ASSESSING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT: students' experiences of the different forms of assessment in a Bachelor of Education course

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Abstract

In this study I examine the current alternative forms of assessment that were employed in the foundation year of the Bachelor of Education course at Rhodes University in 1998. Since assessment is concerned with ascertaining the amount, and kind, of learning that has taken place, it links learning and teaching. As my role in the course was academic development, I was interested in the nature of the development that the course promoted, for lecturers and students.

My main intention was to gain insight into students' experiences of the assessment practices. To this end I selected six students, photocopied all their academic writing for the year and interviewed them. In addition, to provide a holistic picture of assessment and marking, I interviewed the six lecturers who team-taught the course. The data thus included the course assignments of the six students and an interview with each student as well as with the course lecturers.

The findings show that though policy documents advocate alternative forms of assessment, implementing such assessment is a complex matter for both teachers and students.

CONTENTS **Page**

Chapter One

Introduction

Assessment occupies a central position in the curriculum as it sheds light on both teaching and learning. All levels of education require forms of assessment in order to appraise the success of teaching and the extent of learning. Assessment thus unifies the dynamic of teaching and learning. Yet assessment is a relatively under-researched area of educational practice in South Africa. At present our educational system and curriculum are being restructured in cognisance of a global shift in our understanding of knowledge and cognition - the competing epistemologies of positivism and constructivism.

The long-unchallenged positivist view regarded knowledge as facts, data, waiting out there for us to discover and record. The traditional curriculum reflected this view of knowledge as information, with school subjects having a certain discrete content, chunked and sequenced. The main aim of assessment was to test the recall of content. Constructivism holds that knowledge only exists when a person examines data and assigns meaning to it, that knowledge consists not of the facts in themselves but of the sense that people make of the facts. A curriculum based in a constructivist epistemology prioritises students' applying their intelligence to data (not necessarily within subject boundaries) to construct their own understanding. Assessment would entail tasks requiring students to understand and use "information in a way that reveals its point, its relevance, its usefulness" (Hinchey 1998:52). This study hopes to question the certainty of traditional examination-based assessment as well as to explore the challenges of implementing the current alternatives in assessment.

The assessment practices that are the focus of this study were part of a post-graduate course, the Bachelor of Education, at Rhodes University. As it caters for practising educators, I felt that examining the assessment processes within the course could be useful to both sets of teachers involved: the lecturers/teachers presenting the course and the students/teachers doing the course. The forms of assessment within the course were varied and innovative. What they had in common was the fact that for all the assessment criteria were formulated for each assignment. Having identified criterion-referenced assessment as a useful linking concept, I made criteria, and lecturers' and students' understanding of them, pivotal to the investigation.

My other motivation for this study was a need to deepen my own understanding of how (and whether) academic development (AD) could benefit students' writing. AD in South Africa has its origins in a recognition by universities that secondary schools generally, and especially the historically under-resourced schools, did not adequately prepare students for tertiary studies. (For a crude indicator, one need look no further than the low number of matriculation exemptions annually.) An area of difficulty for students was linguistic: for some, the English second language speakers, the fact that English was the medium of higher education, and for many more students, the nature of the reading and writing required at tertiary level. However, an understanding of the problem as being located in the deficiencies of students was questioned by the constructivist view of knowledge which posed the challenge to university lecturers to make their disciplinary knowledge accessible to students. This epistemological-pedagogical challenge has been given some currency by post-apartheid policy demands for equity and access in higher education. The role of AD is also in the process of being redefined (Moore et al. 1998).

Needless to say, the damage wrought by a grossly unequal educational system is not easily

remedied. As increasing numbers of black students registered for post-graduate studies in the 1990s, lecturers found that language problems, albeit of a different sort, remained. My AD post, established in 1997 in the Education Department, was an attempt to address the linguistic-cum-pedagogical problems at a postgraduate level. I used most of 1997 to get a sense of the courses and needs in the Department. In 1998 I registered part-time for a Masters degree and made the B Ed course my main AD involvement. Since AD has historically been a first-year, or undergraduate intervention, I hoped that the study could both report on the relevance of AD and evaluate its role in a postgraduate course.

I would like to convey some of my initial, grand optimism with this quotation from Hoeg (1994:78-79) who, with the licence of a novelist, overstates the case famously:

> When you assess something you are forced to assume that a linear scale of values can be applied to it. Otherwise no assessment is possible. Every person who says of something that it is good or bad or a bit better than yesterday is declaring that a points system exists; that you can, in a reasonably clear and obvious fashion, set some sort of a number against an achievement.
>
> But never at any time has a code of practice been laid down for the awarding of points ... But a code of practice is essential. To ensure that things can be spoken of fully and frankly. A code of practice is something that could be passed on ... to ... a teacher.

Chapter Two

Context

2.1 Introduction

Since the democratic elections in 1994, education has been restructured via the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Depatment of Education (DoE)1995a) and reconceptualised through an outcomes-based curriculum, Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education (DoE 1996). One of the questions facing us five years later is how (and whether) policy changes have translated into the transformation of education in practice. Vital to this question is the link between teacher education and the broader educational changes, as teachers are the people who have to understand and implement the new policies if they are to be effective.

This study explores the assessment practices in a postgraduate course for teachers, the Bachelor of Education (B Ed) at Rhodes University. It focuses on the alternative forms of assessment used in the B Ed coursework and how these were experienced by six students, all of whom are English second language (ESL) speakers. My intention was to learn more about how they coped with the demands of the written assignments, since my involvement in the course as an academic development (AD) practitioner meant that I spent a great deal of time reading and responding to students' draft assignments. I was interested in comparing students' experiences and perceptions of assessment with those of the course designers/lecturers as it would enable one to probe the hidden curriculum: whether the intended curriculum, the plans of lecturers, differed from the reality experienced by students. Sambell and McDowell (1998:391) argue that assessment is "the element of educational practice which most powerfully determines the hidden curriculum".

A review of government policy documents and assessment theory have informed my understanding of the context of the B Ed course and its assessment practices. Thus, this chapter has three aims. It examines, firstly, the notions of assessment which inform the new curriculum. Secondly, it traces the national educational policy developments and the B Ed course at Rhodes University as a response to these developments. Thirdly, it problematises the role of AD within a postgraduate course.

2.2 Assessment within the new curriculum

Assessment is about ascertaining the amount, and kind, of learning that has taken place. In South Africa, the policy-makers restructuring education are responding to both local conditions of racist inequity and historical division, and to a global shift in the underlying conceptions of what constitutes learning and assessment. Gipps (1996:7) argues that what is needed to prepare learners for the next millennium are "not only the basic skills, but also the higher order skills of problem solving, critical thinking and evaluation ... to become effective learners aware of, and in control of, their own learning".

In order to understand assessment in Curriculum 2005 and the impact it can (or intends to) make on the ground, it is necessary to sketch the curriculum and assessment practices that preceded it. One cannot discuss assessment without analysing its relationship to both learning and teaching, as the three act in concert to shape the curriculum. Shay (1998a:162) claims that assessment can also inform teachers' critical reflection on curriculum design and practice, arguing that "while the primary purpose of assessment is promoting and measuring student learning, an important spin-off is that students' performance on assessment tasks can also give lecturers the opportunity

to reflect on the quality of their own performance (e.g. the curriculum design and delivery)." As time constraints limit how effectively lecturers can achieve this secondary purpose of assessment, "assessment as curriculum inquiry" (Ibid:162), this study hopes to show that this role of assessment could be an area of AD involvement in course/curriculum development.

The type of teaching dominant in South African classrooms until recently (many would argue still, see for instance, Khoapa and Mzamane 1998) has been characterised as the 'jug and mug' or transmission mode of teaching. The role of the teacher was that of an expert transmitting information to passive learners whose role, in turn, was to absorb the information and spout it back when tested. I don't want to suggest that transmission teaching *per se* constitutes poor practice, but rather that its dominance undermines critical and evaluative classroom interaction. Assessment, in the main, took the form of written examinations/tests which were almost invariably summative, i.e. assessment came at the end of a period of learning, summing up what had been learnt. The most significant summative examination has been the senior certificate examination which ends formal schooling. The curriculum focus on the content to be taught, learnt and tested resulted in two related problems. It promoted a view that knowledge was uncontested and neutral, and that the primary purpose of assessment was to measure and quantify how well students had memorised the information imparted.

This traditional view of knowledge is very different to the one that underpins the new curriculum and outcomes-based education (OBE). The learning outcomes of OBE are framed as competencies that encompass knowledge, skills and values. Consistent with its social constructivist approach to knowledge, Curriculum 2005 advocates that assessment should be not only summative but also formative, i.e. a part of the process of learning, requiring learners to use

and produce knowledge rather than recall and reproduce it. Social constructivism regards the process by which individual learners make sense of (construct) knowledge as being an inescapable part of knowledge as a product, as the result of learning; hence the emphasis in the new curriculum on assessment being formative. A positive aspect of formative assessment is that it develops consistency in teaching, learning and assessment in school.

