

**REVIEWING THE ROLE OF THE PROVINCIAL AND
DISTRICT OFFICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
ASSESSMENT POLICIES IN THE GAUTENG AND
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCES**

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Executive Summary

A robust, reliable and continuous classroom assessment system is crucial for improving learning and is a critical function of governments and schools. Between January 2010 and May 2010, the HSRC conducted a study to investigate how the Gauteng and Western Cape Provincial Departments of Education (i) prepare and support teachers to cope with the demands of the curricula and assessment practices and (2) how the information collected in schools is used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The study focused on the two provincial offices as well as one district office per province. The participants ranged from the level of a Deputy Director- General to that of a curriculum advisor. The study used a qualitative case study approach. Data gathering methods included individual and focus group interviews, document collection and document reviews and to some extent observations.

The research revealed that while all the officials interviewed agree that curriculum and assessment are inseparable, there are differences in terms of how provinces approach the implementation of assessment policies. The structuring and organization of the offices largely determines how the systems are equipped especially in terms of resources and how they function. In the Western Cape districts are further divided into districts and implementation is left to circuit teams under the management of a circuit manager. Curriculum advisors sit in the circuit meetings and get budgets for their own programs, whereas in Gauteng implementation is left to districts. Because of the size of the district management, learning areas specialists do not sit in management meetings and they are not happy about this situation.

Available resources in the province must be utilized maximally. The available universities and credible NGOs and other organizations within the province should, where relevant, be used to train and support officials. Sitting in meetings week after week, as the officials do, does not guarantee that the officials gain mastery of assessment or the curriculum. They need thorough training as well as opportunities to practice what they have learned.

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1 Introduction

This document reports on the activities carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) as a member of the consortium carrying out the programme: Improving the quality of education in South Africa: The Literacy and Numeracy Challenge. The programme was supported by the South African national Department of Education (DoE)¹ and received funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to South Africa.

The aim of the overall programme was to contribute towards developing the capacity of the education system to ensure that children in South Africa complete a full cycle of good quality basic education through improving the literacy and numeracy skills of learners. Specific areas of focus were knowledge advancement, policy knowledge and strategies, research capacity and institutional support.

Intended outcomes of the programme were:

- Delivery of good quality research underpinned by conceptual and methodological rigour
- Promotion of dialogue in policy research through more structured engagement of key policy constituencies (namely, DoE, teacher unions, parents and others) to inform and facilitate effective policy formulation and related programme implementation
- Effective use of monitoring and evaluation tools and processes by departments of education and other role-players at all levels of the system
- To impact on pre and in service training of teachers by communicating to training institutions information about good practice arising from an enhanced understanding of literacy and numeracy learning

Planned outputs of the overall programme were:

¹ Since the project was initiated, the Department of Education has been restructured into the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training.

- publications, such as an audit map of current and completed research relating to literacy and numeracy; case studies of good practice; and relevant publications to enhance the knowledge base of key stakeholders, e.g. policy briefs, “what-works” manuals, journal articles and conference papers
- toolkits and instruments such as new ways of assessing learning and developing data collection instruments
- identification of conditions under which policies can work, such as the generation of a set of ideas and practices for use by policy makers and other actors
- promotion of ‘structured policy dialogue’, such as information-sharing workshops, sector-specific policy briefings (e.g. with teacher unions) and peer-review meetings

2 Role of the HSRC within the overall programme

The task assigned to the HSRC was to investigate how our national assessment system supports teachers and education officials in improving learning in schools. The rationale for this was that a robust, reliable and continuous national and classroom assessment system is crucial for improving learning and is a critical function of governments and schools. Used appropriately, assessment systems can enable an education system to reach its goals of providing good quality education for all. In South Africa, however, despite numerous assessments exercises (such as systemic evaluations and Common Tasks of Assessments) and a substantial investment of human and financial resources, the full value and impact of assessment studies, and information derived from them, have not been realized, particularly in relation to improving the performance of learners from rural and poor backgrounds.

The legacy of apartheid means that South Africa is confronted with low learner performance. It has been argued that this is not because of a lack of policies intended to enable good quality education (Jansen, 2004; Parker, 2004; Motala, 2001) but because of an amalgam of issues including the complexity of the curriculum and related assessment difficulties (DoE, 2002), poor use of information obtained from assessment (Kanjee, 2007), lack of teaching and learning resources, and lack of teacher capacity. In view of

this, the aim of the study was to investigate how the various levels of the educational system prepare and support teachers to cope with the demands of the curricula and assessment practices and how schools, and district, provincial and national officials, use the information collected to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

A related challenge to be addressed in the study was how best to resource and develop assessment capacity and skills at all levels of the education system. Ideally, every learner should receive regular feedback in order to realize her or his potential. Understanding the tools, resources needed to achieve this, as well as the skills and knowledge required by teachers and by education department officials at district, provincial and national levels was an important part of the aim of the project.

A systems model, with indicators of the factors affecting learner performance, it was felt, would help with the DoE and other roleplayers to understand the main drivers of achievement and those aspects of the education system requiring reform.

This study investigated in particular assessment systems and practices in Gauteng and Western Cape provinces. Details of the findings appear below in this report.

2.1 Aims

The primary aim was to examine the two assessment systems with a view to learn their best practices related to collecting and providing relevant and timeous information to all role-players for use in improving learning in South African schools. This would build on and enhance current and past efforts and interventions, and would result in the development of guidelines, strategic plans and options for the DoE to use in strengthening and improving its Monitoring and Evaluation system and thus enhance good quality basic education for all.

2.2 Objectives

The main objective of this study was:

- to improve teaching and learning in schools by importing best assessment practices from two of the best performing provinces for use in other districts and provinces

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Study design

The study used a qualitative case study approach. The methods used to gather data included individual and focus group interviews, observations, document collection and document reviews. Thirty interviews between forty five minutes and one hour long were conducted. In some cases, officials were interviewed more than once for clarification purposes. The officials interviewed were from the level of a Deputy Director General to those responsible for the implementation of assessment policies at school level.

2.4 Outputs

The stated outputs of the project were:

- A report with a set of policy options and recommendations for consideration by the DOE in improving monitoring and evaluation systems and practices in general, and the assessment system in particular.
- Publications in the form of policy briefs, conference presentations and journal articles to enhance policy dialogue, policy understanding, and knowledge.

2.5.2 Study instruments

First, a literature review of national assessment policies and studies was carried out. Questionnaires were then developed and refined by the research team. The questionnaires targeted officials at the provincial offices, education district management teams, middle managers, curriculum implementers and assessment facilitators, and education officials responsible for mediating policies with the schools. The management questionnaires focused on broad policy issues while those for the curriculum implementers and facilitators gave more weight to practical assessment issues and practices. The

questionnaires were reviewed internally, by all the research team members and by an international consultant, Prof. Y. Sayed, who was an external advisor to the team. The questionnaires covered broad areas such as the national assessment policies, school assessment policies, district capacity available to implement assessment policies, professional development and support provided to schools and district officials by the district and province, use of assessment information and the efficacy of the “foundations for learning” campaign. (See Appendices 1 – 5 for the questionnaires.)

Document reviews were also carried out. The sections of this report relating to Gauteng and the Western Cape give details of documents reviewed. To cross-check the information provided by the officials through the questionnaires, policy documents related to the implementation of the policies were collected from all of the relevant officials.

2.6 Reporting framework

A reporting framework was devised, using the following headings:

- Policy
- Organizing structure and systems
- Strategic plans
- Resources
- Curriculum
- Instruments and tools
- Capacity development and training
- Reporting and dissemination
- Effective use of information

Findings from the research carried out in Gauteng and in the Western Cape are presented below, using the above headings.

3 The implementation of assessment policies in Gauteng Province

3.1 *Gauteng Province*

Gauteng is the geographically smallest but economically most important province of South Africa, contributing more than 33% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). It occupies less than 2% of the country's landmass, but with more than 10m residents is the most populous province. It is highly urbanized, containing the cities of Johannesburg and the capital city Pretoria/Tshwane. The province has more than 2500 schools.

