



Challenges for piloting an integrated, effective national assessment system in South Africa

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Overview of presentation

- **Overview of the Centre for Education Quality Improvement**
- **Assessment Challenges in SA**
- **3 Rs Programme**
- **HSRC Projects**
- **Next steps**

Centre for Education Quality Improvement

What is CEQI?

High level initiative of the HSRC to assist government in making a positive impact

Primary purpose:

To support government as well as other key role-players (teachers, parents, learners, NGOs, donors) enhance decision making processes for implementing relevant and effective strategies to improve education quality at all levels of the system in South Africa

Objectives

- To develop relevant policy options
 - Costed
 - Demonstrated impact - i.e. RET for improving education quality, particular for poor and disadvantage learners in South Africa
- To advance knowledge through high-quality research and critical scholarship
- To engage in evidence-informed policy dialogue to share and disseminate information and ideas about good practice to improve the quality of education in South Africa;
- To facilitate the exchange of local and international experts and decision makers working in the field of education quality:
 - NGOs, University, Government, UN, etc

HSRC Brief - Challenge

- To **develop and pilot** an integrated and effective national assessment system for providing relevant and timeous information to key decision makers at the classroom, district, provincial and national levels for **improving learning**

Challenge 1: Teacher assessment

- Enhance teacher capacity to improve learning in schools - focussing on schools in poor and rural areas
- Identify teacher conceptions of learning (and assessment) and how these applied in practice
- **Our brief** - tools for providing teachers with relevant information on learning needs within their classroom
- Establish standards of performance against which performance can be interpreted
 - Grades 9, 6 and 3
 - Establish Grade level standards or ELP

Challenge 2: Policies and Structures

- **Determine relevancy of current assessment policy for enhancing learning**
- **Identify how assessment policy is implemented in schools and the classroom to enhance learning**
- **Audit current implementation mechanisms, structures and procedures at the different levels of the education system to implement assessment policies in South African schools and note its impact on learning**

Challenge 3: Set of indicators

- **Common understanding of requirements for improving learning**
- **Develop core indicators – conceptually, theoretically and empirically - for use at the different levels of the system to monitor how schools are functioning for improving learning**
- **Key set of indicators in terms of its**
 - **Definitions**
 - **Data collection**
 - **Analysis and interpretation**
 - **Reporting and dissemination**
 - **Application in practice**
 - **Evaluation**

Challenge 4: Data

How is data used at the different levels of the system to enhance decision making to improve learning

- **Integrate data collection from various sources**
- **Make both data and information available to ALL users including teachers and parents,**
- **Target reports to specific audiences**
- **Reports - easy to access AND understand**

Better use of assessment information

- In practice = use of assessment for enhancing learning

- Which means
 - Providing relevant and timeous information to key decision makers
 - Teachers
 - Policy Makers
 - Parents, principals, ...

- Effective use of info for learning

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Challenge -

- How do we do this?
- i.e. how do we ensure that **teachers**, and policy makers are able to access the information they need to enhance learning?
- Answer:
 - An effective, integrated assessment system
 - Takes into account teacher conceptions and practices pertaining to assessment and learning across different schools within SA

Key assumption

- **For assessment to impact on improving learning (all decision makers), its potential to improving learning must be fully realised**

Definition -Assessment

- **“the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the student about his or her progress, strengths and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy and to inform policy”** (AFT, NCME, NEA, 1990: 1).
- **Definition includes national examinations**
- **Examples:**
 - **National/provincial assessments – Grade 3 & 6 SE Regional/international assessments – TIMSS, SACMEQ, MLA**
 - **Project evaluations – QLP, DDSP**

3 core functions of assessment

- **Formative:**

assessment that provide feedback to learners about how to go about improving, i.e. evidence for learning based on the on the here and now.

