

Chapter 2

Teachers' Views on the School Assessment Team's Management of Curriculum Assessment in Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' views on managing curriculum assessment strategies in primary schools at Germiston, Ekurhuleni South District in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The study was premised on the following research question: What are teachers' views on the school assessment team's management of curriculum assessment in primary schools? The study used a qualitative research methodology that was explorative and descriptive. Five primary school teachers, based on their managing and teaching experiences, in the Germiston area at Ekurhuleni District in Gauteng Province were purposefully selected for interviews in this study. The study revealed that teachers had similar views on the school assessment team's management of curriculum assessment in primary schools. Most teachers believed SATs developed assessment policy and developed the assessment plan and ensured the implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum 2005 was implemented in Grade 1 by the then Minister of Education in South Africa, Sibusiso Bhengu, in July 1998. However, the curriculum was discontinued in 2003. The years 2004 and 2005 were crucial for reviewing the curriculum to enhance and refine the accomplishment of the curriculum and assessment goals. In primary schools, specialized assessments and modifications were carried out during that time. The learner's progress was measured against outcomes rather than against performance. For this reason, there was no passing or failing. Learners who did not meet the criteria for attaining the standard could apply for reassessment, and the learner would decide when he or she was ready for assessment. Teachers would assess learners continuously by employing strategies such as peer and self-assessment, initiating projects, and assisting learners in putting together portfolios. The learner's progress would be monitored continuously, and some external assessment would also be done at the end of Grades 3 and 6. Assessment in an outcomes-based system enabled both learners and teachers to determine whether learners are achieving the agreed outcomes or not. A variety of assessment methods would be available to ensure that the methods are suited to the performance being assessed (Steyn et al., 2011, p. 32). In 2000, the C2005 Review Committee found that, among others, there was a lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policies and their implementation in schools. C2005 was refined and replaced by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) to strengthen C2005 (Steyn et al., 2011, p. 110).

In July 2010, Minister Angie Motshega announced a new curriculum improvement process in South Africa. Three ministerial committees were established to ensure smooth implementation of the curriculum, namely the Ministerial Project Committee for Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements, the Committee for the Reduction of Learning Areas in the Intermediate Phase in the General Education and Training Band, and the Learning and Teaching Support Materials Committee. At the beginning of 2010, subject-based teams were selected by the Department of Basic Education Ministerial Committee to work on developing new curriculum documents based on simplification, improvement, and clarification (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 14). The new curriculum documents contained the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement guidelines for all subjects for implementation in 2010, presenting new approaches to planning, teaching, and assessment. The report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement found that teachers were confused, overloaded, stressed, and demotivated, and as a result, were underperforming. This revision served to strengthen the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in schools. This curriculum focused on the content to be taught per term of the year

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