3.2 *The research process*

Mainly, the research team carried out research in the Quality Assurance, and Examination and Assessment directorates of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), the Tshwane South district, and in three schools in that district. Much of the information obtained from the Quality Assurance, and Examination and Assessment information was used in another report on assessment in schools. The data was collected through focus group interviews, individual interviews, observations during cluster meetings and during lessons, and from document reviews.

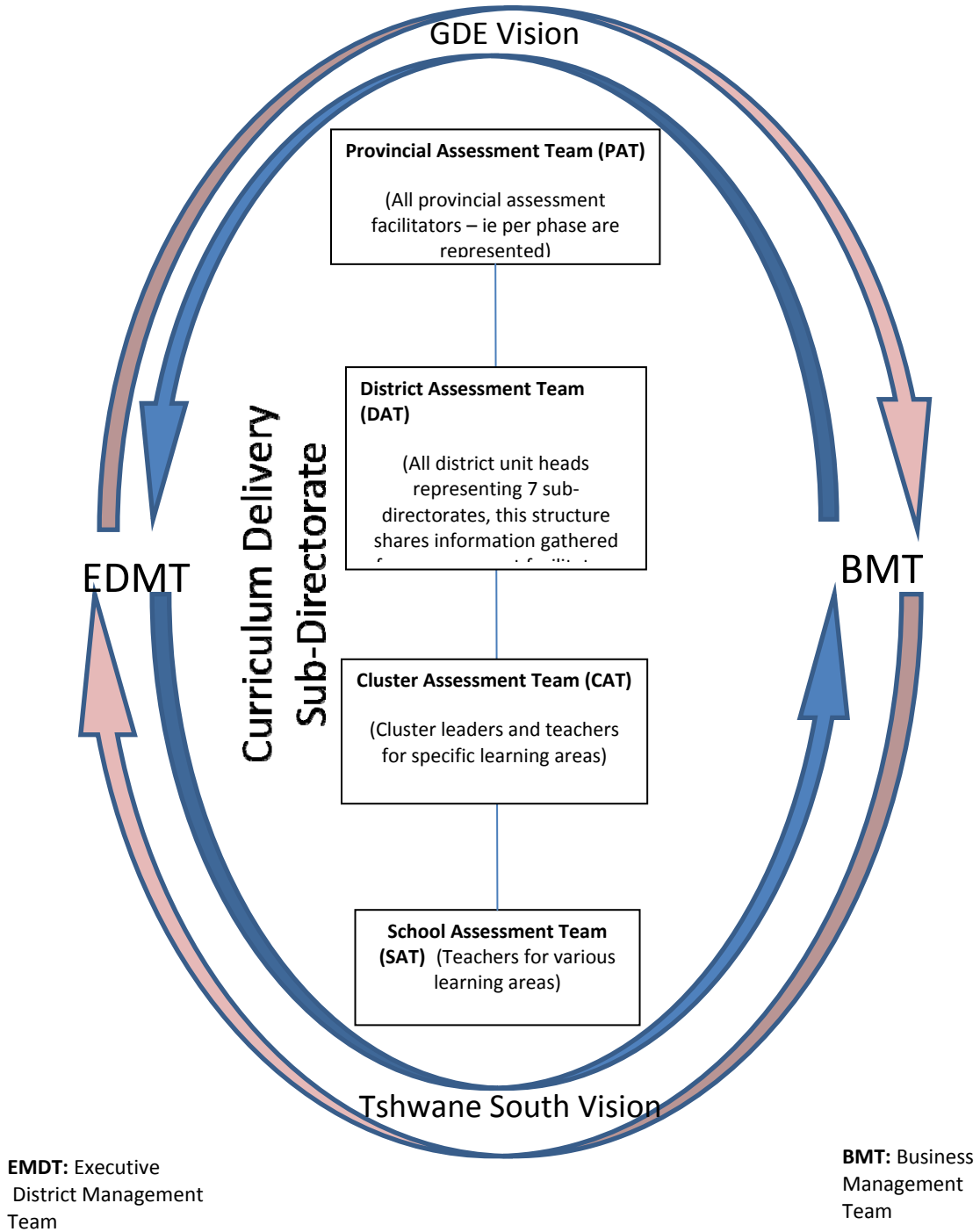
3.3 *The findings*

3.3.1 *Organization of districts and their systems*

As the diagram below indicates, districts are structured in a manner that allows for effective policy implementation with synergy between curriculum delivery services and the institutional development and support sub-directorate. Sub-directorates work together to ensure the following:

- (i) Smooth running of the district
- (ii) The implementation of the education policies sent by the provincial and national departments of education.

Figure 1: Structure of the GDE assessment system



Districts have a range of bodies responsible for the smooth implementation of education policies, and these ensure liaison between the province and the district. Some associations to which officials are affiliated operate at the district and others at the provincial level. Where a certain function falls under the province, district officials report to the responsible provincial official.

The highest ranking team at the district level is the Executive District Management Team (EDMT), responsible for the overall strategic vision and policy management in the district. It consists of all the district officials heading the various sub-directorates as well as the district Director, and may meet as often as weekly. The EDMT meets biweekly. In these meetings, each Chief Education Specialist CES reports on strategic issues. Discussions on these are given priority.

There is considerable interaction between the province and the district. The district Director, while managing the district, also participates in the provincial business management team (BMT) which meets once a month. All twelve district directors and anyone at the provincial office at director level or above takes part in the BMT meetings. These help the district Director to track developments in the province and to stay abreast of issues reported by the other districts.

Senior officials heading the various sub-directorates drive the implementation of the strategic vision of the district. They too are members of district and provincial associations and receive mandates from their district managers and from provincial associations. These associations focus on practical operational issues. Curriculum and assessment issues and best practices are discussed at the Curriculum Information Forum (CIF). The Curriculum Director chairs CIF meetings, which take place quarterly.

Assessment facilitators also have their own provincial assessment body, the provincial assessment team (PAT). This is replicated at district level, where it called the district assessment team (DAT). Both the PAT and DAT meet once a month. DAT meets after

the PAT has met so that issues discussed at PAT can be reinforced at the district level and customized to suit the needs of the district.

Between the school and district level, there is another assessment tier: the cluster assessment team (CAT). This is composed of elected cluster leaders who assist district officials to manage their function of supporting schools. Cluster leaders assist teachers with assessment issues and moderation of learner portfolios. They too meet once a month. Specifically, they support schools in implementing assessment policies and they help education officials with moderating learner portfolios.

As well as these structures, the district has two types of school visiting teams, one of which focuses on curriculum and assessment matters. There is also a multidisciplinary team which visits underperforming schools; this is the district transversal team and draws its members come from all the seven sub-directorates. The function of this team is to diagnose problems encountered by the school and to assist it with dealing with them.

3.3.2 Structures in place for schools

The school's assessment policy is drawn up by the School Assessment Team (SAT) and/or the School Management Team (SMT). The SAT consists of the deputy principal, the HoDs and teachers representing the different grades in the school. The SAT supports educators and conducts internal workshops on assessment and recording.

In some schools, the SMT in consultation with staff members draws up policy regarding different aspects from the school. On assessment, teachers are required to provide in advance their requirements for each term and these are distributed as assessment guidelines to parents.

School Governing Bodies (SGB) are also supposed to draw up policy but in most cases they ratify it. In the opinion of one principal, this is because the SGBs are parents and do not know much about what is happening in education.

3.3.3 District Strategic plans

Districts' strategic plans are derived from a number of sources. The most important are:

1. The Presidents' Address and the ANC manifesto
2. The State of the Nation address
3. Provincial strategic goals
4. The address by the Provincial MEC for Education

The EDMT uses these documents as the basis for formulating its own strategic plans, and district assessment strategic plans flow from these. The district is also guided by schools' assessment plans.

3.3.4 Resources

3.3.4.1 Human resources

From the interviews we learned that the human resources sub-directorate is responsible for making sure that all positions are filled by properly qualified officials. The district fills vacancies on time. When there is a vacancy at the office if it cannot be filled quickly using a qualifying candidate, a PL2 teacher who is a cluster leader can be seconded to the district office to fill the position, temporarily.

