best aligned with the external summative assessment marks on levels 3-5. However, as I noted previously, a reason for the discrepancy on levels 1-2 may be

because the teacher was reluctant to fail half the Level 2 learners and may therefore have assessed all 56 learners at Level 2.

#### 4.4.5. Time allocation and assessment reliability

According to Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:52), assessment of learners on a continuous basis requires teachers to spend a great deal of time performing administrative tasks. Teachers need to keep records of formal and informal assessments; as a result I think many teachers perceive it as a heavy workload. In the four schools I examined, teachers did have complete mark records. Of course, how reliable these records are warrants a study of its own.

Clarke (2011:15) notes “poor time on task” as a possible reason for educational underperformance. Fleisch (2008:122) also points to the centrality of time in academic success and argues that research findings from the Presidential Education Initiative (PEI) show that learners in disadvantaged schools receive substantially less instructional time in actual teaching and learning around the core curriculum. Chisholm (2005), cited in Fleisch (2008:126), undertook an in-depth study that compared official policy with the actual time teachers spend teaching and learning in schools. The study revealed that the percentage time teachers spent teaching ranged from a minimum of 6% to a maximum of 56%. The study further revealed that although the majority of teachers’ time was spent in classrooms, limited time was actually devoted to instruction. CASS practices are time-demanding; many individual learners have to be graded in many individual tasks. In cases where teachers are not spending maximum amount of time in their

classrooms , it is likely that the CASS marks will be unreliable and will have low validity.

Although there is no way of determining how much time the teachers from schools A, B, C and D actually spend teaching in their classrooms, given the high absenteeism rate among South African teachers, it may be a plausible explanation for the discrepancies in this limited case study. Spaul (2011) notes that teacher absenteeism in South Africa is twice as high as that of teachers in Namibia and Botswana, and three times higher than teachers in Mozambique. The worst affected province was KwaZulu-Natal schools where teachers are absent on average 24.6 school days per year (Spaul, 2011). Given that the four schools are in KwaZulu-Natal, it is likely that they experience high teacher absenteeism which would have an effect on assessment.

Boinamo & Van der Walt (2008:9) also argue that teachers do not spend sufficient time in classrooms. They argue that absence from class means teachers fail to fulfill the basic requirements of the curriculum and even where teachers complete the curriculum, learners often do not understand the content that has been taught (Boinamo & Van der Walt, 2008:9). They claim further that Grade 12 results reflect this situation and that the situation is deteriorating.

In addition, Clarke (2011:15) mentions that teachers do not keep a detailed record of learner attendance and that latecoming is not recorded and monitored. Teacher absenteeism and latecoming is also seldom recorded and monitored, which may lead to a demotivated classroom environment.

In an article titled “Bunking Teachers Fail Learners,” Macfarlane & Chaykowski (2011) refer to an unpublished study conducted in South Africa and Botswana. The findings from this study revealed that teachers and principals, who were interviewed during the study, did not consider teacher absenteeism a serious factor. The findings further revealed that the amount of time scheduled for teaching Grade 6 Maths and the time that teachers actually spent teaching was “disturbingly low.” The study reveals that South African teachers neglected to teach 60% of their lessons and that the Botswana teachers neglected to teach 40% of their lessons (Macfarlane & Chaykowski, 2011).

Another time-related problem is learner absenteeism and learner transfer (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004:52). Teachers may not know what course of action to take when learners are absent from tests or transfer from one school to another. It appears that in these situations, teachers are inclined to allocate CASS marks to learners without any actual classroom assessment (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004). Similarly, Broadfoot et al. (1992) point out that administration of continuous assessment within a school may not be straightforward. Teachers need to pay attention to procedures they need to follow when learners are absent during continuous assessment tests or when a learner transfers from one school to another. They also need to know how to deal with normal aggregating and weighting of marks (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004). I did not interview teachers to find out whether there is high absenteeism. If there were, then it is likely that it would have affected assessment.