Another advantage of the new curriculum should be to reduce the differences between the school and higher education with regard to literacy and learning. Geisler (1994) cites studies in the US and UK showing that most student writing in school is based on their need for factual recall of information, that little writing is analytical and in line with the expectations of higher education: "In fact, this kind of writing [analytical writing] seems to distract students from learning the broad range of content required by the tests they take" (Geisler 1994:47). A similar pattern of schooling occurs in South Africa with the added factor of historical inequalities. Peirce and Stein (1995) analysed a university admissions test in its draft form, to be written by black candidates, and warn of the lack of consistency between the expectations of the test, and teaching at university. They show how candidates taking a university admission's test suppressed an insurgent reading of the test text in favour of a dominant reading. Candidates realised the expectations of the test-makers and markers and responded rationally in the test situation. Peirce and Stein argue, however, that a critical response to a text is precisely what higher education wants and values in students, so that the test-takers' suppression of the insurgent reading, while it is a sensible response within the test genre, to gain admission to the university, is an inappropriate response once they have gained admission. Peirce and Stein claim, further, that as the test privileges a dominant reading of the text, it necessarily privileges dominant groups in South Africa, the white and wealthy, which is unacceptable when universities are trying to

redress past inequities. They ask (1995:64), "if students from historically disadvantaged communities seek access to schools, universities and workplaces, what forms of assessment would give them the best opportunity to demonstrate their talents and abilities?" Their question is one that the B Ed course designers tried to address through the varied forms of assessment.

In terms of assessment, Curriculum 2005 proposes to meet the present educational problems and future-oriented needs of students and society by expanding assessment strategies from reliance on a written test or examination to include a range of possibilities (as outlined in Table 1, below). International studies describe alternative assessment as "consisting of valid and reliable procedures that avoid many of the problems inherent in traditional testing including norming, linguistic, and cultural biases" (Huerta-Macias 1995:10). The need for assessment that is not culturally biased is an important consideration in South Africa at present, yet teachers and researchers need to investigate whether Huerta-Macias's (1995) assertion of validity and reliability is borne out in practice.

There are a variety of terms used to describe the 'new' assessment - the generic term being alternative assessment. However, in South Africa, education policy documents on assessment use the terms alternative, authentic and continuous almost interchangeably. As a way out of the terminological confusion, Brown and Hudson (1998:657) suggest that "we view portfolios, conferences, diaries, self-assessment and peer-assessments not as *alternative assessment* but rather as *alternatives in assessment*". Balliro (1993:560) argues further that what we need is "to name assessment approaches more descriptively in terms of what they are and what they do, not simply posit them against standardised tests. A more useful term as an umbrella concept might be *congruent assessment*, a process by which the assessment fits the goals of the ... program".

Mindful of Balliro's injunction not to counter-pose the new and the old in terms of assessment, later in this chapter the assessment processes used in the B Ed are described in more detail. However, Table 1 below, adapted from McDowell (1998:334-335), is useful to clarify and summarise the differences between the 'old' and the 'new' alternative assessment practices.

TABLE 1: Summary of changes in assessment practices

OLD ASSESSMENT PRACTICES	ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT
1. Assessment uses controlled and structured tasks, standardised for the whole learner population.	1. Assessment uses authentic tasks based in the context where the learner will use the knowledge and skills. Tasks may vary across the student population.
2. Assessment is separate from teaching and learning. Tasks take place after teaching and learning, and are often done by an external agency.	2. Teaching, learning and assessment are integrated - assessment tasks are learning activities and teachers are involved in assessment, and use it to adjust teaching.
3. Learners' role is to learn what is prescribed and present themselves for testing.	3. Learners are informed participants in assessment. Self-, peer- and co-assessment are used.
4. Assessment requirements and criteria remain under the control of assessors. Where these are shared it is in the form of old or model exam papers.	4. Assessment requirements and criteria are open, intended to be used by learners and teachers to manage and improve learning. There is scope for criteria to be negotiated.
5. Assessment focuses on learning outcomes as the product of learning - levels of knowledge and content.	5.Assessment still focuses on outcomes, but the **process** by which knowledge is achieved is also important, e.g. cooperative work.
6. Assessment performance is reported in the form of quantitative marks, often used to rank learners.	6. In addition to or instead of quantitative marks, assessment is also qualitative - outlining strengths, weaknesses or issues for future growth.

Policy documents emphasise that assessment is central to OBE, yet there are problems as the

new criterion-referenced[1] formative assessment approaches are grafted onto the existing norm-referenced, mainly summative examination-based assessment practices. Jansen (1997:8) believes that the matriculation examination will remain in place "because of the powerful interests insisting on the assessment status quo with respect to the matriculation examination" and argues that the washback effect will militate against curriculum reform having an impact on classroom practice.

Another problem is that most teachers themselves were schooled in the examination-based system, have no direct experience of other assessment practices, and have been inadequately prepared to alter their current practices or implement the new policies. These problems are exacerbated by the apartheid legacy of sharp differences in educational resources, and the consequent difficulties in setting up, supporting and evaluating alternative assessment practices.

The rationale of the discussion document on assessment (Towards a Policy Framework for Assessment in General and Further Education and Training Phases in South Africa) claims that "In the new education reforms assessment is to be seen as an integral part of learning and teaching" which will require a "paradigm shift from a norm-referenced approach to a formative criterion-referenced approach" (DoE 1997:19). Though the document notes that "the old assessment paradigm is still in operation" and that "the type of assessment used in any education and training system affects both the received curriculum and teaching methodology" (DoE

[1] Gipps (1991:30) describes criterion-referenced assessment as, "designed to reflect whether or not a student can do a specific task, or range of tasks, rather than to measure how much better or worse his or her performance is in relation to that of other students. Thus levels or criteria of performance are set and students are marked or graded according to whether they reach the level or attain the criterion".

1997:8), it does not spell out how the shift in assessment practices will be phased in; for instance, when it will reach higher education, a crucial concern for teacher education as it is now part of higher education. The document simply states that

> CASS [continuous assessment] should not be interpreted merely as being the accumulation of a series of traditional test results. Authentic assessments should be prominent components of incorporating the three main categories of new assessment (aimed at assessing skills and processes as well as knowledge and attitudes and personal growth) which are encompassed in participating in group or individual projects, portfolios and performance assessments....The strength and success of a CASS-based model rests on the professionalism and ability of a highly skilled teaching and training core (*sic*) who understand, and are able to apply, the sound educational assessment principles and draw from the variety of assessment techniques advocated in this document. (DoE 1997:26)

A major problem of implementation becomes apparent in this formulation - the assumption that teachers who understand the assessment principles will automatically be able to apply them. Jansen (1997:5) claims further assumptions of not merely "the application of a skill but understanding its theoretical underpinnings and demonstrating capacity to transfer such application and understanding across different contexts", and warns that "what started off as an enlightened model of 'transformational competencies' **will** become a mechanical model of behaviourism in the majority of South African classrooms" (emphasis in the original). In order to understand the part that teacher education can play in preventing this, the following section will examine the broader educational changes, and the B Ed course as both a response to and part of these developments.

2.3 Education policy and the B Ed course in transition

2.3.1 Teacher education policy

Key documents for my examination of the process of educational transformation at a policy level are the report of the Teacher Education Research Group of the National Education Policy

Investigation (NEPI) (1992), the SAQA Act (DoE 1995a) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training (DoE 1995b), the Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training (DoE 1996), the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) Report (1996), a discussion document called Towards a Policy Framework for Assessment in the General and Further Education and Training Phases in South Africa (DoE 1997), and the COTEP (Committee on Teacher Education Policy) Norms and Standards for Teacher Education (1998 and 1999).

As this list shows, policy documents range from discussion documents and White Papers to Acts of Parliament. It is difficult to distinguish the status of these various documents and Hartshorne (1999:105) suggests that policy follows three phases on the way to becoming law. At first there is wide public consultation and the discussion documents which are "sometimes called Green Papers ... followed by .... government White Papers followed by .... legislation". With regard to assessment specifically, the discussion document of 1997 appears to be the most comprehensive current official statement. Perhaps the fact that assessment policy is still at an initial stage points to the difficulty of legislating on an aspect of the curriculum as complex as assessment.

My policy paper chase started with the NEPI Reports, which informed the educational policy of the African National Congress government. The NEPI Teacher Education Research Group characterised the then-current curriculum for teacher education as being dominated by Fundamental Pedagogics, with an emphasis on "content, and the ... rote memorization of facts" (1992:17). To address the situation the report prioritised "the upgrading of teacher qualifications and the development of teacher quality" (1992:31).