According to the current structure most of the positions on the organogram are filled. There are positions that are still vacant but most of the ones that were vacant when we started the research have now been filled too. Curriculum being the biggest has some vacancies still.

The district has inherent shortages despite the fact that all positions are filled as per the requirements of the post establishment structure. The officials told us that the district is among the 3 biggest in the province and should not be allocated the same number of foot soldiers as the smaller districts. A fair distribution would allow each LAS to visit one school per month. At the moment they can only visit a school once a term and they do not visit schools during the last term. The 65 LASs are just not enough to cover all the schools, including independent schools. The officials complained that the number of

LASs allocated per district is equal for all the districts in the province. This distribution is not equitable and the number of LASs for the district is not commensurate with the number required to serve all the schools.

The officials reported that teacher development falls within the ambit of the human resources sub-directorate. They said that when there is a perceived lack of skills capacity, it is the human resources sub-directorate that has to make sure that it provides officials with the necessary training and support. When recommendations are made human resources provides the officials with workshops.

3.3.4.2 Financial resources

Almost all the officials were complaining about budgeting or financial provisioning. They feel that the district needs to be allocated more money than it is currently receiving. The money they receive only covers operational issues and only allows for the running of the office. This state of affairs affects the availability of facilities necessary for the officials to do their duties effectively and efficiently. Some times the budget is not enough even to cover the operational costs in full. When we were doing the interviews, there was a moratorium on employing new staff members or buying of stationery and other necessary equipment. Telephone lines could only reach landlines and officials could not call cell phones. Costs such as staff development are never included in the budgets of the other sub-directorates either than human resources.

3.3.4.3 Facilities

Officials complained about a lack of basic resources like stationery, cars, working telephones, photocopying machines, computers and printers. They told researchers that they, although they were not allowed to call cell phones, teachers cannot take calls during school hours. In addition to this, both officials and the teachers have limited access to computers and not all of those have access to e-mail which could help officials to communicate with teachers. One official who had a computer in her office told us that she was using her personal printer. Cluster leaders are expected to communicate and

support their teachers through e-mail, which seems an anomaly when not all have access to this.

The LASs reported that scarcity of resources impacts severely on school visits. Preparing for school visits can be a logistical nightmare and needs thorough planning as the district does not have enough cars. According to officials, up to five people have to share one car. They plan in such a manner that they use the morning session for school visits and the afternoon session for workshops. This can prevent them from spending enough time with teachers at the schools; however, it is regarded as being better than not visiting at all. For the IDSOs, the situation was not as bad as they are more numerous and are able to visit their allocated schools at least once per month. However, this is still not enough as IDSOs deal with school managers and members of SGBs. This, according to officials, is where support is needed on a constant basis.

3.3.4.4 Curriculum

The officials responsible for assessment reported that under the new NCS, the official curriculum since 2003, curriculum cannot be separated from assessment. Further, they informed us that the NCS deviates from the forms of assessment popular under apartheid and is now linked to formative assessment. According to the officials, it is logical and appropriate for assessment to be located in the curriculum delivery sub-directorate and that the assessment officials report to the CES for curriculum delivery. The officials also stated that teachers are still struggling to see curriculum and assessment as the same function or to see assessment as a means to an end and not the end by itself.

Districts are intent on ensuring that curriculum and assessment are not separated. Officials said that assessment facilitators and LASs visit schools as a team and use monitoring tools that cover all the areas related to teaching and the organization and management of teaching. In addition to the filling the monitoring tool, the LAS writes a report to be sent to the DCES, CES and the school principal who in turn makes copies for the relevant teachers. When there is serious need for the kind of support that only

assessment facilitators can provide, then this is requested. During moderation, LASs work with the cluster leaders according to learning areas to moderate portfolios. Assessment facilitators mainly provide support and guidance to the various groups.

Treating assessment and curriculum as a continuum is not easy, however. Some officials complained that others were territorial and even though they know curriculum and assessment are inseparable there are people who still want to hold onto the divisions between the two.

3.3.4.5 Instruments and tools

District: districts have a range of tools for communicating policy issues. These include provincial circulars and district memos.

The district has an assessment management year-plan that follows provincial and national plans. Based on this plan, every official develops a personal plan. The district, provincial and national plans in turn are sent out to all schools so that they can follow suit and develop their own assessment management plans.

The school annual plan needs to be easy to understand and follow. In addition to the general plan including all the activities in a school, teachers draw up personal assessment plans. These are sent to the school management team which puts together a school assessment plan. This should be available to all and should indicate when a particular teacher will conduct what form of assessment and in what grade.

School: the school assessment policy is drawn up in line with the national assessment protocol as well as circulars sent to the schools by Head Office. The school assessment policy specifies how many assessments should take place each term but does not specify their frequency. Teachers decide on the number of assessments to take place each term as is required by the department.

3.3.4.6 Capacity development and training

Officials interviewed said that government-sponsored capacity development and training does not take place as often as they would wish, and there can be a long process involving paper work and recommendations by section heads before funding is provided for training or retraining of staff.

Training takes two main forms: workshops and meetings. Capacity development meetings are generally organized throughout the various tiers of the DoE. Assessment facilitators attend monthly PAT meetings where they are updated about the latest developments in assessment. In turn, they meet with the district transversal team and ensure that members of the team are up to the task before they go out on school visits. Between PAT meetings, assessment facilitators meet with their managers as DAT and address any assessment-related problems they have come across and review new developments.

The district also has its own capacity development meetings. These include induction meetings for new teachers and heads of department, cluster meetings, feedback meetings after school visitations and the road shows carried out at the beginning of the school year.

The other main form of capacity development and training at district level is the workshop. These are mainly the responsibility of the Teacher Education Unit, located within the Human Resources sub-directorate. However, on occasion officials from Curriculum Services provide the training. Generally, teachers receive training when there is a new policy that needs to be mediated, for example when the Foundations for Learning Campaign was introduced.

If, when visiting a school, officials identify a need to provide support for it, two options are available to them. They can immediately provide support and visit the teacher thereafter to see how s/he is coping. Alternatively, an arrangement can be made to

support a larger group at a central venue. In that case, members of the team that visited the school usually arrange for that training.

Where there is a need for an external trainer and funding is involved, a recommendation is made by the officials who identified the need and the Human Resources sub-directorate is approached. Training in that case becomes the function of the sub-directorate.

Policies, memoranda and circulars are used in building the capacity of or training officials and teachers.

Officials interviewed said that in some cases capacity development or training is provided by external organizations such as the HSRC. This tends to occur when a new approach needs to be introduced, or capacity in a particular office needs to be increased. An example is an HSRC workshop in February 2010 for district officials on standard setting.

3.3.4.7 Reporting and dissemination

Reporting and disseminating of data is a two-way process from the province to the school and from the school to the province.

According to officials interviewed, reporting takes place each time that information is collected from schools by the district or the provincial office. This is gathered for the purpose of keeping records, and to inform and improve the system. After gathering, it is passed on by the following means:

- i. Reports written after attending workshops, meetings or visiting schools
- ii. Letters and e-mails.
- iii.** Memoranda and circulars: these are official documents communicating district policies and any other management and governance information.

3.3.4.8 *Effective use of information*

District: the primary aim of collecting information is to improve the system. The District Information System Management unit deals specifically with assessment data collected from schools. Once this is available, the unit analyzes it and makes it available to officials for discussion and planning.

Province: in addition to being channeled to the Information Management unit, information can be passed on to other assessment facilitators at PAT and to senior officials within the unit. The purpose can include simple reporting on progress in a particular school or to enable other support directorates to make decisions about supporting the school. A recent initiative has been to establish a ‘pacesetters’ project. The project, which stems directly from studying information coming out of schools, will encourage schools to work together to assist those which are struggling and to ensure that they all perform at a similar level.

Information is used to monitor progress as well as to account. If a school or a teacher is introduced to a certain program, such as the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FLC), the department monitors its progress. A considerable amount of reporting took place around the FLC. Information is also collected to account for taking certain actions. When officials carry out follow-up visits, they collect information that will help them to determine if further assistance is needed or if teachers are coping and assistance can be stopped.