#### 4.4.6 Social, economic and political contexts and assessment

Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:51-52) discuss how issues of gender, socio-economic background, and even personality play a role in teachers' assessment. In small close-knit communities, parental pressure could also influence teachers in their assessments, thereby causing them to make false or inaccurate judgements of learners' performance. In the same way, Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008) hold that some teachers inflate CASS marks and this malpractice becomes evident when there is a significant disparity between CASS marks and external summative assessment marks. Schools A, B C and D are all located in communities where teachers and parents are part of a close-knit social group.

As Clarke (2011) notes, a lack of resources is another possible reason for educational underperformance. Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008) are of the opinion that if classes have insufficient and inadequate books and furniture, results will not improve. They argue that the lack of quality textbooks for teachers and learners is also a key contributor to underperformance. Taylor & Vinjevoid (1999), when summarising the findings of individual studies of the Presidential Education Initiative (PEI) in the late 1990s, observed that few teachers were using textbooks in a systematic way. This even occurred in classrooms where textbooks were available. Taylor & Vinjevoid (1999) further explain that the relative under-utilisation of books may be linked to teachers' lack of content knowledge or their weak reading skills. In summary, it is likely that given the socio-economic and geographical contexts of the four schools, this would contribute to the allocation of CASS marks and their discrepancies with the external marks.

Clarke (2011) notes that unionism emphasises political activism rather than actual teaching. In their article “Bunking Teachers Fail Learners,” Macfarlane & Chaykowski (2011) also argue that South African teachers are highly unionised. They claim that 80% of teachers in public schools belong to unions and that the majority of these teachers are SADTU members. In reference to the unpublished study, they suggest that in South Africa the expression of teacher unionism at local level constrains the ability of government to pursue its policy objectives of improving literacy, numeracy and broader educational outcomes.

Boinamo & Van der Walt (2008:9) blame teacher unionism for the situation in education, where the needs and interests of true professionals are brushed aside by the demands of job-sitters. They claim that while some professionals are genuinely committed to teaching and give their best for their learners, the job-sitters are driven by self-interest and pursuance of political activism (Boinamo & Van der Walt, 2008:9). The activist characterisation of trade union activity during Apartheid continues today with voices of teachers’ unions protecting their own interests and ignoring the interests of learners and parents who receive inferior service from the members of these unions.

#### **4.5. Summary**

In summary, classroom-based assessments that take place throughout the academic year will tend to be weak and unreliable if these types of conditions prevail in some schools situated in the low socio-economic contexts of South Africa. The factors that influence the reliability and validity of the assessment as noted in this chapter are teachers’ poor subject knowledge (which is correlated

with teachers' qualifications), years of experience, and the associated problems of a school in a low socio-economic setting, with high absenteeism, few resources and not enough teaching time. All four schools are situated in conditions that are prone to these problems. I have tried to show how in specific cases these may account for the discrepancies encountered in the marks of the four schools.

In Chapter 5, I shall examine the strengths of CASS and ways in which it may improve learner performance and achievement.

## **CHAPTER 5: Strengthening the Role of CASS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, I highlighted some of the problems with CASS and its reliability, validity and motivation for learning when contextualised in specific educational conditions. I do not want to end my study on what may seem a rather depressing note, so in this last Chapter I want to look at the strengths of CASS and to suggest some ways in which its application can be improved in South African schools with the potential benefit of reducing the discrepancy between CASS and the external summative assessment marks. In this way the perceived reliability and validity of CASS can be strengthened.

### **5.2 A Few Additional Concerns Regarding CASS**

In addition to the concerns about the reliability and validity of CASS raised in Chapter 4, Broadfoot et al. (1992:115) note several other sources of unreliability in school-based assessment. These, among others, include administration mistakes, teacher or assessor bias and uncertainty about the originality of the work or the extent of a learner's contribution to a group project. Broadfoot et al. (1990) also mention that learners from affluent contexts may be at an advantage, in that they have ready access to resources required for project work.

Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:viii) are of the opinion that some teachers are unimaginative in their questioning strategies. As a result, a great deal of classroom assessment is based on written tests, which resembles the traditional approach to assessment. In this type of assessment, learners only learn memory skills. They further maintain teachers often use poorly focused questions, a predominance of

questions that require short answers involving factual knowledge, the evocation of responses that involve repetition rather than reflection and a lack of procedures designed to develop higher-order cognitive skills.

Boinamo & Van der Walt (2008:9) point out that numerous schools in South Africa are dysfunctional to such an extent that self-conducted performance evaluations cannot possibly produce a result that reflects reality truthfully.

In Chapter 4 and in this section, I have looked at possible reasons for problems in reliable assessment. These reasons would contribute to the CASS marks given to learners and, ultimately influence the degree of discrepancy with the external summative marks.

### **5.3 Strengths of CASS**

In Chapter 3, I discussed CASS and its benefits. To recap briefly here, CASS provides information used to support learners' development and enable improvement in teaching and learning. CASS, as set out in the Generic Assessment Guidelines, is school-based and consists of "practical work, oral work, written tasks, tests, projects, portfolios and any other task specific to that learning area" (Department of Education, 2002b:14).

Various scholars have discussed several benefits of continuous assessment. Earlier I have stated that Kellaghan & Greaney (2004:44-45) argue that the key

strength of assessment by teachers is its focus on performance. They explain that this has several advantages, namely:

- CASS does not decontextualize knowledge and skills;
- It provides evidence of learners' learning in authentic settings;
- It facilitates assessment of a learner's ability to think critically, co-operate, solve problems and communicate; and
- It can contribute substantially to advancing learners' learning and understanding (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004: 44-45).

Also, CASS is formative; teachers use CASS to guide their teaching and learners' learning by giving constant feedback on the knowledge learnt. Learners become aware of their errors and repeat the work until they have mastered the knowledge Gardner (2006:104). Like Gardner, Van der Berg & Shepherd (2008:iv) discuss how CASS provides learners with feedback on their performance during the Grade 12 year, and such feedback is likely to have a positive effect on learners' preparations and efforts for the Grade 12 examination. Moreover, CASS assesses those skills an examination does not assess. For example, continuous assessment evaluates group work and democratic participation (Israel, 2005). CASS supports learners who do not cope well under examination pressure, since CASS affords opportunities for teachers to assess learners in a relaxed atmosphere. Further, it is a system that monitors the learner's performance throughout the year and in this way develops a profile for each learner (Israel, 2005). CASS makes assessment fair by reducing the dependence on performance in a single terminal examination as the only determinant of learner achievement. In addition, it affords learners the

opportunity to demonstrate attainment over time and in a variety of contexts. Klenowski (2002).

So, given the strong benefits of CASS, how can its reliability and validity be improved in South African schools and, in particular in Grade 12 ENGFAL?

In my teaching capacity, I too have observed that CASS has the potential to prove an effective indicator of and motivator for learning achievement. I have seen that the implementation of CASS can assist in improving assessment skills for teachers who teach Grade 12. For example, in the English First Additional Language moderation process for the creative writing paper, teachers from different schools cluster together to read and mark learners' essays. They share ideas on how to use the marking rubric and in that way, their assessment skills improve. In addition, during oral moderation, learners gather in a common venue for presentation in front of a panel of teachers. This kind of situation promotes competition among teachers to display their learners' achievements. It also presents an opportunity to learn from teachers who teach successful learners. What is more, learners who participate develop not only knowledge, but life skills such as how to prepare themselves for job interviews in the future. It also promotes competition among learners for better performance and thus improved results.

In summary therefore, CASS, if correctly implemented, can improve the culture of teaching and learning. It forces teachers to expose learners to the whole curriculum and prevents them from teaching only for the examination. However, it

has been established that certain aspects regarding the implementation of CASS can be problematic and disadvantages have been identified.