A subsequent audit by Hofmeyr and Hall (1996) confirmed the NEPI findings and provided more detail on the problems that prevailed in teacher education:

- 36% of the total teaching force is un/under-qualified (p 31),
- the general quality of teacher education is low (p 74)
- fragmentation of courses is a problem throughout the field (p 74)
- the theory-practice divide is a continuing problem (p 74)
- methodologies are generally teacher-centred and emphasise the recall of content (p 74)
- the conceptual underpinnings of subjects are infrequently developed in the HBCs [historically black colleges] (p 74)

The new outcomes-based curriculum was introduced against this background of a generally ineffectively-prepared teaching force. It was proposed in the 1995 White Paper (DoE 1995b) and adopted the following year (DoE 1996), and ushered in a shift in the content and aims of the curriculum which teachers had played a limited part in formulating and, in the main, were unprepared for.

In order to make teacher education and existing teacher qualifications compatible with OBE, the latest COTEP document (1998) expands the concept of competence to describe what teachers do in their places of work. It proposes six "roles and their applied competences for the specific context of the school-based practitioner ... These roles may be used to re-shape existing qualifications and to research and design new qualifications" (1998:48). There are five contextual roles for the teacher: mediator of learning; interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials; leader, administrator and manager; scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; a community, citizenship and pastoral role. The sixth is a specialist role in a particular learning area/subject/discipline/phase. Each role is associated with the achievement of

competence in three areas:

- foundational competence (academic, discipline-related epistemological knowledge);
- practical competence (occupational, e.g. varying administrative responsibilities);
- reflexive competence (associated with professional development, e.g. the ability to evaluate one's teaching and make changes).

However, the COTEP document (1998:54) emphasises that:

> The roles are described separately and the applied competences broken down into reflective, practical and foundational competences, only to provide explicit and clear descriptions. In the exit level outcomes of a qualification, and in the curriculum of a learning programme, the roles and competences must be integrated.

Recently (July 1999) the COTEP document was updated and another role, that of assessor, added to the six above. This additional role emphasises how central assessment is to the envisaged curriculum change, but it suffers from a shortcoming common to all the COTEP provisions, namely "the major assumption throughout the document ... that competencies define and operationalise the roles" (Basara and Mattson 1998:51).

2.3.2 The B Ed course in transition

The B Ed course designers in the Education Department at Rhodes University felt that the course needed to do more than explore the new curriculum in an introductory manner, but should form part of the broader educational transformation taking place in South Africa. The B Ed has become an in-service course for teachers, teacher educators (in colleges and non-governmental organisations) and Education Department officials, offered part-time over two years. The first year is foundational while the second year consists of electives. In 1998 there were six lecturers who ran the foundation course concurrently at the East London and Grahamstown campuses.

Some of the key curriculum changes to the B Ed foundation year were:

- the integration of the previously separate core 'disciplines' (of sociology, philosophy and psychology that had characterised the foundation year) and their replacement by a complex inter-related, inter-active course;
- that this integrated educational theory course was team-taught;
- that there were six 3-day sessions spread over the academic year, which doubled the contact time from the previous 54 hours to 108 hours;
- that a range of assessment practices were employed in the course assignments.

Thus the rationale for the 1998 B Ed described it as a course "meant for those with teaching experience and who have already had some prior professional preparation but who now, in the light of changes taking place in education, wish to enhance and extend their professional knowledge" (B Ed: Proposed New Structure 1997). Though the B Ed aimed to do this, the intended learning outcomes of the 1998 B Ed were not formulated. This omission resulted in problems with regard to assessment and points to the difficulty of actualising curriculum change in terms of the new policy. There was the conceptual difficulty of formulating outcomes in the absence of clear policy guidelines on teacher education, such as those provided subsequently (1998) in the COTEP document. Even with the COTEP guidelines, the B Ed curriculum innovations demonstrate the difficulty of reconceptualising one course within a progression or career path of development. How are the learning outcomes of the in-service B Ed degree different to those of the pre-service diploma, the Higher Diploma in Education, for instance? Further, there is the practical problem of integrating the academic and vocational/professional aspects of the educational qualifications.

The B Ed offers a test case "to explore the possibilities and difficulties of an introduction of a different type of curriculum focus into higher education" (Robertson 1995:295). It also provides an instance of the relationship between academic and professional interests in higher education, and how these combine to shape the outcomes for a course.

This study explores alternative assessment in the coursework of the foundation year of the B Ed. Assignments which were spread over the academic year contributed to a year mark that comprised half of the total mark for the course. The remaining half of the course mark came from three examinations written at the end of the year. The final examinations, one in each of the 'core disciplines', were in accordance with calendar requirements based in the former teacher education curriculum still in place until the new COTEP regulations were phased in. This produced a tension in that the single integrated course was summatively assessed through three separate final examinations counting 50%.

The formative assessment, the assignments, covered a range of genres and were self- , peer- and lecturer-assessed. Though the assignments were varied and students shared a great deal of their work through oral presentations, the marks were awarded for the **written** assignments. The written mode dominated assessment in coursework, which included keeping a professional journal and compiling a portfolio based on the year's work (academic essays, two small research projects, and theoretical analysis and reflection by teachers of their own teaching practice). In demonstrating the difficulties and problems of implementing key aspects of the new curriculum (like integrated learning areas and alternative forms of assessment), the course would provide first-hand experience, for both lecturers and learners, of the complex relationship of theory and praxis, as well as the gap between policy and practice.

This study focuses on how six students experienced the alternative forms of assessment used in the foundation year of the B Ed coursework. I chose six participants who speak English as an additional language as I am especially interested to learn more about how they coped with the linguistic demands of the written assignments. I also examine the use of criterion-referenced assessment in the course and its effectiveness as a standardising mechanism for markers, as well as a guide for student writers to develop their writing ability.

2.4 Student diversity and the role of AD

The B Ed students in 1998 (and typically in any year) had a range of academic, educational and linguistic backgrounds - most have a first degree from a historically black university, some from a historically white university, a few have degrees from other African universities and, for the first time in 1998, there were five students who entered the course with a fourth year undergraduate diploma called the Higher Diploma in Education, specialising in junior primary education. The class was multilingual: the majority of students were Xhosa home-language speakers and there were five individuals with other African languages as a first language while a minority of students, who were English home-language speakers, were clearly advantaged by the fact that the language of higher learning is English. With this diversity, it was very difficult to plan whole class AD work or to target particular students. Greater student diversity in higher education and different entry routes for students, i.e. a degree or an undergraduate diploma as entry to the B Ed, are precisely what policy-makers advocate (cf the NCHE Report 1996).

The NCHE Report (1996:4-8) sees the central features of transformation as:

- increased participation in the system by a diverse range of constituencies.

- greater responsiveness to a wide range of social and economic needs.
- increased cooperation and more partnerships between HE and other social actors and institutions.

With regard to AD the NCHE recommends that "AD structures should be responsible for guiding and coordinating AD work at institutional, faculty and departmental level. They should also form the core of a national network designed to foster inter-institutional cooperation and regional and national projects in such matters as access programmes, curriculum and materials design." Further, such an AD agency should have the following functions: "the allocation of earmarked funding for developmental projects designed to enhance equitable access and success in higher education; advising higher education institutions on the development of AD programmes" (1996:146).

My primary concern, in terms of AD, was to develop students' academic literacy by mediating the course assignments so that students would not be disadvantaged by differences in their prior educational experience. This perception was based on my experience as a tutor in the first-year English Language for Academic Purposes course at Rhodes University and the broad policy guidelines of the NCHE. In addition, my other involvement in the course, as a co-marker for many of the assignments, made me realise powerfully that marking as a social practice is as much part of the assessment process as students' writing, but far less researched. Allen (1998:241) refers to "the secret garden of grading course work".

Mediating the course assignments, my main concern, entailed a process approach to assignment writing. The assumption underlying a process approach to writing is that "it is through attention

to meaning, and not just form, that language - and writing - improve" and further that "the goal of this approach is to nurture the skills with which writers ... shape their raw materials into a coherent message, with which they work towards an acceptable and appropriate form for expressing it" (White and Arndt 1991:3-5).

However, Moore et al (1998) adopt the position that AD can play a far more significant role than merely mediating course assignments, and argue further that language development (LD), in a multilingual country like South Africa, is central to higher education for a number of reasons:

> Firstly, language-related issues are a principal factor of educational disadvantage, and effective language development work is therefore essential for meaningful equity and redress, and for ensuring that 'epistemological access' is made available to all students. Secondly, LD is clearly also central to the development of key skills such as effective communication, critical reasoning and life-long learning. Thirdly, the developing expertise of LD staff in crosscutting issues such as assessment and evaluation is a crucial resource for effective programme planning and implementation. (1998:10)

The uncertainty arising from my narrow perception of AD, as compared to the far wider understanding of AD outlined by Moore et al, was compounded when my role in the course was described as that of professional development. I understood academic development as the development of students' academic literacy, not the wider range of competencies identified above by Moore et al. as language development, nor the range of competencies expected of educators by the 1996 and 1998 COTEP documents.