Schools’ use of assessment results: before teachers report to parents, they give learners their assessment to check discrepancies that can be rectified after that they submit their reports to the HOD’s. The schools inform the district about the results, using a form which gives a breakdown of the ratings achieved in the different learning areas. Assessment results are used for improvement, with some teachers stating that they use them for baseline assessment at the beginning of the year. This helps them to understand learners’ problems and to identify weaker ones in need of intervention strategies.

4 The implementation of assessment policies in Western Cape Province

4.1 The Western Cape

4.2 Study design

The design used in the Western Cape (WC) was similar to that used in Gauteng. A proviso stipulated by the province was that the research process must not interfere with Western Cape Education Department (WCED) district or head office plans. Once permission was secured, the researchers proceeded to identify all relevant interviewees and to arrange interview dates.

The methodology, using individual and focus group interviews, document reviews and observations, was also similar to that in Gauteng. The first week was spent interviewing officials at head office and collecting relevant literature. Head office-based interviewees were individually interviewed, each interview being about forty five minutes long. The second week followed the same processes but in the Metro East district offices. This district was chosen because of its involvement with a previous HSRC assessment project. The sampled district officials were interviewed at their offices in the district office. The interviews happened simultaneously with the collection of documents from the interviewees.

In some instances, officials were observed while doing their work although time did not allow all to be observed. The focus was particularly on how the province collects, stores and uses information. Most of the officials were in the Education Management Information and Quality Assurance Directorate. In addition, one primary school was visited; and researchers were given demonstrations of the online systems used by the teachers and officials. These are the Central Education Management and Information System (CEMIS), District Education Management and Information System (DEMIS) and EduInfoSearch.

In all of the interviews, two HSRC researchers collected data from the official with one researcher mainly focusing on conducting the interview and the other on collecting documentary evidence. The interviews were all audio-taped, none of the officials refusing this. The interviewees were drawn from the various ranks in the department, ranging from the level of Deputy Director General to Curriculum Advisor. Twenty interviews were conducted with WCED officials, and around fifteen documents collected.

Documents collected for review, in hard copy or electronic format, were those mentioned by the interviewees as well as any others relating to assessment available on the WCED web site. They included:

1. The organization and structure of the Western Cape Education Department
2. Literacy and numeracy (LitNum) strategy documents
3. WC Provincial Annual Assessment Grade 9 Report, 2008
4. Structure of Provincial Annual Assessment Tests
5. Results of Grade 3 and 6 Provincial Annual Assessment
6. Example of School Report
7. Grade 6 Provincial Annual Assessment Report
8. Grade 3 Provincial Annual Assessment Report
9. Exemplars to Schools
10. Instrument design and data analysis of Assessment of Grade 9 Language and Mathematics

The findings of the interviews, the literature review and researcher observations were triangulated to create the analysis.

4.3 Organising structure and systems

Against the background of the WC Provincial Government having adopted the Human Development strategy, the WCED embarked on an organisational re-design process, also called the modernization process, in response to this. The strategy involved restructuring as well as appointing senior management. The aim was to drive systemic change and thus

improve education quality, with a particular focus on improving service delivery and achieving the educational outcomes required by the national curriculum. The department thus requires qualified people who can achieve these goals. The process has buy-in at the highest level and is driven by the Minister of Education, who has primary responsibility for providing education in GET and FET schools and for vocational and technical training in FET colleges. The official immediately below the Minister is the Superintendent-General (SG), responsible for ensuring that the province provides learners with quality education. These two officials account to the public through the Communications Directorate of the WCED, which also assists with conveying other key information, such as Matric results, to the public.

The task of providing quality education is divided into the following four major sub-tasks:

1. Curriculum management
2. Institutional development and coordination
3. Planning and strategy
4. Corporate services

Each of these can be divided into smaller tasks and is the responsibility of a single branch of the WCED. Each branch is headed by a Deputy Director-General who reports to the SG. As stated above, one of the key tenets of the redesign process is to ensure that key positions within the department are filled. At the time of the interviews, almost all the top positions had been filled, except for one position of Deputy Director-General. According to the officials interviewed, the province was operating at slightly more than 80% capacity.

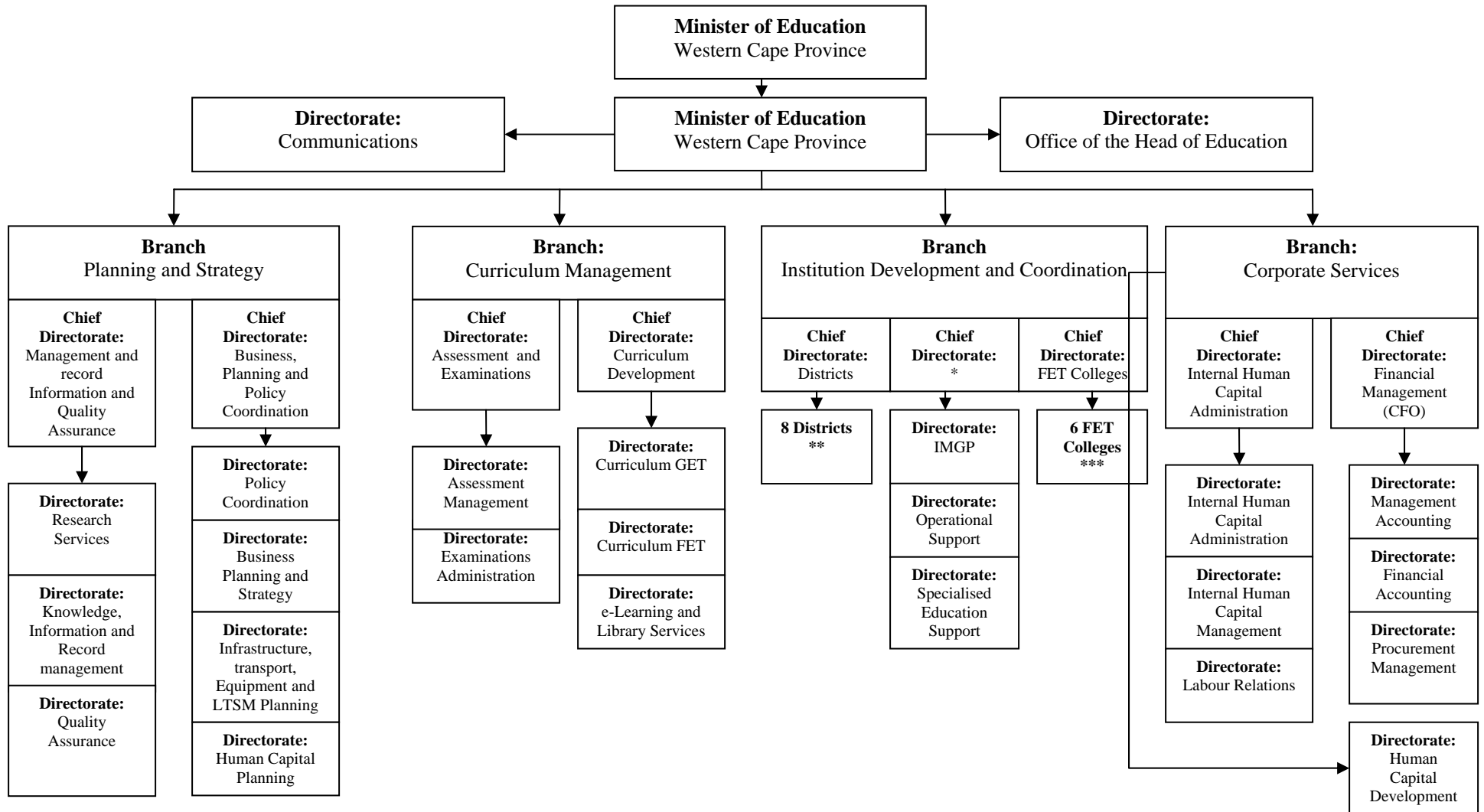
The officials in the WCED believe in the redesign and modernization processes, and state that they do not knowingly compromise quality. They reported that only qualified personnel are employed, and that the division of labour between the four WCED management branches and their sub-branches was fairly even. Each branch has two, and in one case three, Chief Directorates, each of the nine with a specific mandate and all

functioning collectively to contribute toward the department's major aim of providing quality education. Effective and efficient service delivery and maximum coordination is encouraged by the manner in which the four branches are subdivided and staffed.