#### **5.4 Suggestions on How to Improve CASS**

In this section, I am going to address the suggestions on how to improve CASS by looking systematically at specific authors and then integrating the main suggestions in a summary at the end.

According to Kellaghan & Greaney (2004) teachers need to make assessment an integral and frequent aspect of teaching for classroom assessments to improve and thereby improve learner achievement. Assessment activities need to include questions that focus on meaningful aspects of learning. Teachers need to pose questions that require learners to draw on higher-order cognitive skills, not just recall, and to explore the issues raised, not merely repeat information. Teachers, therefore, need to be conversant with subject content to change their approach to assessment effectively.

In Chapter 4, I argued that teachers' lack of knowledge concerning how to allocate, weight and administer CASS marks, is problematic. Cornish (2011:16) supports the aforementioned suggestion by highlighting the fact that teachers in Singapore undertake continuous in-service training. Cornish (2011:16) is of the opinion that Singapore's success in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) may be attributed to the continuous in-service training teachers receive because training directly affects learner achievement. If continuous assessment improves learner achievement, it follows that teachers

need to undertake continuous in-service training in subjects they teach. Based on my discussion, I want to recommend that teachers are given continuous in-service training in English First Additional Language as well as in all aspects of assessment.

Macfarlane & Chaywoski (2011) suggest that teachers need to attend organised content workshops. In clarifying this claim, Chisholm (2011) refers to the content workshop she attended where teachers received subject content training and indicated they wished to receive further training in the content of their subjects. Chisholm thus views teacher training in subject content as an effective and enjoyable experience when it is well organised and presented effectively. Again, I want to recommend that strengthening teachers' subject knowledge and assessment practices will improve learner achievement directly.

Broadfoot et al (1992) similarly argue that if continuous assessment is to improve learner achievement, teachers should be provided with adequate INSET support and/or the construction of question item banks for assessment. They further suggest that structures be designed that will take the pressure on teachers into account. I asserted that teachers perceive CASS as an administrative overload. If they were provided samples of CASS per subject that they could draw on, the additional load of constructing new assessment questions and tasks will be reduced.

Christie (2008:201) holds the idea that teachers need high quality in-service professional development, particularly as lifelong learners in a knowledge age.

Naturally, part of the pre-service and in-service training includes training in effective assessment practices. In particular, it ought to train teachers on how to deal with assessment of absent learners and the assessment of learners who have transferred from other schools. In addition, the regional subject advisor needs to have a reputation for being a helpful and resourceful person who is able to advise teachers on how to deal with assessment challenges effectively.

Israel (2005) points out that educator unreliability in continuous assessment marks is both a local and international problem. Israel (2005) reflects on the idea that additional training in curriculum development, assessment skills, and effective standardization and moderation processes, could help teachers to improve. This is why teachers need to attend workshops to keep them up to date with development in assessment approaches.

Ma (2011:13) supports the view that professional development may improve teaching, which may correspondingly improve learners' motivation to learn. Professional development exposes teachers to new techniques, methods and approaches that keep them abreast with changes in teaching and assist them to assess effectively. Ma (2011:13) explains further that professional development prevents teachers from stagnating and rouses their interest in the subjects they teach. The need for academic training and professional development implies teachers need to join professional organisations so that they keep abreast of current issues and developments in education. In this way, they are encouraged to share teaching hints and techniques they may find useful in the classroom. Ma (2011) also advocates that language teachers participate in workshops, organise

observations and continue with their education, aspects that may assist them in developing language teaching skills and knowledge of the subject. Importantly, strong and active professional teachers' organisations may collectively be able to address the problem of dysfunctional schools.