The aim of my research is to examine the nature of the relationship between the expectations of the lecturers and the performance of the students. The expected outcomes of the course were gleaned from the course outlines as well as from interviews with the lecturers involved in the

teaching. I explored whether there was a chasm between their expectations and the manner in which the students understood what was expected from them. The various forms of assessment and the manner in which students performed would provide insights into the entire learning experience in the B Ed course.

In particular, I investigated and answered three questions:

- How successful was the implementation of criterion-referenced assessment in the B Ed course in developing students' writing ability?
- How successful was criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism for markers?
- To what extent did my interpretation of the broad AD policy meet the needs of the B Ed students and form part of a process of making higher education more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the research paradigm informing this study, the data generated to address the research questions, and the methods employed to interpret the data. In addition, issues of validity and ethics are considered throughout the chapter.

3.2 The research paradigm and methodology informing this study

The research paradigm most appropriate to my needs is qualitative critical ethnography. I will justify the reasons for my choice by explaining each of these terms in turn. The central focus of my research, matching lecturers' perceptions and practice of assessment in the foundation year of the B Ed course with students' experience of it, necessarily entailed a qualitative approach. My involvement as an AD practitioner in the new B Ed course began with the revision of the course in 1997 and its implementation in the following year. This meant that I was familiar with the course, the lecturers and the students and, in order to conduct my research, it was important that I "make the familiar strange", a key challenge of ethnography. Critical ethnography requires a further commitment to "ask what could be.... Critical ethnographers ... celebrate their normative and political position as a means of invoking social consciousness and societal change" (Thomas 1993:4). The particular perspective and role of AD in the course and my own value orientation as a researcher correspond to those of critical researchers who are "concerned about social inequalities, and ... direct ... work toward positive social change" (Carspecken 1996:3).

To facilitate a critical perspective within which "all parties [students and lecturers, in this case] may initiate comments, challenge assertions, and question not only theoretical formulations but also metatheoretical and metaethical frameworks" (Cherryholmes 1988:112), I decided that the research should be participatory. Glesne and Peshkin (1992:12) propose three guiding goals for participatory research "(1) to develop critical consciousness, (2) to improve the lives of those involved, and (3) to transform societal structures and relationships". It is unlikely that my research will achieve all these ambitious goals; the change that ensues may be no more significant than improving the effectiveness of AD in the course, but it could also have the benefits of giving the student participants greater insight into their own learning and writing, and providing an illuminative evaluation of the course as a whole for the lecturers. These last two outcomes could meet Glesne and Peshkin's first goal of participatory research.

Student participants were invited to shape the research from the start (see Appendix A). I did not consider it necessary to solicit lecturers' involvement in this way as I felt that a collegial relationship was more equal and that they were more likely to play an active role in the research. I interviewed the six student participants and all six lecturers who had set and marked assignments. One of the reasons for obtaining interview data is that, like Nielson (in Leki and Carson 1997:39), I believe that "to explain and understand any human social behaviour ... we need to know the meaning attached to it by the participants themselves". Each interviewee checked his/her transcript of the interview. In addition, as is required for member checking (Davis 1992), both sets of informants, the students and the lecturers, validated my analysis of their interviews by commenting on my construction of the common themes and concerns, as well as differences, that emerged from the two sets of interviews.

I considered ethnography more appropriate than action research because I was not a key designer or teacher of the course. My involvement was similar to that of a participant-observer: it included co-planning the course, a little course teaching, the marking of assignments, as well as the more typical AD work of reading and responding to students' draft assignments. However, I did not think that examining AD work in isolation from the course curriculum as a whole would be viable, and certainly not optimal, as AD is multi-disciplinary and cross-curricular. Rather, I felt that a focus on **assessment** would capture a broader concern and capitalise on my experience in course assignments.

Carspecken (1996:41- 43) suggests five logical stages for critical research which I feel are a useful framework to guide my research. My research does not follow his guidelines faithfully, but instead takes a different course at certain points. His five stages are:

1. compiling a primary record through the collection of monological data;
2. preliminary reconstructive analysis;
3. dialogical data generation;
4. discovering system relations;
5. using system relations to explain findings.

His first step is to compile a primary record through the collection of monological data, by which he means that "the researcher does not involve the people under study in any penetrating dialogue but rather takes a purely third-person position in relation to them" (1996:42). The primary data record in this study was not based on monological data collection as, far from being "as unobtrusive as possible within a social site to observe interaction" (1996:41), I was actively involved in the assessment processes, and ongoing evaluation and discussion of the course. In

fact, even as I clarified a research focus, I spoke to my colleagues, the lecturers on the B Ed course, who unanimously, from the start, gave their whole-hearted support for the project. I felt that this verbal support constituted informed consent from colleagues who are all experienced researchers. However, I felt it necessary to obtain more formal and carefully informed consent from the student participants, thus the letter in Appendix A.

In many respects my position as a researcher, heavily implicated in the practices I was investigating, compelled me to telescope the second step, preliminary reconstructive analysis, with the third, dialogical data generation. Reconstructive analysis uses a variety of techniques to analyse the primary data. As there were no primary data for this study, in Carspecken's sense of the term, I used the techniques of reconstructive analysis on the monological and dialogical data. Carspecken (1996:97) defines the second stage as putting "more words onto the actions observed, as if the actor had tried to convey the entire meaning of the act verbally rather than through the complexities of vocal tone, gesture ... and so on". I had observed the actions of lecturers and students in lectures and workshops and participated in course meetings, but I had taken no field notes. However, I felt that the many "impressions of meaning" that I had built up in the course of 1998, if reconstructed in the way that Carspecken suggests, could help to uncover unspoken impressions which, when articulated, help one become more aware of what one might be missing or biases that might be in play (1996:102).

In the third stage, dialogical data was generated from the interviews with the lecturers and students. For both sets of interviews I wanted to hear about "the implicit theories constituting [their] actions" as, "often people act according to one implicit theory, and talk out theories that are very different" (Carspecken 1996:156). In order to achieve this I used an interview schedule

with mainly open-ended questions (see Appendices B and C), and tried to tie questions to concrete issues and examples in assessment on the B Ed course.

In stage four, the researcher relates the site, the B Ed class in this study, to wider social and cultural groupings to discover system relations. As regards the B Ed students, I was interested in two aspects of their experience of the course. Firstly, I was interested in academic issues, like whether the levels of literacy with which they had entered the course had prepared them for the written work, how they had coped with the written demands of the course, and what their greatest difficulties had been. Secondly, I was interested in the usefulness of the course to them in their professional work as teachers, and the value of the assessment procedures in particular.

In terms of the lecturers, I was interested to compare their intentions for the course itself: to assess whether there was a common understanding of how the course sought to develop students academically and professionally, and of the role that assessment played in this process. Specifically, the interview focussed on their role as markers in assessment.

Stage five uses system relations to explain the findings, and Carspecken warns against trying to fit mechanistic social theories to the detail and specifics of research findings. He (1996:203) recommends that

> Once in possession of a set of relationships between routines, cultural forms, and physical properties of the environment, the next step is to ask why the environment is like it is and why these particular people live parts of their lives in an environment like this. ... A 'good fit' means that certain cultural themes have been well traced to environmental conditions and that these conditions, in turn, have been explained economically and politically.

Carspecken also advises that another key concept at this stage of analysis is that of interests:

"socially constructed means for meeting needs and desires". He argues that "the researcher should consider the location of her group within society generally through examining the members' access to economic, political, and cultural resources" (1996:204).

3.3 Data collection

The data for this study were the written work six students produced during the foundation year of the B Ed, as well as interviews with each of the six students about how they experienced the various forms of assessment on the course. In addition, I interviewed the six B Ed lecturers on assessment in the first year of the B Ed course. All of these were filtered through my experiences of the course from an AD perspective. Though Carspecken's stages provided a methodological framework for my research, the three research questions and the variety of methods of data collection constituted the main means to ensure methodological triangulation, "the use of two or more methods of data collection" (Cohen and Manion 1996:233). Davis (1992) suggests additional techniques to make the findings of qualitative research more dependable; some of which are peer debriefing, member checking and inquiry audit. The only one that I used in this study was member checking, "performed by an ongoing process of testing out with informants the research analysis, interpretation and conclusions" (Davis 1992:607).

Before discussing the three research questions and the data collection procedures in more detail, I need to explain how this study has addressed issues of validity. According to Freeman (1998:164), "judgements of validity are at the intersection of the inquiry and the disciplined way in which you have conducted it." He divides internal validity into four areas (1998:170):

1. descriptive validity, which I tried to meet by providing a full picture of the context, the course

and the participants, similar to the rich detail of a case study;

2. ecological validity, which I addressed by collecting first-order data, students' assignments and the lecturers' course outlines and forms of assessment, and second-order data, interviews with both students and lecturers. The two layers of data enabled me to investigate participants' practice as well as the ideas shaping their practice;

3. interpretive validity, which I addressed by referring to various critical research methodologists and Carspecken's framework of five stages for critical research to guide my process;

4. theoretical validity, which I met by reviewing local and international research in the field of assessment.