The Curriculum Management, Institution Development and Coordination, and Planning and Strategy are the most involved in the direct management of curriculum delivery and assessment in schools, and are therefore the main focus of this study. The Curriculum Management branch is divided into two chief directorates: Assessment and Examinations, and Curriculum Development. These manage curriculum delivery, and assessment and examination processes, respectively. The officials responsible for assessment ensure that schools comply with and implement the national assessment policy frameworks and standards. The Chief Directorate: Institution Development and Coordination enhances school performance as it manages the development of educational institutions and management structures and coordinates delivery of programmes and activities in the province.

The nine Chief Directorates at the head office are split into twenty directorates. One of the chief directorates under Institution Development and Coordination is Districts. The WECD has eight districts, each headed by a district director. Directors based at the head office and at district offices have the same authority but different functions, with district directors ensuring the quality of education and of educational institutions within a district. The 49 circuit team managers of the WCED assist district directors in enabling schools to provide quality education.

Figure 2: Organization and post establishment: Western Cape Department of Education



**Institutional, Specialised and Operational Support*

***Metro Central District, Metro East District, Metro North District, Metro South District, Cape Winelands, Eden & Karoo District, Overberg District, West Coast District*

****West Coast, South Cape, Boland, Northlink, False Bay, College of Cape Town*

4.4 The findings

4.4.1 Assessment systems: Assessment management and examinations administration

fall under the Chief Directorate: Assessment and Examinations which in turn falls under the Curriculum Management branch. This chief directorate is tasked with ensuring that national policy frameworks and standards in respect of assessment and examinations are complied with. Officials in the directorate are required to ensure that assessment systems relating to curriculum delivery and assessment in all the phases are developed and maintained. They are also responsible for correct planning and administration of examinations and certification.

The Assessment Management and Examinations Administration Chief Directorate has two sub-directorates: Assessment Management and Examinations Administration. Assessment management entails developing provincial assessment systems, applying national assessment systems, building skills and capacity to ensure efficient and effective application of the assessment policies, and reviewing the assessment systems in place. At head office, the Assessment Directorate is headed by an Assessment director who reports to the Chief Director. In the district offices, there are assessment coordinators who report to curriculum heads who are members of district management teams.

Operationalization of assessment policies is complex. It is intertwined with curriculum delivery but has aspects that are assessment specific. In managing this complexity, the assessment director liaises directly with the eight assessment coordinators who are based at district offices and responsible for managing the implementation of assessment policies at district level. The assessment director, other assessment officials based at the head office and the eight district coordinators form the provincial assessment committee. They meet once a month to discuss issues relating to the implementation of assessment policies.

Districts also have similar committees, which include the district assessment coordinator as well as the GET and FET coordinators. District assessment coordinators do not work

directly with curriculum advisors, who are also qualified assessors. Instead, they work closely with phase coordinators who are responsible for supervising curriculum advisors. Curriculum advisors thus account to their phase coordinators for curriculum delivery and for assessment related matters. When needed, an assessment coordinator can participate in phase coordinators' meetings and interact directly with curriculum advisors. District assessment committees manage the implementation of assessment in the district.

The WCED has a unique human resources system in the sense that implementing policies, including assessment policies, at the school level is the circuit team's responsibility. Circuit team management consists of the Circuit Team manager, two Institutional Management and Governance Managers, a social worker, a psychologist, an Administration Development Officer and Curriculum Advisors (CA) for each of the three phases. The IMG managers are responsible for the basic functionality in a school and ensure that schools implement policies appropriately. CAs support and guide the teachers, helping with teaching and assessment. Schools help the process by forming their own assessment committees with their own coordinators. Subject teachers work closely with the CAs and with the assessment coordinators.

4.4.2 Strategic plans:

The WCED strategic plan is based on the strategic plan of the Western Cape Provincial Government which includes human capital development as a goal. The WCED contribution to this plan is its commitment to the improvement of the life chances of every child in the province through the provision of quality education. According to the WECD strategic plan, from the period 2010 to 2019 the focus is improving learners' reading, writing and calculating abilities (LitNum strategy) and on increasing the number of learners passing Grade 12 including those passing with Matric exemptions and passing mathematics and science. One of the interviewees confirmed this by saying the Western Cape Education Department has set targets in order to improve learner performance:

We have set targets for literacy Grade 3, Grade 6 and Grade 9; we have set targets for the Matric pass rate, for university admission rates, maths numbers, physical

science numbers and we intend to reduce the number of schools with a less than 60% pass rate (Interview: Curriculum Directorate: 9 April 2010)

As to how the WCED proposes to achieve these goals, the emphasis is on:

- Providing knowledgeable and caring officials who are able to support schools, teachers and learners
- Ensuring that teachers are present at school and are prepared
- Sufficient funding
- An environment which enables the partners in education to function effectively and efficiently together.

4.4.3 Policy: Knowledge of and familiarity with national assessment policies

To be able to fulfil the WCED's strategic objectives, officials must have a good understanding of national education policies. All twenty interviewees displayed a good knowledge of the current national assessment policies for GET and FET, indicating that two major policies drive national assessment at present: the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002) and the National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the General and Further Education as well as the Training Band (DoE, 2005). Government Gazette 29626 was the document most frequently referred to by the officials. Although all of the officials knew about assessment policies, some had a deeper understanding of them and could talk extensively about their implementation. Some of these officials complained about some of the policy changes implemented by the National Department of Education and the rate at which they have happened. They complained especially about the announcement made before the end of the 2009 school year by the Department of Basic Education regarding assessment, and the subsequent withdrawal of the announcement in the first quarter of 2010. The officials complained that such a manner of handling policy issues is confusing and can lead to chaos.

The province and the various directorates responsible for carrying out assessment or supporting assessment processes reported that the province holds assessment in high regard as it enables them to "understand whether the system is performing" (Interview:

Curriculum Directorate: 9 April 2010). Assessment helps them to evaluate the core business of the province of ensuring that schools provide good quality education, to identify problems and to remedy the situation where necessary. The officials stated that for the province to implement any new policy or program, it is necessary to know how well the curriculum system is performing so that learner performance can be improved. For the province to determine how the system is performing, it relies substantially on information gathered through school assessments and examinations. For example, the provincial and national annual literacy and numeracy tests for Grades 3, 6 and 9 enable the province to determine how learners are performing and in which districts and at which schools they perform better or worse than others.

The Minister or the SG is usually the first official to communicate information to the public, through media releases. This announcement is followed by a release to the districts, the schools and the school communities. The province takes advantage of its strong and effective IT system and provides results online as soon as announcements are made. Hard copies are also provided, but more slowly. The release of results to the districts, schools and communities happens in two stages: providing the reports to the districts and schools, and visiting districts and schools to explain the results to the district officials, teachers and parents. The results are always accompanied by an analysis from the research unit. Thereafter, the curriculum delivery branch studies the reports and devises strategies to remedy the identified problems through activities including road shows. As soon as schools receive the results, they also analyse and assess them and develop their own improvement plans.

4.4.4 Resources: Human resource

Redesign and modernisation strategies are in place to provide the province with enough qualified personnel. The WCED, through the implementation of these two strategies, is committed to ensuring that it provides all the offices with enough qualified staff, especially in senior positions. At the time of the interviews, except for one, all of the top management positions in the four branches of the WCED were filled. According to one of the participants, the modernisation strategy allows the department to restructure, and if

necessary, to wait to fill a position until a suitable candidate is available. The redesign and modernisation strategies are employed at the WCED head office as well as the district offices.