- **Summative:**

summative assessments are used to certify achievement or potential, i.e. evidence pertaining to what learners have been or will be able to do used for certification & selection

- **Evaluative:**

assessment are used to evaluate institutions and curricular and serve the purpose of accountability –

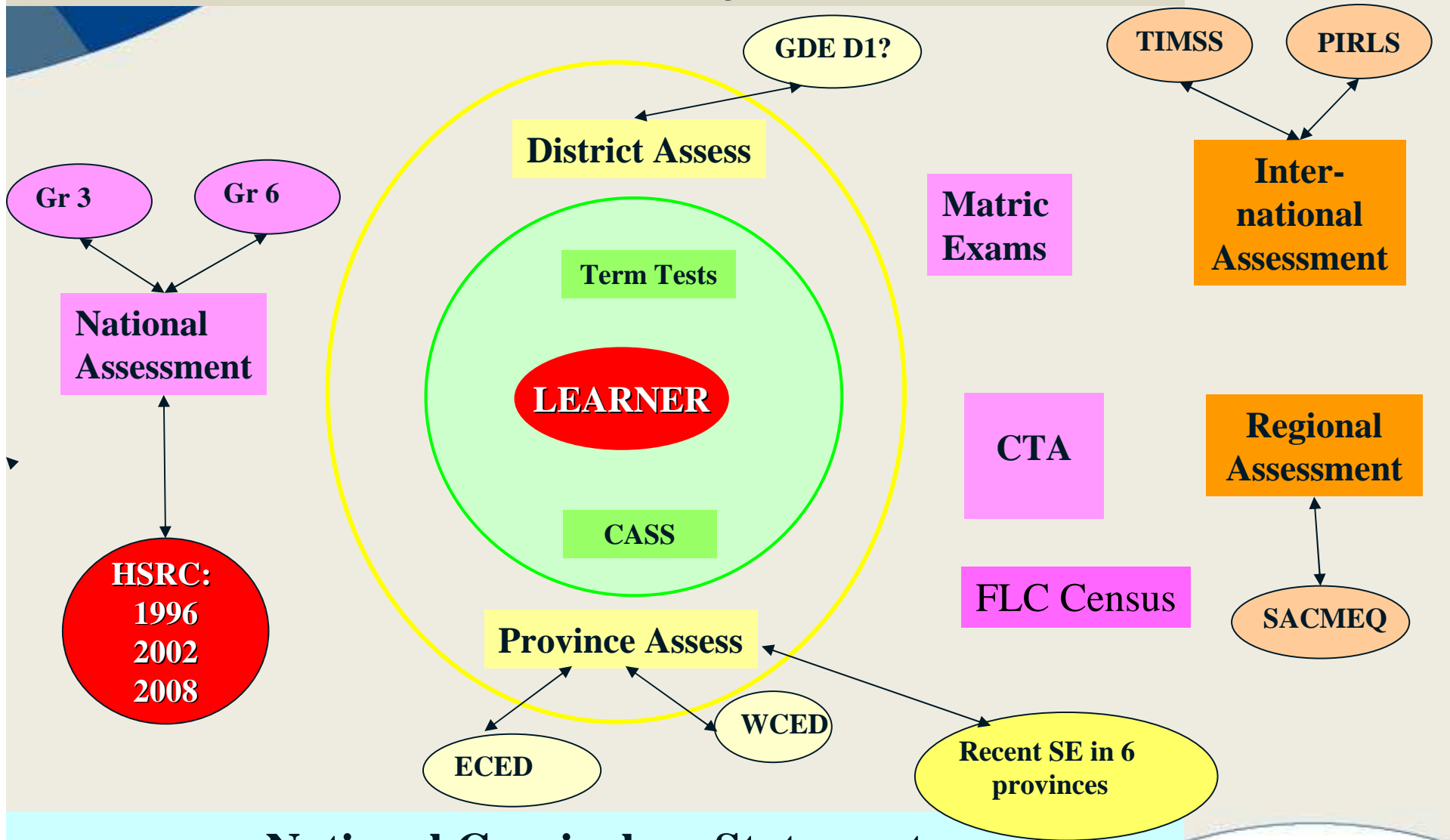
Assessment in South Africa

- **History linked to apartheid system**
- **Significant increase in LSAS since 1995**
 - **Massive increase in expenditure**
- **Trend set to continue**
- **LSAS results portray BLEAK picture of education in South Africa**