3.3.1 Procedure 1: The value of criterion-referenced assessment for students

In answering the first research question, on the value of criterion-referenced assessment in the foundation year of the B Ed course in developing students' writing ability, I regarded the students as the primary source of data and I gathered both written and oral data from them. The written data came from the six participants' academic writing, as reflected in their portfolios, and a questionnaire about their prior writing experience (Appendix D), while the oral data came from an interview conducted with each participant.

In order to find interested student participants, in August 1998 I gave every student in the class a letter of invitation which also asked for their written consent to copy the writing they produced during the course (Appendix A). Fifteen students responded to my letter of invitation and volunteered to participate in my research. In September I followed this up by giving the fifteen volunteers an open-ended questionnaire about their writing experience prior to the course (Appendix D). I felt that it was necessary to have an indication of students' writing ability and

experience prior to the course in order to gauge whether the forms of assessment used in the course had developed their writing.

Nine students filled in the questionnaire and from these I selected six ESL speakers. I chose participants for the following reasons:

- their interest in the research, displayed by their returning a questionnaire (Appendix D),
- gender balance, I wanted an equal number of men and women,
- the different experiences at the two centres where the course was run, East London (EL) and Grahamstown (GT) campuses,
- the fact that most AD work in the B Ed course had been with ESL students.

I employed purposive sampling as I "handpicked the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of [my] judgement of their typicality" (Cohen and Manion 1996:89) and their interest and cooperation in the research.

Table 2 below shows some detail of the six participants' background and professional setting. Because I promised the participants confidentiality, their names have been changed.

TABLE 2: Educational and linguistic background of the student participants

STUDENT and CAMPUS	**GENDER**	**SCHOOL SETTING**	**ACADEMIC QUALification**	**HOME LANGUAGE**
Marcus (EL)	Male	Primary school	BA	Xhosa
Nora (GT)	Female	Primary school	BA	Xhosa
Raymond (EL)	Male	Finishing sch.	B Sc (Hons) Cert in Vet Sc	Twi/English
Sipho (EL)	Female	Secondary sch.	BA	Xhosa
Veronica (EL)	Female	Primary school	HDE	Xhosa
Zakhe (GT)	Male	Secondary sch.	BA	Xhosa

The course sought to develop students' reflectiveness in two ways: (a) by the content of the assignments which required research into/reflection on their own professional settings and practice, and (b) by getting the students to reflect on their marked assignments in the portfolio. The assignments required students to incorporate their own experience and knowledge into their formal academic writing. Geisler, in her (1994) study of undergraduates in the USA, noted that school left students unable to use academic texts "to gain insight into the context-bound processes by which formal academic knowledge can be integrated with personal knowledge brought from their indigenous home cultures" (1994:90). I was interested in the nature of postgraduate South African students' writing and whether ESL students in particular would have similar difficulties, given the dominance of rote learning and the reliance on textbooks as a source of knowledge in South African schools. Table 3, below, categorises assignments in terms of genres.

TABLE 3: Assignments in terms of genres

Written Assignments in 1998	**Genres**
1. Journal	**Journal** - personal, reflective, stylistically free, meaning-focussed writing
2. Situation analysis 3. Sociological views on educ. inequalities (Research)	**Research report** - narrative critical analysis
4. Ideologies applied ... 5. Lang. differences –> differences in educational achievement.	**Academic essay** - exposition argument
6. Learning theories ... 7. Cooperative learning activity ...	**Reflective practice** - critical application and analysis of theory
8. Portfolio	**Reflective practice**

As the table indicates, each assignment, in varying degrees, was a combination of writing based on personal teaching experience and prior learning experiences on the one hand, and the current learning experience provided by the B Ed on the other. This was consistent with the course intention to bridge the theory/practice "divide in education" (Carr 1995:34). Most of the B Ed assignments were an attempt to bring together local knowledge (teachers' lived professional experiences) and rhetorical writing processes, adapting genres like the research report and creating the reflective practice essay. Thus, many B Ed assignments were "mixed genres. Examples of mixed genres are arguments which make use of narrative structures, narratives which have reporting or exposition structures embedded within them, and reports which are simultaneously impersonal and personal in form" (Carter 1996:14).

I wanted to assess the extent to which the written assignments developed students' academic literacy or, to use Geisler's term since the B Ed is a postgraduate course, their academic expertise. According to Geisler (1994) expertise in higher education has two dimensions: domain content and rhetorical process. She argues that academic expertise typically occurs at graduate level when the students have acquired both a critical mass of information in a particular field (the domain content) and an understanding of the rhetorical processes at work in academic texts, broadly, that academic knowledge is constructed and contested. She contends further (1994: 94-95), that the process of developing academic expertise occurs through the "problem of reflection, seeking explanations that ring bells with your own experience" and that "building an appropriate methodology to look at people's activities as well as their representations is not a trivial task".

I drew up a writing profile for each student to bring together the students' "actions as well as

their representations". Gillespie (1993:529) holds that the value of a profile lies in the way that it "summarizes ... [and brings] these faces [of learners] more clearly into focus". The profiles of the six students in my study were intended to highlight how the assignments developed the students' academic writing, and the nature of the academic expertise they acquired. Firstly, the profiles would focus my analysis of their writing by allowing me to map Geisler's notion of the two domains of academic expertise onto the assignments. Secondly, the profiles could inform my interviews with the student participants. Thirdly, I hoped that the profiles would have some value to the participants, as one student, Veronica, had expressed the wish that the research would be useful to her too. She said, "I hope that this research will also be of advantage and of help to my studies". Participatory research has "a commitment to the learning process of those engaged in the research" (Walters 1983:171), and I hoped that students could use the profiles to assess their own growth in the second year of the B Ed and that, with their feedback, it could be part of a reciprocal process of growth.

I conducted three of the four East London-based students interviews' at the East London campus, and one at the student's home. I interviewed the two Grahamstown-based students in my office. All the student interviews were audio-taped. While the different settings affected the interaction during the interview in ways that are difficult to judge, I do feel that by transcribing the first two interviews before I did the rest, I was better able to focus the subsequent interviews. I reversed the order of the first two questions on the interview schedule, for instance.

3.3.2 Procedure 2: Lecturers and the value of criterion-referenced assessment

In answering the second question, on the success of criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism for markers, I considered the lecturers/markers to be the main source

of data and I interviewed all six of them. In addition, I used the course outlines and outcomes to assess lecturers' views.

For the lecturer interviews I explored how lecturers planned assignments and how they used the criteria in their marking (see Appendix C). In addition to the criteria as a means to make explicit and develop academic expertise in students writing, there are the marker's comments. My intention in the interviews was to uncover the approach that had underpinned lecturers' assessment: to make explicit their latent theories in order to explore the commonalities as well as the subtle differences between lecturers.

The interviews were conducted at work and were informal and conversational in tone, with a semi-structured format. I placed the interview guide, of mainly open-ended questions, on the table so that both the interviewee and I could read it easily. All the lecturers agreed to the interview being audio-taped. I transcribed the interview and gave each lecturer a copy of his/her transcript. Again, as noted with the student interviews, transcribing the first lecturer's interview made me more focussed for the rest. This did not result in my changing the interview schedule in any way, but the later interviews were about ten minutes shorter than the earlier ones - a measure of my improved focus!

3.3.3 Procedure 3: The value of AD

In answering the third question, the extent to which my fairly narrow interpretation of the broad AD policy met the needs of the B Ed students, and formed part of a process of making higher education more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, I relied on both sets of interviews, on class evaluations and on my own reflections on the role of AD. I kept a journal

of my early thoughts on the role of AD until about April 1998, which is a written record of my initial experiences and reflections. Class evaluations had been conducted for each session of the course and, as these were not anonymous, I could track the participants in my study.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Method of analysis of student data

I drew up a learner profile for each of the student participants and used Geisler's two aspects of academic expertise - domain content and rhetorical process - to assess each student's progress or difficulty in their assignment writing. The interview transcript allowed me to compare students' current thinking about their foundation-year assignments and the assessment procedures, with their portfolio reflections on the assignments completed during 1998. Once I had done this for each student, I could look for similarities and differences in how the six students experienced the various writing genres. As the students' marks ranged from firsts to fail for the various assignments, I felt that they were a representative sample in terms of levels of attainment, though this had not been a factor in selecting participants.

In the analysis of the interviews I examined whether the assessment criteria had developed the students' sense of themselves as makers and not just consumers of academic knowledge. I asked whether the criteria focussed on content domain **and** rhetorical process, thereby developing academic expertise among the students. Further, I followed up the learner profile by asking students how the assessment criteria and assignments, as reflected in their profiles, linked with the professional competencies in the COTEP document (1998), and what professional competencies students felt they had developed during the course.

