

6067

Centre for Education Quality
Improvement

**Improving teaching & learning in
SA schools: teacher pedagogy
and assessment practices**

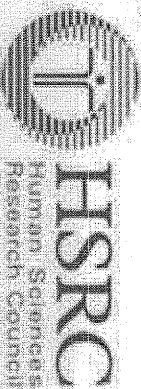
10th UKFIET Conference, Oxford
15 – 17 September 2009

Matthews M Makgamatha (HSRC, SA)
Anil Kanjee (HSRC, SA)
Yusuf Saed (University of Sussex, UK)

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

6067

Social science that makes a difference



Outline of the presentation

- **Background to the study**
- **Rationale for the study**
- **Methodology**
- **Results**
- **Implications for improving teaching and learning**

Background to the study

- 1994 - SA became a democratic state;
 - Policy formulation process;
- 1997 - new education system, C2005, is implemented in schools;
- 2000 - C2005 is revised;
- 2003 - Revised NCS statement is introduced in schools;
- 2008 - FLC implementation;
- 2009 - Now what?

Study Rationale

- Background on CEQI & the RNE initiative.
- Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) - National Department of Education (NDOE) partnership.
- Aim of the study: investigate current teacher assessment practices in primary school classes in SA.
- To inform the development of a curriculum-based computerised classroom assessment system (data-base of assessment items and a software to run the database).
- Key questions:
 - What are the current teacher classroom assessment practices in SA schools?
 - What is the nature of relationship between teachers' assessment practices and current assessment policy?
 - How can teaching and learning in be improved through classroom assessment?

Methodology

- **Schools sample: 8 schools**
 - had computers, quintile ranking, ex-DoE affiliation
 - purposively selected with assistance of provincial and district offices
- **Participants: teachers of Grades 1 to 6**
- **Instruments & method: questionnaires, interviews, lesson observations, document review**
- **Theory of action: Assessment of Learning (AFL) William & Thompson (2008)**

Results

Teachers' beliefs & understanding of assessment:

- That assessment information was useful to both teachers & learners:
 - Discuss assessment criteria with learners
 - Assessment of learners' work should have teacher's comments
- Assessment of learners should mainly involve awarding learners marks;
- That parents need to be involved even though it was frequently difficult ensuring that parents meet with teachers;

Results

Teachers assessment practices:

- Teacher classroom assessment happens within the context of Continuous Assessment (CASS) - formal assessment are recorded and informal assessments not;
- Majority of teachers developed their own tests and use open-ended questions;
- During lessons, teacher tended to ask their learners more low order than high order questions;

Results

Teachers' support for assessment:

- Stronger inside than from outside the school.
- Inside school support: HODs - visits classes, make recommendations & give feedback to teachers; Phase meeting - teachers assisted each other during phase meetings; Regular staff meetings.
- Outside the school: District officials/Learning Area Specialists (yearly, irregular & often once a year)

Implications for improving teaching & learning

- Strengthening support to teachers for better assessment practices at the school level using the existing structures & mechanisms.
- Explore out-of-school mechanisms that can be used to support teachers e.g. talking to districts & use of teachers' cluster meetings for teacher professional development.
- Refocusing teachers' use of assessments to include determining learners' strengths & weaknesses and developing relevant teaching strategies to deal with both.
- Making available to teachers high quality curriculum-based assessment items which they can use in class during teaching & learning.