Assessment in South Africa – CASS

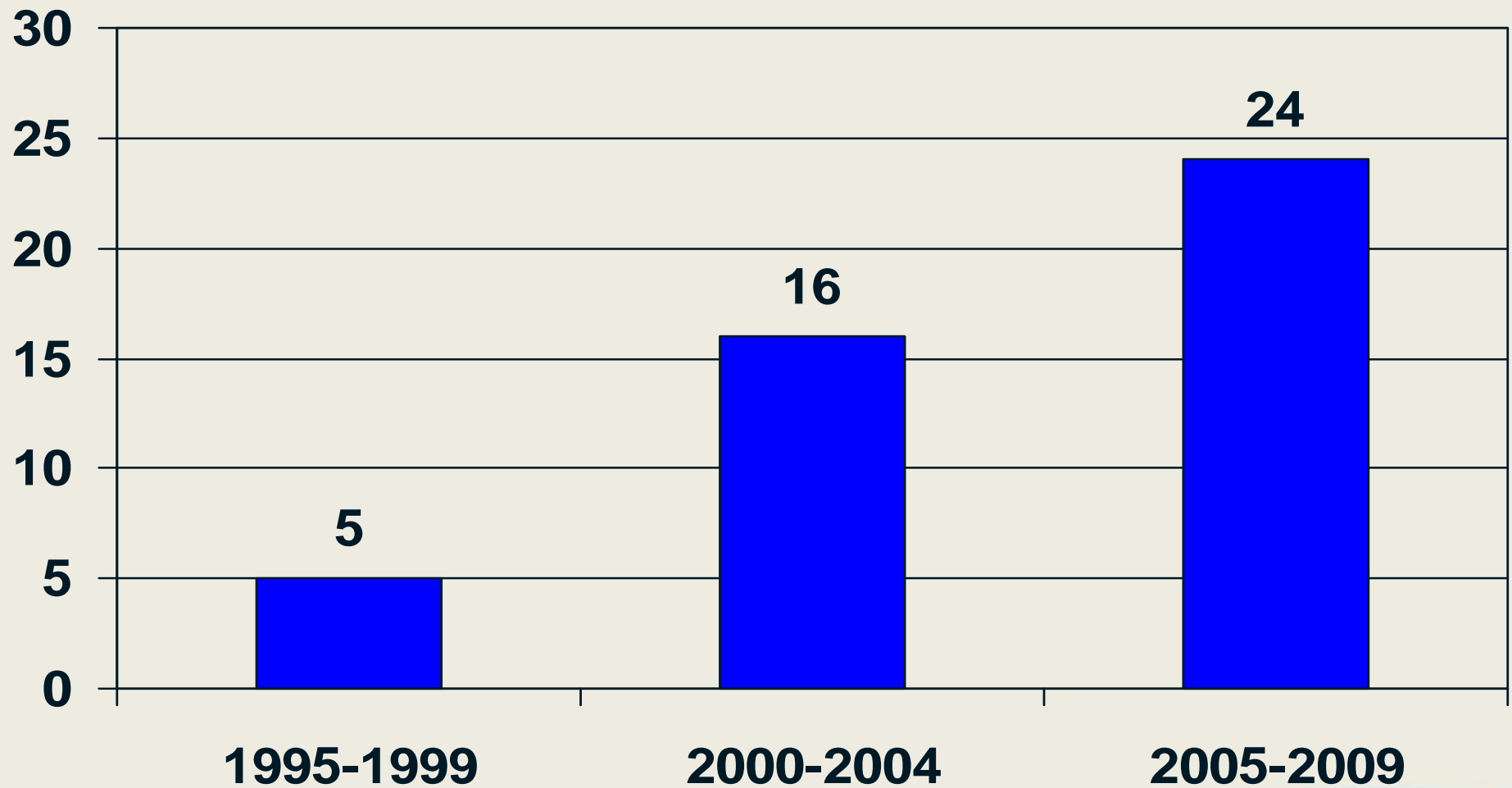
- Significant pressure to improve quality
- Growing trend on the “use of assessment to improve learning”
 - Move towards census testing
 - Increase focus on classroom assessment (2007 national policy)
- **but limited evidence of effectiveness of “strategy”**
 - In particular - how policy implemented
 - Whether learning is improving
- Implications of the FLC
 - annual testing