3.4.2 Method of analysis of lecturer data

After transcribing each of the six interviews with the lecturers, I looked across the transcripts to compare their attitudes to and practice of assessment. In addition to my main research question as regards the lecturers' data (the success of criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism) I also asked the following questions:

- is there a common understanding among lecturers of how the course sought to develop students academically and professionally?
- what is the role of assessment in this process?
- how did lecturers use the criteria on the assessment sheet when they marked?

I constructed my understanding of the common concerns and differences that emerged from the six sets of interviews in order to give each lecturer a copy so that they could validate my analysis of the interview material or challenge unwarranted conclusions.

3.4.3 Method of analysis of the role of AD

Reflecting on my own role as AD practitioner in the course has been particularly difficult. In assessing the extent to which AD has met student needs, I found Ivanic's (1997) study useful because she suggests that the acquisition of academic literacy is a dialectical process. She warns that teachers who accept academic discourse uncritically can attempt to develop students' academic literacy prescriptively. She feels that "a critical view of discourse communities brings to the fore the power relations, the struggles and the possibility of change within and among them" (1997:83). Ivanic suggests a dialectical relationship between teaching students the genre and other academic conventions on the one hand, and their being critical of academic discourse conventions and expectations on the other. In the words of Carter (1996:13-14), "genre-based

teaching is both revolutionary and reactionary". I drew on this insight to focus my reflections on the value of AD in the course for both students and lecturers.

Chapter Four

Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of my three research questions:

- How successful was criterion-referenced assessment in developing students' writing abilities?
- How successful was criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism for markers?
- To what extent did my interpretation of AD meet the needs of the B Ed students and form part of a process of making higher education more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds?

As two of the research questions focus on criterion-referenced assessment, I wish to discuss the notion of criteria as an aspect of assessment theory before delving into the detail of the assessment practices within the B Ed course. Assessment in education is about assigning a mark or standard to student learning. Students at tertiary level typically display their learning through written tasks like essays or research reports; what is being assessed is the students' performance in writing. The object being measured - the essay, for instance - has no inherent 'right answer' or true mark. Criteria provide an indication both of the construct (the underlying skills or abilities being tested) and the task (the genre of academic essay, for instance).

In addition to these "ordinary notions of criteria", Shalem and Slonimsky (1998:5) suggest a

third, moral dimension. They develop their argument in a paper analysing the criteria underpinning the COTEP competencies, but I felt that their understanding could be extended to assessment criteria more generally. They argue that "criteria must command respect ... from being associated with a respectable group that has been appointed on legitimate grounds of authority". In order for a group, and the criteria it generates, to have "legitimate authority", they claim that the act of providing criteria must not become a "straitjacket" in which the two parties (the assessor and the assessed) "condemn the political process to silence, deception or apathy" but instead, that it is incumbent upon the group that generates the criteria that it "keeps disagreement alive" (Ibid:16).

Ideally, therefore, assessment criteria would be negotiated between lecturers/markers and students. Certainly this is the vision informing the NQF in South Africa (Isaacs 1997). Such criteria would constitute lecturers' and students' agreed understanding of a task: a common frame of reference signalling both a means for students to guide their accomplishing the task, and lecturers' expectations of the end product. Explicit criteria would have the added benefits of making assessment formative, and encouraging student self-assessment. What is the case, however, when the assessment criteria are not negotiated up-front between students and lecturers, as happened in the B Ed in 1998? Do students and lecturers have the shared understanding envisioned by the policy-makers? When lecturers and students don't have a shared understanding of assessment criteria, can they 'speak the same language' in terms of assessment?

Luke (1996:316) presents two reasons why explicit criteria are deemed important in teaching different genres: firstly, inequitable educational outcomes are attributed to "implicit, unstated and elitist criteria for performance and achievement which have the effect of excluding marginal

socioeconomic, cultural and gender groups", and secondly, "the problem of unequal access is to be dealt with by making explicit and attainable the criteria through direct instruction that transmits mastery of the 'genres of power'".

However, he proceeds to question the assumption that these projected social and cognitive gains will result from explicit linguistic and pedagogical criteria:

> The assumption is that this transmission [of powerful genres] will lead to increased language awareness and therefore 'choice' and 'control' in the construction of texts, linguistic and intellectual achievements that will result in improved school achievement. Taken together, these steps are seen as part of a political approach to the problem of unequal outcomes ... By investing power in particular genres, texts, skills, abilities, competences, the range of educational interventions tend to reify power: that is to turn it into an object which can be ... deconstructed and pedagogically reassembled and transmitted. (Luke 1996:320, 321)

He suggests instead (1996:333) "reframing the text not as a genre but as a *social strategy* historically located in a network of power relations", in other words, that students need to learn to "read power". These issues of power are part of the context within which genre-based teaching, and AD work, in South Africa need to be considered; for instance, whether criterion-referenced assessment facilitates the democratising of the assessment process and provides an indication of the skills that a task seeks to develop in students.

On the question of lecturers' marking practice, Shay (1998b:1) has argued that

> assessment is subjective - the assessment is, in part, construed by the subject, that is, the assessor. To say however that assessment of writing is subjective is not to imply that it is arbitrary. An assessment is seldom, if ever, arbitrarily made, but always motivated, though not always consciously so.

This analysis explores the value of criterion-referenced assessment from multiple perspectives: from the lecturers' perspective, whether criteria clarified their own understanding of various

genre, and to standardise their marking; from the students' perspective, whether criteria were useful in writing tasks; and finally, from an AD perspective, whether criteria served the broader political goal of opening access to success in higher education to all students regardless of their educational or linguistic backgrounds.

I start by reporting my findings on criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism for the lecturers because, in giving their conceptualisation of the foundation year of the B Ed course, lecturers provided an insight into the **intended** curriculum. Moving from the lecturers' perspective on the B Ed foundation year, focussing specifically on assessment, facilitated a comparison with the students' experience of the course, the **received** curriculum. This chapter therefore addresses firstly, the extent to which criterion-referenced assessment helped to standardise lecturers' marking, secondly, the value of criterion-referenced assessment in developing students' writing ability, and thirdly, the role of AD in meeting students' academic needs.

4.2 Lecturers' views on the role of criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism in marking

In analysing the transcripts of the interviews with the lecturers three themes emerged that I felt could enrich the question of standardisation and criterion-referencing. The three themes below also serve as the sub-sections for this discussion:

- lecturers' understanding of the purpose of the course as a whole (section 4.2.1)
- lecturers' perceptions of how assessment developed students' writing ability (section 4.2.2)

- how lecturers used the assessment criteria in marking (section 4.2.3)

These sub-questions helped to 'unpack' the research question on criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism for markers and contributed to a more detailed consideration of the value of criterion-referenced assessment within lecturers' marking practice. To give the lecturers the same anonymity as the students, I gave them other names and, because there was only one male, I did some gender-swopping with the names. The six lecturers were called Belinda, Harry, Odette, Rose, Wendy and Zelda. This gender swopping via name changes is not germane to the findings as it played no role in the interviews, and the fact that Xhosa does not distinguish between gender for the third person singular pronouns resulted in one of the students doing a similar swop in her interview. Sipho (see p58) used the masculine third person singular, he, to refer to a lecturer/marker who, her assignment showed, was female.

4.2.1 Lecturers' understanding of the purpose of the course as a whole

All the lecturers agreed that the course had two main aims: developing students academically and professionally. The intention to bridge the theory/practice gap was a concern that underpinned the entire course. According to Odette, "they're [the students] grappling with praxis.... It's the nature of the B Ed year, it's what defines it almost." Rose agrees: "we're trying to make them good students [academically], but I would say that was a less important goal than trying to make them good teachers, insightful thinkers with an understanding of education.... We've got this terrible tension in the course." For Wendy the two goals of the course could be reconciled and were inter-related. She said

> I wouldn't like to separate them. I don't think you can. My goal was to get people to work with the body of knowledge, any body of knowledge, but in a certain way.... So, yes, there's a body of knowledge, but that body of knowledge I see very much as a socially

> constructed one, which means that it depends on your ideology as to what you put forward or defend or advocate in any body of knowledge. There's no such thing as neutral knowledge ... To me professional growth and development only comes about when you start to challenge your own ideas, your own assumptions, and those of others.

For Harry the course had the goals of academic and professional development, but it also had a third goal that linked up with the role of assessment. He expressed it this way, "the third thing was to try and say to them that the academic genre is not a stilted artificial genre. It has got to be accessible, it has to be critical, it's got to be relevant."

4.2.2 Lecturers' perceptions of how assessment developed students' writing ability

Table 3 in chapter 3, which analyses the course assignments in terms of their genres, shows that in many ways the course writing achieved a mixture of genres consistent with the course aims that the lecturers identified. Each assignment in varying degrees was a combination of writing based on prior learning and teaching experiences on the one hand, and the current learning experience provided by the B Ed course on the other.