Where the department does not have enough qualified staff or it is not financially able to employ staff for certain functions, it can go out to tender. This has happened, for example, with the development of systemic evaluations. Currently the service provider for this is a consortium led by the University of Cape Town. The WCED encourages service providers to work closely with it. In the case of the systemic evaluations process, service providers specializing in developing a systemic evaluation carry out the bulk of the work, with officials managing the arrangement and quality assuring its work. Officials qualified in the field supervise the service provider.

As well as attracting highly qualified personnel, the WCED develops existing staff members, taking responsibility for in-service training of its officials as well as of teachers. Officials, especially curriculum advisors and those who have been in the service for a long time, are trained moderators and assessors. Thus, when they go to schools to support and guide teachers on curriculum delivery matters, they also assist with assessment matters. Training of officials is ongoing, and is available for all newly appointed curriculum advisors. The department has an agreement with the University of the North to provide all new assessment officials with the required training. Training begins with the officials and is extended to the teachers, who also receive in-service training. The WCED has its own teachers' in-service training unit, the Cape Teacher's Institute. This provides a number of forms of training for teachers, including training for principals, for foundation phase teachers and for subject teachers. Training at the Institute usually takes place during school holidays, with teachers spending at least two weeks receiving theoretical and practical training.

4.4.5 Financial resources

in line with the WCED's commitment to the development of human capital, the department commits funding to the realization of this goal, providing substantial amounts

of money for the implementation of its human development programs. This is coupled with the provision of training in financial management, with one of the training modules available for WCED officials being training in the management of finances. A specific strategy, the Work Skills Plan (WSP), is aimed at human resource development, with training of teachers and officials being provided for through this plan. The WSP allows even curriculum advisors to implement in-service programs as they are funded for programs they propose which aim at the development of teachers. All that officials need do is to identify a need affecting a broad group of teachers and forward the information to the WSP unit for funding. Officials interviewed reported that funding is not always enough for all of the projects they would like to implement, but that it is not as problematic as it is for other provinces. Districts, like the head office, are held accountable for budgeting and District Directors are required to ensure that district budgets are able to last through the financial year.

4.4.6 Facilities

Interviewees stated that they have sufficient basic facilities such as stationery, cars, working telephones, photocopying machines, computers and printers. Communication and passing on of information is encouraged, as officials' cell phones are subsidized. Teachers receive teacher workbooks and lesson plans. Officials are allowed to use government vehicles so long as their travelling remains within a stipulated number of kilometres. The officials stated that most schools are equipped with computers and have internet access through the Khanya Project. This was especially relevant as a considerable amount of communication between the province, the districts and the schools is done electronically. The officials reported that office space is not a significant problem, and that they have some form of privacy even if the situation is not ideal.

4.4.7 Curriculum

The two Chief Directorates falling under the Curriculum Management branch are Curriculum Development, and Assessment and Examinations, with officials interviewed clearly indicating that there was a strong link between the two. Head office and district

officials responsible for curriculum development and assessment and examinations work closely together. Curriculum advisors are also assessment specialists and moderators.

4.4.8 Instruments and tools

The province uses a range of tools to manage the provisioning of quality education and to communicate policy issues. These include provincial circulars, minutes and gazettes. These documents are sent out by the head office or by district offices to schools. In most cases, communications are sent electronically via:

- Central Education Management Information System (CEMIS)
- District Management Information System (DMIS)
- EdoInfoSearch
- Media releases

Interviewees indicated that there are also other documents, such as year planners, for province, districts and schools. Year planners give a detailed schedule of events planned by the province, district or school for a given year.

4.4.9 Capacity development and training

Capacity development is well organized by the WCED, with officials interviewed reporting that various capacity development and training activities are conducted by the various levels within the Department. An interesting instance is the Cape Teaching and Learning Institute (CTLI). This is funded by WCED and runs various training courses throughout the year. These are structured to promote capacity development, and include, for instance, leadership courses for principals. In addition to these course, people such as Curriculum Advisors at district level can indicate areas where courses should be offered when needed. The unit responsible for this type of courses is the Work Skills Program (WSP), which is located at the district level.

4.4.10 Reporting and dissemination

Reporting takes place every time that information is collected from schools, the district or the provincial office. Information is gathered for the purposes of keeping records,

informing and improving the system. After it has been gathered, it is passed on through the following media:

- Reports, usually sent out after attending or conducting workshops or meetings or after visiting schools
- Letters and e-mails
- Memoranda and circulars: these are official documents communicating district policies and any other management and governance information

In addition, with regard to the Provincial Diagnostic Annual Assessment, the procedure is as follows:

- For Grades 3, 6 and 9 results, the service provider responsible for quality assuring the results makes a presentation to head office
- The media are invited and the Minister or the Superintendent General (S.G.) makes a press statement
- After the statement has been released, school reports are made available via the CEMIS system
- The final process of dissemination is the compilation of a provincial report

In addition to the above forms of dissemination, head office carries out road shows where there results are explained to the communities. These road shows usually occur over a two month period, and generally focus on a few well performing schools and a larger number of weaker performing schools.

4.4.11 Effective use of information

Road shows are used to engage with districts, schools, communities and parents. Officials informed the researchers that the primary aim of collecting and disseminating information is to improve the system. The Central Education Management System unit deals specifically with assessment data collected from schools. Once this data is available from schools, the unit analyzes it and makes it available to the officials for discussion and planning.

In addition to channelling information to the Information Management Unit, information can be passed on to assessment facilitators from other districts within WCED at PAT meetings, and to senior officials in the province, perhaps for the purpose of reporting on progress in a particular school. It can also be passed on to one of the other support directorates, such as the IDSO, for use in making decisions about supporting a school. Information gathered is also used in relation to accountability by various educational roleplayers, such as teachers and principals; and for purposes of quality assurance.

5 Discussion

Unsurprisingly, most participants were aware of national assessment policies, but that their commitment to implementing them varied. Officials directly responsible for assessment as well as the middle and top management knew the policies intimately and could talk passionately, at length and in depth, about each of the two policies which they identified as the main assessment policies. They were clear that there is no gap between assessment and curriculum, and wanted assessment to be used for learning and not just as an end in itself. The research exercise found that some officials' own understanding of policy is not strong enough to enhance teachers' ability to understand it and thus to feel confident in carrying out assessment.

In the case of Gauteng, the thinking among learning area specialists and assessment facilitators tended, however, to be different. Learning area facilitators did not view themselves as masters of, or having a role in, curriculum and assessment. Instead, they saw a divide between curriculum and assessment and were willing to do the minimum in assessment. This was supported by the very short comments they made about assessment in their monitoring tools when conducting school visits. There is thus a danger that teachers are being sent different messages. This was not the case in the Western Cape. The function of supporting teachers in carrying out assessment duties lies with the curriculum advisors are also trained assessors. Therefore, they ought to provide holistic support and guidance to the teachers knowing that there will be no one after them to provide teachers with support in assessment, except for the school.

Both provinces have tools for monitoring the implementation of the policies, with school visits being followed by written reports. However, not all officials appear to understand that the purpose of visiting schools includes collecting information of formative value, instead spending considerable amounts of time on administration-related exercises rather than on matters relating to assessment. Comments made by some on their monitoring forms indicate this, as one-word comments that do not provide helpful insights on assessment. Where considerable amounts of information were collected, this tended to relate to instances of flouting of policy or deviation from the norm by schools. Again, this was more observable in Gauteng than in the Western Cape. In the case of such officials, it would seem that their goal is to collect the information to record the school visit. As a result of the lack of reliable and usable data, officials rely more than is ideal on end-of-the-year results than on the information they collect throughout the year.

There is also a difference between the provinces in relation to the issues of control, management and quality control. In Gauteng it would appear that the service provided by some officials at monthly assessment and curriculum fora, where information is disseminated and training carried out, is not always of an acceptable standard. As a result, other officials and teachers can be left feeling uncomfortable when implementing what they have been informed about.

6 Recommendations

- Capacity building at the level of district and provincial officials is important. Time and resources must be made available for this. In order to enhance understanding of the role of assessment in education and related assessment practices, provincial education departments need to ensure that all officials have a good understanding of assessment policies and of their relation to curriculum. Senior management and assessment facilitators should not be the only officials who believe that assessment can be used to change teaching and learning in

schools. When officials know and appreciate policies, they become better at implementation.