Current Assessment System June 08



**National Curriculum Statement
Learning Outcomes
Assessment Standards**

LSAS conducted/planned: 1995 - 2009



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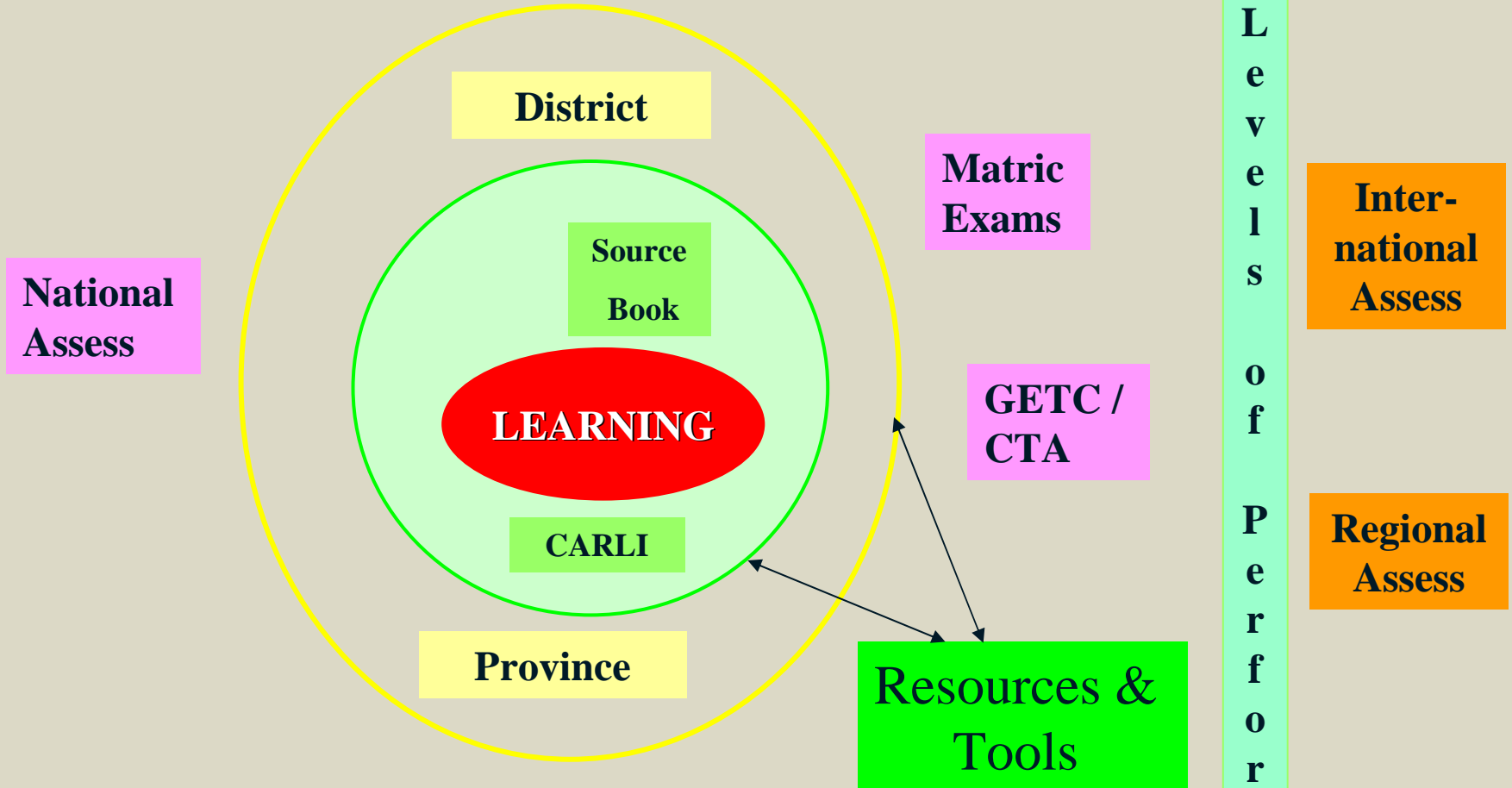
Classroom Assessment

- The most critical aspect of any assessment system to enhance learning
- Requires teachers, principals and education dept officials to understand how learning takes place and engage in processes to enhance learning
- A key step in this process - provision of relevant tools and resources to empower teachers for obtaining required information:
 - When they need it
 - Easy to obtain and apply
 - That is integrated into teaching process
 - Does not increase workload

Integrated Assessment Model

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National Curriculum Statement (LO + AS)

Classroom Assessment Tools

NA items	AS 1
NA items	AS 2
NA items	AS 3
NA items	AS 4
NA items	AS 5
NA items	AS 6
NA items	AS .
NA items	AS .
NA items	AS .
NA items	AS N

A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6



Reports

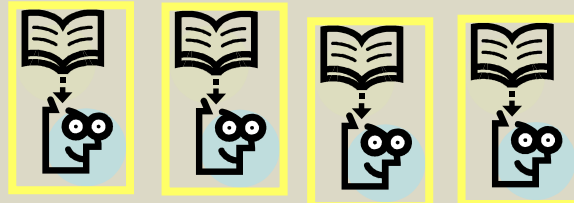
Officials
Schools ...