### Professional Ethos and Teacher Organisations

For professional teacher organisations to improve teaching practices, Kallaway (2011) argues that a need exists to include and involve teacher organisations in resolving the educational reform logjam. Kallaway (2011) views the current organised teaching profession as problematic and claims teachers need strict monitoring to ensure they are present in their classrooms to deliver quality teaching and learning. According to Kallaway, problems exist because teachers strike and desert learners and are absent from school when tasks are supposed to be completed, with the result that CASS marks are neglected. In Kallaway's (2011) view, when the strike is over, teachers do not have sufficient time to attend to assessment tasks, which prompts them to inflate CASS marks, thus causing discrepancies. Kallaway is of the opinion that if South Africa is to stimulate growth and increase international competition, control of teacher unions needs to be confronted so that there may be more meaningful monitoring of teachers. To this end, the South African state needs to write and implement policies that will increase the quality of mass education. Although Kallaway's (2011) criticism of South Africa's teacher unions appears extreme in its generalisation, there is widespread agreement that certain teacher strikes have harmed the educational endeavour.

### Improved Time Mangement

Harding & Green (2010), claim that outstanding academic achievement is due to teachers who know their subjects well, spend maximum time on-task and care for their learners' personal and academic growth. This implies if there is to be improvement in continuous assessment, there needs to be an overall strengthening of content knowledge, classroom management, time management and commitment to learners' development.

Brombacher (2011:20) asserts that learners need to repeat processes of knowledge constantly taught them so their ideas mature from simple to sophisticated. Frequent practice instils learners with confidence regarding their ability supported by regular and useful feedback, which is an essential component of CASS. If teachers neglect to spend sufficient time-on-task, they will deprive learners of opportunities to practice tasks until they gain confidence. In Chapter 4, I discussed that some teachers regard providing feedback to learners in large classes as a challenge, which is also a serious concern. Supporting and training teachers in effective time management may alleviate this problem.

The KwaZulu-Natal Moderator's Report on the ENGFAL NCS Examinations (2009) argues that if improvement in the overall performance of learners is to be achieved in KwaZulu-Natal schools, learners need to read, write and speak English more often than they do currently. This statement resonates with Brombacher's (2011) call for more practice. The report further mentions that schools need to ensure that an adequate supply of appropriate reading material is available to all learners in all grades. Omidire, Bower & Jordaan (2011) support this call in their assertion that

learners need to spend more time reading to improve their ENGFAL levels. If learners read and write English on a regular basis, their achievement levels will increase. Improved learner performance may also facilitate teachers' assessment tasks in that they will be required to spend less time on remedial teaching.

### Parental Involvement

Thurston (2011:21) refers to the role of parent involvement in learner performance and states that research has evidenced that active involvement of parents in their children's education not only affects learner achievement positively. It also contributes to superior education quality. This implies schools need to educate parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's academic lives. In short, considering and finding ways in which parents can assist with informal assessment at home, may pay desired educational dividends.

### Recognition of Importance and Relevance of Language Proficiency

The KwaZulu-Natal Moderator's Report on the ENGFAL NCS Examinations (2008) clarifies that the learning process in the NCS, in all subjects in the FET phase, emphasises reading, writing and speaking and that proper recognition needs to be accorded to the language of learning and teaching across the curriculum, if any improvement in learner achievement is to be realised. This implies that teachers must emphasise the importance of ENGFAL in improving learner performance. It also implies teachers must avoid "code switching," that is, where teachers teach and explain concepts using the vernacular language, which is not the medium of instruction. Doing so hampers learners' development and places them at a

disadvantage when they write external summative assessments and nobody translates for them.

The KwaZulu-Natal Moderator's Report on the ENGFAL NCS Examinations (2008) also reports that using ENGFAL as a language of teaching and learning must begin in the Intermediate Phase and be sustained throughout the Senior and FET Phases. In this regard, all teachers need to take the Foundations for Learning document issued by the Department of Education (2008) commencing in the lower part of the GET band, seriously. This approach holds that if learners read in the classroom, their knowledge of ENGFAL will increase and by the time they reach Grade 12, their language competency will have improved. Since the language of instruction is the same as the language used for the external summative assessment in Grade 12, it may eliminate or minimise discrepancies between CASS and summative assessment marks.