While it is relatively straight-forward to analyse the assignments in terms of genre, it is more difficult to match the criteria used in assignment marking to the skills that the course sought to develop, or to Geisler's (1994) two dimensions of academic expertise (refer to section 3.3.1). This conceptual difficulty is compounded by the problem that the assessment criteria were not made available to the students along with the assignment brief. Students wrote the assignments without the explicit criteria that lecturers formulated before marking the assignments. Thus, the criteria were implicit for students as they wrote each assignment, but explicit to lecturers as they marked. The interviews with the student participants discussed later in this chapter show that students relied on their prior academic writing experience in their initial assignments and on study group

discussions. Arguably the criteria were of greater use to lecturers in standardising marking than to students in developing their writing. Lecturers acknowledged the problem.

The lecturer who detailed the limitations of the assessment criteria in terms of developing students was Zelda. She questioned how useful the criteria had been to students and added

> what we understand by all of these descriptors might be completely different from what the student understands. Say for example the whole idea of 'linking the story to broader theoretical perspectives' [one of the criteria for the situational analysis]... I'm not sure that the students' perception of what we understand by that and our own perception would be similar ... I think for students who are lacking certain writing skills that they know they're not 'there' yet, but what 'there' actually looks like, I'm not sure it helps them get 'there' to say, 'You're at a 2 or a 1 for this'.

She felt that whole-class feedback in the form of a report, similar to what was given after the second assignment, was most helpful to students as it used student writing and provided real examples of the criteria in the context of an assignment. She considered the report after the second assignment to have been significant in terms of students' growth because:

> it was a detailed working through what they're required to do, where they're required to find sources, what we regard as sloppy, giving examples of sloppy work ... [and saying] Here's an example of what works, and it works because of that, that and that. Here's an example of what doesn't work. Why do you think it doesn't work? What's missing here?

Zelda's observation raises the question whether the students would have benefited from being given the detailed report before the assignment. It highlights an ongoing dilemma in teaching: whether advance notice of problem areas obviates student difficulties or whether students need to encounter the difficulties in doing a task, and revisit what they have written, with feedback from lecturers. According to Linn et al (1991:18), "validly teaching for success on these [alternative] assessments is a challenge in itself and pushes the boundaries of what we know about teaching and learning". One needs to be mindful, however, that "validly teaching for success" does not

become a process of devising "methods to elicit the kind of behaviour constituting successful performance on the tasks, rather than methods promoting rich knowledge and understanding" (Davis 1998:132).

Belinda made the link between criteria and the skills that each assignment, and the assessment process as a whole, sought to develop in students. She cautioned against getting "locked into" a generic set of criteria for all the assignments, but did not explain what criteria the different genres require:

> clearly they [criteria] must differ because you are not asking the same thing over and over again. I think that this should help students to recognise that we are looking at the development of different skills and that in some assignments the focus is more on these skills and other assignments it's more on other skills and that we hope that by the time they get to writing exams they have developed those various skills and are drawing them together.

Davis (1998:94) argues that the language to describe complex cognitive capacities, like those being assessed through the B Ed written assignments, "is imprecise and cannot be tightened up" and that it is even more difficult to assess "the same trait over time", or in different contexts/genres. One needs to ask, therefore, whether the criteria were precise enough to discriminate between different genres and at the same time consistently identified the commonalities of academic writing.

In order to establish the nature of the complex capacities that the assessment criteria were seeking to develop in students, I concentrated on the three genres which had been marked using criterion-referenced assessment sheets: the research report, the academic essay and the reflective practice assignments (see Appendices E 1-3 for copies of the respective assessment sheets for the three genres). I have excluded the marking of the portfolio as it was marked by two members of the team and moderated by the rest of the team. As Wendy and I were the two markers, I want to

defer the discussion of the portfolio marking to the section of this chapter that considers the role of AD (see section 4.4.2). Table 4 represents Geisler's notions of domain content and rhetorical process mapped onto the criteria for the three genres.

TABLE 4: Mapping genre and criteria onto Geisler's dimensions of academic expertise

GENRE	CRITERIA			
	Domain content		Rhetorical process	
Research report				
Situational analysis	content	theory & practice	structure & style	methodology
Educational inequalities	content	critical insight	structure & style	methodology
Academic essay				
Ideologies applied ...	content	critical insight	structure & style	
Reflective practice				
Cooperative learning activity	content	overall evaluation	structure & style	
Learning theories ...	units of work	critical evaluation	structure & style	

Table 4 shows that assessment criteria are consistent within each genre: for instance, the two research reports were assessed using four very similar sets of criteria; the two reflective practice assignments used three similar sets of criteria. At the same time, there is a difference between the research reports, on the one hand, and the rest of the assignments, on the other, in terms of the assessment criteria used. The genres of academic essay and reflective practice have two sets of domain content criteria and only one set of criteria relating to rhetorical process, while the genre of the research report has two sets of criteria for both. If one accepts that a crucial difference

between undergraduate and postgraduate study is that in the latter students need a sense that they are producers and not only consumers of knowledge, then it seems reasonable to suggest that the genre of the research report is important in developing a postgraduate level of academic expertise. In particular, the criteria that require students to report and reflect on the methodology and conduct of their research, absent in the other assignments, engages students in the rhetorical processes of constructing academic knowledge.

One must note the reservation that it is difficult to apply Geisler's neat construct of academic expertise as domain content and rhetorical process to the assessment criteria of a genre-mix, as all of these assignments were. The lecturers certainly did not formulate criteria with Geisler's notion of academic expertise in mind. It is difficult, after the fact, to establish accurately whether, at the time, lecturers formulated assessment criteria to develop students' capacities (whether in terms of writing, reflectiveness, critical analysis) or as a yardstick by which to measure these capacities. The interview questions did not probe this matter.

4.2.3 How lecturers used the assessment criteria in marking

All the lecturers said that they used the assessment form after reading through and commenting on the whole assignment. Zelda summed up the way in which the lecturers generally used the form:

> I certainly only used it at the end. I can't recall having it as a guide as I read through it [the assignment]. I definitely tried to get a sense of the whole work first, and look at it in relation to the question ... I mean I didn't follow the assessment form as I went through it [the assignment]. I came to that afterwards. Probably in my own mind there was a sort of an overall sense of how the person had answered the question and then I looked to the assessment grid, the criteria, in order to help me define particular aspects.

Rose used the assessment criteria in a similar way to Zelda, but felt that the assessment sheet had made her commentary on the students' work more superficial:

> As regards the marking, I must say that I marked, I used the assessment form *post hoc*. Insofar as I went into an essay I read it, I responded and I got into a dialogue with the student as is my style, on the opposite side of the page, and I did it my old way, of interacting with the student in a conversation. Um, and then I went back and having completed it and having responded to it at that level, I then went back and said for example, for assignment one: historical overview, how well do I think that he managed it, or she managed it ... I visited the form after I had done my first interaction with the assignment. So it didn't intrude or impinge or impose or alter, I suppose, my initial response except insofar as I was aware that there was this form coming up at the end, and so perhaps the depth of my dialogue with the students was diminished because I knew that I would also have to pull out a comment to write on the form as well. In previous years I suppose maybe my marking took longer because I got into a deeper dialogue with the students, and so to a degree the form, I suppose, made my dialogue more shallow, the knowledge that the form was coming up. I don't know whether that's ideal.

There was one other interesting aspect to the criterion-referenced marking that only certain lecturers mentioned: the notion of marking for an audience. This notion arose from my attempt to establish lecturers' marking practice. I questioned lecturers about how they marked coursework assignments as compared to examinations. Odette said that in one of the examination papers she marked and put "personal comments ... saying 'Yippee!' or 'Thank God this person's got it right' or 'At last someone who understands Bourdieu' or sort of like sarcastic comments on a whole lot of things written throughout. ... A student wouldn't see that at all. It would be like 'Idiot!'" She argued that comments like this were helpful to the external examiner who would get "a feeling of where exactly where I was at". She was convinced, however, that students were not an appropriate audience for comments of this nature:

> You're working with people's investments and ... you work with that gently. There might be say 20 to 30 percent of people that could handle it and enjoy it, but there's a lot of other people that won't, and you can't tell the difference. And there's a lot of people that would pretend to take that criticism well, but they wouldn't. The teacher-student relationship is a power relationship and, in a power relationship, honesty is always a weapon.

Zelda agreed that in examination marking the external examiner was very different to a student as the intended audience for a marker's comments. Yet her view was that

> Remarks which evaluate people in a way which is degrading or denigrating I think is just unprofessional .... I would be very offended if I were ... a moderator reading ... that kind of thing ... I certainly wouldn't write it [a comment like 'Idiot'], not ever. Even 'Nonsense' I wouldn't write. I would write 'This doesn't make sense', but not 'Nonsense' because of the connotations of some of those things, because writing is personal. To say that somebody has written nonsense is to make nonsense of their thinking.