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Quarterly



Teachers

Trends:

Assessment in South Africa

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Reporting trends: LSAS

- reporting learner performance by means scores, usually reported by national, provincial or district level. In addition, information was also aggregated by gender, language and geographical location;
- Information presented using both tables and graphs and reported by learning area or sub-domains assessed
- Scores also reported by achievement levels,
- Reports on the context within which learning took place and on the factors that affect learner performance;
- Report on actual learner responses to test questions;
- In at least one of the studies reviewed, the following was noted:
 - The assessment of teacher content knowledge;
 - The use of advance data analysis techniques, i.e. path analysis multi-level modelling to identify impact on learner performance and to determine factors affecting learner performance respectively;
 - The use of matrix sampling design to comprehensive and in-dept coverage of the curriculum outcomes and assessment standards;
 - The use of Item Response Theory to equate scores from the same or similar tests administered at different points in time.

3 Rs Project

- **goal is 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**
- **Funded by RNE**

3 Rs Project – Consortium

- **Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)**
- **JET Education Services (JET)**
- **Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA)**
- **Education Policy Consortium (EPC)**
 - Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), Education Policy Units at
 - University of the Witwatersrand,
 - University of Fort Hare,
 - Centre for Education Research, Evaluation and Policy (CEREP) at the University of KwaZulu-Nata
 - Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at the University of the Western Cape.

HSRC Project – AIM

- **To develop and pilot an integrated and effective national assessment for providing relevant and timeous information to key decision makers at the classroom, district, provincial and national levels for improving learning**

HSRC Projects

- **To enhance teachers assessment skills and practices - develop assessment resources to enhance learning in schools**
- **To design and implement the Grade 9 national assessment study (leading to a national set of indicators and a framework) for monitoring the functioning of the education system**
- **To review current assessment policies practices and structures at all levels of the system (classrooms, schools, districts, provinces and nationally)**

Assessment Policies and Structures to Improve Learning

- **Assessment systems in other countries - 2008**
- **Critical review of the evolution of assessment policy since 1994 in South Africa - 2008**
- **Identify implementation mechanisms, structures and procedures established at the different levels of the education system to implement assessment policies in South African schools - 2008**
- **Determine how assessment policy is implemented in schools and the classroom - 2008**

Improving teacher assessment practices

- Review of teacher, principals and education dept officials:
 - assessment needs and practices & understanding – 2008
 - Reporting and feedback practices - 2008
 - Identify effective strategies for implementing CASS policy
- Developing standards – 2009 -10
- Develop and pilot computerised assessment and reporting system - 2008-2009
- Determine impact of a classroom (computerised) assessment system on teaching practices and learner performance – 2010
- Develop and cost set of policy options, & scaling up implications 2010 - 2011

National Assessment of Learning Achievement

- Review of international experience in conducting NA - 2007
- Developing core indicators – for use at the different levels of the system to monitor the functioning of schools – 2008
- Conduct national assessment pilot (2007) and main study (2008) to report on ALL Assessment Standards
- Develop standards of performance at the end of the GET Phase for identifying what learners know and can do - 2009
- Report on:
 - current performance levels of Grade 9 learners.
 - trends in Grade 9 learner performance 1996, 2002 & 2008
 - factors affecting learner performance - 2009

Methodology/Design issues

- Review of school improvement programs/projects in SA
- Support for site visits, interviews and observations
- Secondary analysis - factors affecting learner performance
- National review
 - Teacher assessment practices & understanding
 - Systems, structures, policies, programs
- National pilot - Grade 4, 5, and 6 – Maths and English items
- National standard setting process - Grades 9 (3 & 6??)
- Pilot and main study for Grade 9 National Assessment
- Development of software and instruments (matrix sampling)
- Randomised Experiment to trial interventions - 2 districts
- Costing exercise
- Report on scaling-up implications

Collaboration possibilities

- **Development of item database for Intermediate Phase (English FAL & Mathematics)**
- **Participate in review of systems and processes**
- **Participate in national standard setting process**
- **Conduct/participate in analysis using available data**
- **Comment on analysis and interpretation of data**
- **Reporting and dissemination**

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