#### Teacher Support within Schools

Another idea, suggested by Broadfoot et al (1992), is the establishment of an assessment committee within each school. The committee could assist with internal moderation of assessment questions. It could also encourage teachers to hold reasonable and attainable expectations of learners through professional contributions from their colleagues. It could guide teachers to assess with minimal errors, thereby minimising discrepancies in school-based assessments. In Chapter 4, one of the concerns I discussed included the perception of teachers that CASS contributes to their administrative workload, the lack of assessment skills of teachers and the need for appropriate resources to support teachers in

designing CASS tasks. Having an assessment committee within schools, which shares administration and provides constructive advice and resources for CASS, may positively contribute to addressing these concerns.

Kok & Blignaut (2010) strongly support the idea that adequate resources need to be provided to support designers and developers to manage continuous assessment of large numbers of learners and overcrowded classrooms. In section 4.3, for example, I compared learner achievement in CASS and external summative achievement. School D with 74 learners had significant discrepancies between CASS and external summative assessment marks. Naturally, in such a large class, it would prove difficult for a teacher to provide learners with individual attention and to give them timeous feedback on their tasks or assessments but it will mean that learners will not receive appropriate preparation for the external summative assessment. One proposed solution to minimise discrepancies is for the Department of Education to supplement teaching personnel, so that each teacher can teach a manageable group of learners, whom he/she can assess and to whom he/she can provide timeous feedback.

In summary, all authors suggest that teachers need to have adequate skills in assessing their learners. Such skills can be strengthened through various training opportunities and broader involvement of other parties such as teacher organisations, school committees and parents.

## 5.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

In this section, I want to summarise some general recommendations for improving CASS practices and possibly reducing discrepancies. My general recommendations are based on inductions I have made from four schools that showed the extent of the discrepancies. In Chapter 4 I started making some tentative suggestions of why the four schools' marks differ. Having shown that there are discrepancies, the next stage would be to try to further examine the reasons for them.

In Chapter 4 I started looking at specific reasons for the discrepancies as illustrated in the examples of the four schools, and in Chapter 5 I added some general reasons. Together they included:

- A lack of teacher knowledge in administering CASS;
- Large classes;
- The demanding administrative load of teachers;
- An interest in passing as many learners as possible;
- Not wanting to create tensions especially within small close-knit communities;
- Generally dysfunctional schools;
- Not many years of ENGFAL teaching experience; and
- Teacher qualifications which may be inadequate for Grade 12.

I suggested some recommendations concerning how the role of CASS can be strengthened and thereby contribute to minimising discrepancies between CASS and the final external summative assessment marks. Recommendations included:

- Provide more INSET of teachers on knowledge of subject content and assessment practices;
- Encourage teachers to improve their qualifications;
- Make an item bank available for teachers with samples of assessment questions on tasks;
- Encourage teachers to become active participants of professional teacher organisations;
- Encourage greater parental participation in informal assessment;
- Establish assessment committees in schools;
- Appoint more teachers to reduce overcrowding and large classes;
- Fund the establishment of functional libraries; and
- Promote English as a medium of instruction from as early as the Intermediate Phase.

In this thesis, I have looked at discrepancies in continuous assessment marks, which become evident at Grade 12 level, when learners write an external summative assessment. Marks that learners achieve in CASS are combined with marks they achieve in external summative assessment for certification, but in many cases, there are substantive differences between the two assessment marks. I also suggested various reasons that appear to contribute to discrepancies between continuous assessment marks and external summative assessment marks in Grade 12 ENGFAL and in conclusion, I put forward some tentative recommendations for strengthening CASS and in doing so, reducing the discrepancy between CASS and the external summative assessment marks.

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