- Where needed, the planning and organization of support for and monitoring of schools should be improved and prioritized. An approach which tends to rely on counting the number of visits per school and the number of workshops provided is less effective than one which builds on such activities to develop and support teachers.
- When collecting data, officials should be clear about what they mean when they ask teachers to collect information that they can use to change their teaching; and they also must collect information that they can use to affect influence teaching and learning. The reports they compile should make it clear to teachers what to do in order to change.
- The ability to operate with a full staffing capacity is important, training and capacity building must be prioritized, and available capacity must be used optimally and be developed. Budgets need to be sufficient to provide the officials with quality training and with the resources that they need to do their work.
- Universities and credible NGOs and other organizations within the province should, where relevant, be used to train and support officials. Sitting in meetings week after week does not guarantee that the officials gain mastery of assessment or the curriculum. They need thorough training as well as opportunities to practice what they have learned.
- Research must inform the interventions. School visits should be the result of, and should be able to draw on, a complex of information collected from schools. Grade 12 results are not the only source of information available to officials for prioritising and for programme planning.

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Appendices



ASSESSING PROVINCIAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AND TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL INTERVIEW

PROVINCE :
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL :
GENDER :
RESEARCHERS :
DATE :
DURATION :

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSESSMENT POLICY

National Assessment Policy

The purpose is to determine the structures in place to facilitate the implementation of the National Assessment Policy in schools.

1. What is your role and what are your responsibilities with regards to the implementation of the National Assessment Policy?

2. What is the role of this office in implementing the national assessment policy? What factors hinder its successful implementation in schools? How do you address these?
3. How does this province make sure that the national assessment policy and plan are successful, effective and on track?
4. How does success in the assessment practices in this province enhance success teaching in schools?

Capacity

The purpose is to understand the ways in which the province supports districts to carry out activities that enhance classroom assessment practices.

1. Does the province have enough assessment specialists to realize the national assessment goals and needs?
2. What areas, in terms of the available capacity, do you think need to be strengthened, in order for this province, to be effective in implementing the national assessment policy and what plan does the province have to address that need?
3. Are you happy with the capacity available at all the levels of the DoE and do you think it is effective and efficient?

Support

The purpose is to determine the support the Province provides to schools with regard to classroom assessment.

1. Does this office provide officials responsible for assessment as well as teachers with training? If yes how is this decided, how often is it provided and who provides it?

2. Who monitors the results of the training and what kind of impact has this training had so far?
3. How is the relationship between this office and the NDoE and how does it enhance your work?
4. How do you keep track of what happens at the school level and how do you build on it?

Use of assessment information

The purpose is to determine the extent to which the information collected from schools is used in decision making

1. Have you received reports / briefings from any assessment studies since you have been in this position or in the last 5 to 10 years? How have you used the information and for what purposes?
2. How has this information impacted on your thinking and decisions? What report was this? Can you provide us with the copies of the report?
3. Do you have any additional analysis on assessment information?

Open Ended

Please ask the DDG if there is anything else that s/he would want to add which we have not addressed in the interview, or to elaborate on any aspect that has been previously been covered.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



ASSESSING DISTRICT CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AND TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

THE DISTRICT MANAGER INTERVIEW

PROVINCE :
DISTRICT :
DISTRICT MANAGER :
GENDER :
RESEARCHER/S :
DATE :
DURATION :

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSESSMENT POLICY

Capacity

The purpose is to understand the ways District Managers are provided with support to carry out activities to enhance classroom assessment practices.

4. What is the current district capacity to ensure appropriate implementation of assessment in schools? Can you give us a general structure of the district to ensure appropriate implementation of assessment in schools? Do you have a division in this office that is responsible for assessment and or exams? If yes how is this division organized within this district?

5. What are the current levels of training of the officials responsible for assessment in this office? What are their responsibilities?
6. Do officials responsible for assessment have other duties that are equally demanding? If yes to what extent does this affect their duties with regards to assessment?
7. Does this office have enough technological and financial resources to ensure that schools effectively and successfully implement the assessment policy?
8. What would you single out as the strongest point about the capacity available to enhance assessment in schools in this district?

Support

The purpose is to determine the support the District Managers provide to schools with regard to classroom assessment.

1. What kind of support does this office receive from the provincial office with regards to implementing and monitoring the assessment policy in schools?
2. What kind of support does the district give to its officials to ensure they are on track with the implementation of the assessment and policy and they follow the national and provincial assessment plans?
3. What kind of support does this office provide to schools and other districts within the province?
4. What kind of support do you think this district can benefit from?
5. Does communication between this office and the provincial office contribute to effective and successful implementation of the national assessment policy? Please explain your answer

Professional development

The purpose is to understand the kind of training the District Managers provide to educators with regard to classroom assessment practices.

1. How does this office use professional development opportunities to further capacitate education officers and teachers? Who is responsible for their training and how often do they receive it?
2. How does the district monitor the progress teachers make after receiving training?
3. How does the district create opportunities for schools to learn good assessment practices from each other?
4. What else do you want to tell us about the capacity available or necessary and the support provided by this district?

Use of assessment information

The purpose is to determine the extent to which the information collected about or from schools is used in decision making

4. Do you think it is important for you to have assessment information in implementing your regular responsibilities?
5. Do you use school quintile rankings in your decision making?
6. Have you received reports / briefings from any assessment studies since you have been in this District or in the last 5 to 10 years? If yes when? Where did you get this information from? How have you used the information and for what purposes?
7. Can you show us if the information had any impact (your thinking, decisions, schools etc.) Can you provide us with the copies of the report?
8. Do you have any additional analysis on assessment information?
9. Do you have actual data on how your District has performed? If yes, where did you get it? How do you use it?

Foundations of Learning Campaign

One of the most recent policies is the Foundations of Learning Campaign. The purpose is to understand how this policy has been communicated to schools.

1. Are the schools aware of the Foundations of Learning Campaign?
2. What kind of documents has been given to schools relating to Foundations of Learning Campaign? Can you name them?
3. Did the district provide any training for the implementation of the Foundations of Learning Campaign?
4. What changes, if any, would you propose to improve the Foundations for Learning Campaign?

Open Ended

Please ask the District Manager if there is anything else that they would want to add which we have not addressed in the interview, or to elaborate on any aspect that has been previously been covered.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



ASSESSING DISTRICT CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AND TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST INTERVIEW

PROVINCE :
DISTRICT :
LEARNING AREA :
LEARNING AREA FACILITATOR :
GENDER :
RESEARCHER/S :
DATE :
DURATION :

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSESSMENT POLICY

National Assessment Policy

The purpose is to determine the structures in place to facilitate the implementation of the National Assessment Policy in schools.

5. What is your role and what are your responsibilities with regards to the implementation of the National Assessment Policy? Do you have copies of the policy? Can you supply us with a copy?
6. What are the structures in place to facilitate the implementation of the National Assessment Policy in schools?

7. What is the role of the district in implementing the national assessment policy in schools?
8. What factors hinder its successful implementation in schools? How do you address these?
9. How does the national assessment policy enhance teaching in schools in this district? What factors
10. If you could, what part/s of the national assessment policy would you change to suit the needs of schools in this district and why?
11. Does this district keep a plan of assessment? How does it help the district to effectively and efficiently implement the national assessment plan?

Capacity

The purpose is to understand the ways in which Assessment Facilitators are provided with support to carry out activities to enhance classroom assessment practices.

9. What is the current capacity of this office to ensure appropriate implementation of assessment in schools? Can you give us a general structure of the district to ensure appropriate implementation of assessment in schools? Do you have a division in this office that is responsible for assessment and or exams? If yes how is this division organized within this district?
10. What are the current levels of training of the officials responsible for assessment in this office? What are their responsibilities?
11. Have you been involved in any of the national or international surveys? If so – when and in what capacity?
12. Is capacity at the school level effective and adequate enough to ensure that assessment enhances teaching in schools? If not what are the weaknesses and how can they be improved?

Support

The purpose is to determine the support the Assessment Facilitators provide to schools with regard to classroom assessment.

6. What kind of support does this office receive from the district and or provincial office with regards to implementing and monitoring the national assessment policy in schools?
7. What kind of support does this district give to its officials, schools within the district and other district offices to ensure they are on track with their plans?
8. What would you improve about the available support at all levels in order to be effective?
9. Does communication between this office, district and the provincial office contribute to effective and successful implementation of the national assessment policy in schools? Please explain your answer

Professional development

The purpose is to understand the kind of training the Senior Education Specialist provides to educators with regard to classroom assessment practices.

5. How does this office ensure that education officers and teachers are properly prepared to implement and monitor the national assessment policy?
6. If this office is responsible for arranging for the professional development of its officers or for teachers, how often does that training happen, where does it happen and who is responsible for it?
7. How does the district create opportunities for schools and teachers to learn good assessment practices from each other?

8. What else do you want to tell us about the capacity and support available or necessary in this district or in your district or province?

Use of assessment information

The purpose is to determine the extent to which the information collected about is used in decision making

10. Do you think it is important for you to have assessment information in implementing your regular responsibilities?
11. Do you use school quintile rankings in your decision making?
12. Have you received reports / briefings from any assessment studies since you have been in this district or in the last 5 to 10 years? If yes when? Where did you get this information from? How have you used the information and for what purposes?
13. Can you show us if the information had any impact (your thinking, decisions, schools etc.) Can you provide us with the copies of the report?
14. Do you have any additional analysis on assessment information?
15. Do you have actual data on how your district has performed? If yes, where did you get it? How do you use it?

Foundations of Learning Campaign

One of the most recent policies is the Foundations of Learning Campaign. The purpose is to understand how this policy has been communicated to schools.

5. Are the schools aware of the Foundations of Learning Campaign?
6. What kind of documents has been given to schools relating to Foundations of Learning Campaign? Can you name them?

7. Did the district provide any training for the implementation of the Foundations of Learning Campaign?
8. What changes, if any, would you propose to improve the Foundations for Learning Campaign?

Open Ended

Please ask the Senior Education Specialist if there is anything else that they would want to add which we have not addressed in the interview, or to elaborate on any aspect that has been previously been covered.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



ASSESSING PROVINCIAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AND TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

THE ASSESSMENT FACILITATOR INTERVIEW

PROVINCE :
 ASSESSMENT FACILITATOR :
 GENDER :
 RESEARCHER/S :
 DATE :
 DURATION :

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSESSMENT POLICY

National Assessment Policy

The purpose is to determine the structures in place to facilitate the implementation of the National Assessment Policy in schools.

1. What are the structures in place to facilitate the implementation of the National Assessment Policy in schools?
2. What are the factors which hinder the successful implementation of the National Assessment Policy in schools? What are the general concerns of schools and educators with regard to assessment practices? How do you address the problems or challenges faced by the schools in implementing the National Assessment Policy?
3. If you could change certain aspects of the National Assessment Policy, which aspects would you change? Why?

School Assessment Policy

The purpose is to determine the structures in place to facilitate the implementation of the school assessment policy.

1. Do you have a standardized structure for all the school assessment policy in your district? How is the structure communicated to schools?
2. Is the school assessment policy used interchangeably with the National Assessment Policy?
3. From your experience, do you think the educators understand the differences between the school assessment policy and the national policy on assessment? Can you please give reasons?

Capacity

The purpose is to understand the ways the Assessment Facilitators are provided with support to carry out activities to enhance the classroom assessment practices.

1. What is the role and what are the responsibilities of an assessment facilitator in the district?
2. How many assessment facilitators does this district have?
3. What is the current capacity of the assessment facilitator/s in the district?
4. Do you feel sufficiently equipped to provide support to schools with regard to assessment? What kind of training have you received from the district with regard to assessment practices? When? If you received training, please comment on the value of training.
5. What kind of support do you receive from the District Office and the Provincial Office? Is there anything that you would like to have more support on?
6. Do you have clusters in the district? What is their role and capacity?
7. What kind of support does a cluster receive and what support does a cluster give to schools?
8. In your mind, in what ways can the services provided by a cluster be improved?

Support

The purpose is to determine the support the Assessment Facilitators provide to schools or Education Officials with regard to classroom assessment.

1. What kind of support does an Assessment Facilitator provides to schools to ensure appropriate implementation of assessment in schools?
2. How many schools do you support and on average how many schools should an Assessment Facilitator support? Can you give us an overview

- structure for the schools that you support? How do you organize/classify the schools?
3. How does an Assessment Facilitator communicate assessment guidelines and procedures to schools?
 4. Does an Assessment Facilitator visit schools? If yes, how many times? If not who does and how many times?
 5. If you visit schools, how do you collect data during the school visit; through interviews, documentary review or classroom observations? Who is your target and why?

Monitoring

The purpose is to understand the monitoring mechanisms put in place by the Assessment Facilitator to enhance assessment practices in schools.

1. How do you monitor the implementation of assessment in schools? How do you monitor the schools' or educators' adherence to assessment policies? How often do you have meetings with the SMT/SAT/educators? Usually, what are the key issues discussed in those meetings?
2. What kind of documents does an Assessment Facilitator use to monitor assessment practices in schools? What information do you collect from schools to provide evidence of assessment?
3. What factors hinder assessment practices in schools? How is your office dealing with those factors?

Use of assessment information

The purpose is to determine the extent to which the information collected about is used in decision making

1. Does an Assessment Facilitator attend cluster meetings and If yes, how often? How do cluster meetings help in ensuring the implementation of effective and efficient assessment practices in schools?
2. How do you ensure that the feedback or report from the cluster meetings is used to enhance teaching and learning? How does assessment information help you in doing your regular work?
3. Have you received any information from assessment studies in the past three years? If yes, how did you use the information? How did the information impact your work or teaching in the area?
4. Compared to other circuits or districts how does this one do? Have you improved in the past three years? Please explain.

Professional Development

The purpose is to understand the kind of training Assessment Facilitators provide to educators with regard to classroom assessment practices.

1. What training has the district offered to educators in the last two years with regard to assessment? Who provided the training? For how long?
2. If training has been provided, what went well and or wrong
3. What kind of feedback did you receive from educators with regard to the training?
4. Is there a tracking mechanism for educators who attended the training? If yes, what changes have been noted since they attended training?

Foundations of Learning Campaign

One of the most recent policies is the Foundations of Learning Campaign. The purpose is to understand how this policy has been communicated to schools.

1. Are the schools aware of the Foundations of Learning Campaign?
2. What kinds of documents have been given to schools relating to Foundations of Learning Campaign? Can you name them?
3. Did the Assessment Facilitator provide any training for the implementation of the Foundations of Learning Campaign?
4. What changes, if any, would you propose to improve the Foundations for Learning Campaign?

Open Ended

Please ask the Assessment Facilitator if there is anything else that she/he would want to add which we have not addressed in the interview, or to elaborate on any aspect that has been previously been covered.



ASSESSING DISTRICT CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AND TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

PROVINCE :

DISTRICT :

NO OF MALE PARTICIPANTS :

NO OF FEMALE PARTICIPANTS :

RESEARCHERS :

DATE ;

DURATION :

1. What structures does this office have to supplement the implementation of the national assessment policy in schools and what role does each of the structures play?
2. This district office has a visionary leadership that, despite the lack of adequate financial and human resources, has ably led successful and effective implementation of the national assessment policy. Share with us some of your strategies, and ways in which you managed to achieve success as well as the challenges you experienced.
3. There have been numerous complaints that information flow, with regards to assessment, between the provincial office, district offices and schools is slow thus affecting the effectiveness and efficiency with which the national

assessment policy could be improved. What and where are the blockages and how can we best improve them and ensure that they do not occur again.

4. Implementation of the national assessment policy is reported to be widely hindered by the support provided by the DoE. What is your experience in this district with regards to the support provided by the NDoE and PDoE?
5. In what ways does this district get assessment information, when, why and how does it use that information?