For Wendy there was not much of a difference between assignment and examination marking as she felt a need in both cases to "justify why you have given a mark." She considered the external examiner and the student to be entitled to an explanation/justification of her marking. Her experience was that

> The external examiner remarked about that as well. She said that she found it invaluable, those comments .... [Also] if a student comes back to me and says, 'You know, I'm particularly unhappy about what you've given me in the case of this criteria', my comment very often gives me a lead into why I've given that mark. It alerts me, it sort of pinpoints why I justify that mark as being such and I've found that very useful. So in a way ... it's providing evidence to the student of why they got what they got. And I think they have a right to know.

What is the relationship between the marker and the external examiner? Traditional assessment theory maintains that the 'insider' perspective of lecturer/marker should defer to the 'outsider', more objective perspective of the external examiner. Within this view, the external examiner does not need a sense of 'where the lecturer is at'; in fact, lecturers' comments may make it more difficult for an external examiner to keep an 'objective' distance. There is very little reported research on the nature of the relationship between marker and external examiner within the new approaches to assessment. Whether the marking practice of the B Ed lecturers is consistent with the new approach to assessment is, therefore, a moot question. What this study has shown is that there is no consistency among the team of B Ed markers on this matter.

The lecturers' words convey their rich and varied marking practice, providing a context for the discussion of criterion-referencing and the standardisation of marking. Their perceptions of how, and whether, criterion-referencing had helped to standardise marking, based on the interviews, correspond to dialogical data generation (Carspecken 1996). The dialogue was rather limited as none of the lecturers queried or engaged with my construction of the themes in the interviews, despite a written invitation to do so.

4.2.4 Summary: How successful was criterion-referenced assessment as a standardising mechanism for markers?

Predictably, there was no definitive answer to this question. There are two aspects to markers' consistency: inner consistency within the practice of an individual marker and consistency across a range of markers for the same assignment. Wendy acknowledged that even the first aspect, for an individual marker to be consistent in her own practice, was difficult, "The easiest thing is to read and put a mark on a thing. The hardest thing is to justify it and to be consistent." Belinda explained how the criteria had helped to make her marking more consistent by focusing her on the meaning that students conveyed and the way in which they structured an argument in their writing, rather than on a surface element like language fluency:

> ... it helps you because sometimes if you are working through a batch and you have had a couple of students whose language is sort of fairly poor, you get one student who is writing good English and you think, 'Oh, thank heavens', you know. Then you overcompensate because you are so impressed by the student's fluent English that ... you don't realise initially they are writing garbage. I think this is where having these criteria ...meant that you really had to look and say to yourself, 'What is the student trying to say?' even if it was badly put. Even if it was well-put, you still stopped and said, 'Hey, what is this student actually saying. Is it a whole lot of smooth glib talk? Are they providing the evidence for what they are saying?'

Despite some markers' perception that criteria may have made their individual practice more

consistent, Odette felt that the criteria had failed to produce consistency across the range of markers:

> Some lecturers got reputations for being easy markers, others got reputations for being tough markers, and students know ... For example, two students would work together and they'll know that they got different markers and that the one's getting 55 and the other one's getting 65. And the word spreads - with such and such you get high marks... I promise you that's going on, no matter how much you try and standardise it.

Zelda did not comment directly on whether the criteria had been useful in standardising marking, instead she explained how the sort of student perceptions, referred to by Odette, could have arisen:

> I think what we understand by all of these descriptors might be completely different from what the student understands. Say for example the whole idea of 'linking the story to broader theoretical perspectives' [the first assignment] ... I'm not sure that the students' perception of what we understand by that, and our own perception, would be similar. And if it's not similar, I don't know how that's helpful to the students.

The cautious, but positive, views expressed by both Rose and Harry summarise lecturers' general feeling about whether criterion-referencing had standardised marking. Rose felt that it had, "To a degree. However I don't think that you can ever standardise the marking", and Harry said, "I think they [the criteria] certainly put people on some sort of a track, you know, of standardisation of marking. I certainly think it helped narrow the gap."

I could not examine what "narrowing the gap" meant in practice in terms of the standardisation of marking since my sample size, of six students out of a class of 53, was too limited. However, I felt that Carspecken's (1996) stage of discovering system relations would address the question of marking practice and standardisation. It entailed asking some of the larger, systemic questions that Brown and Hudson (1998:665-667) suggest should be asked of alternative assessment in general and of portfolios in particular. Some of these were:

- design decisions, like who established the grading criteria, and who decided on the

assignments;

- logistical issues, like increased time and support for assignment assessment; training and ability of teachers to implement criterion-referenced assessment; time to read and rate portfolios while helping students develop them;
- interpretation issues, like grading student portfolios; setting standards and interpreting criteria in a way that is fair to all students; reporting assessment results (especially of the portfolio) in a way that is fair to all students; reporting portfolio assessment results so that all interested audiences can understand and benefit;
- reliability issues, like consistency across markers and occasions for marking; encouraging objectivity; preventing mechanical errors; ensuring equal access to resources for all students; standardising marking;
- validity issues, like the demonstration of the validity of the assessment processes; determining how adequately the assignments (and the portfolio collection) exemplify students' work, development and abilities; identifying and controlling potential intervening variables that might affect student achievements; separating out which student abilities led to which performance characteristics in what amounts.

As these systemic questions, by their nature, require holistic analysis I felt that it would be useful to return to them at the end of this chapter (section 4.4.2). This would also facilitate a focus on the portfolio specifically, since it contained (minimally) each student's assignments for the year, as well as their reflections on the process. One could then, as Brown and Hudson suggest, examine the portfolio in terms of how it was marked, its value in promoting students' academic development and reflectiveness, and its value as an assessment tool.

4.3 The value of criterion-referenced assessment in developing students' writing ability

I turn now to the second of my research questions, the success of criterion-referenced assessment in developing students' writing. In order to gauge the effectiveness of criterion-referenced assessment in developing students' writing ability, it was necessary to get an idea of the writing ability and experience with which students entered the course. Thus, firstly (section 4.3.1), I discuss students' prior writing experience, as well as the writing profile I compiled of each student (see Appendices F 1-6), combining the assignment genres and Geisler's two dimensions of academic expertise. Secondly, I examine students' experiences of criterion-referenced assessment in terms of the three themes below, which also serve as the sub-sections for this discussion:

- the value to students of criteria and lecturers' comments (section 4.3.2.1)
- students' difficulties with the assessment processes (section 4.3.2.2)
- the value of the portfolios in developing students' writing (section 4.3.2.3)

4.3.1 Students' prior writing experience and writing profiles

A questionnaire on students' prior writing experience (Appendix D) allowed me to establish a limited amount of baseline information about students' writing experience at the start of the course. Their academic qualifications were different: four of the students (Marcus, Nora, Sipho and Zakhe) had a first degree, while Veronica had a higher diploma (HDE) and Raymond had a first degree as well as the equivalent of an Honours. The data revealed that five of the six students were familiar with writing academic essays, while Nora claimed to have "no writing experience" and wrote, "My worry is that some of my writings do not have required skills and I also feel that they lack academic standard". None of the women had kept a journal and only two men, Raymond and Zakhe, had kept diary-type journals before.

The words of two participants, who expanded on their views about writing in English, give an indication of the range of attitudes towards, experiences of and competence in writing:

> All in all I do not do a lot of writing and I regret because I discovered that practice makes perfect. I had a problem in writing in English before I did HDE. Studying solved my problem a little bit. Teaching in the medium of Xhosa retarded me, as a result I changed over to English. (Veronica)

> I was doing English as a major subject at undergraduate level. I like English reading and writing. I also like creative/casual writing because I write free without fear of being wrong. I like to marvel at what I have written and to demonstrate a skill in presenting something that is in my mind. (Zakhe)

The students' writing profiles (Appendices F 1-6) enabled me to condense information concerning the assignments and marking for each individual student in the course of the B Ed foundation year. Through the profiles I mapped Geisler's dimensions of academic expertise onto the genres and assessment criteria of the written assignments and noted the marker and marks for each assignment. I felt that the criteria could indicate the differences between genres and establish which aspects of the students' academic literacy and/or professional competence the lecturers were seeking to develop or assess through the assignments. I concentrated on three of the genres in Table 2: the research report, the academic essay and the reflective practice assignment, as they had all been marked with criterion-referenced assessment sheets. I excluded the journal from the profile because the journal was given only qualitative feedback, assessment criteria were not spelled out, and it was not part of the year mark for the foundation year. I report more fully on the profiles in section 4.3.5.

4.3.2 The value to students of criteria and lecturers' comments

All the students agreed that it was useful to have criteria spelt out on an assessment sheet, but some felt that it would have been better to have the criteria beforehand. Marcus articulated the

general feeling:

> Ja, I think they [the assessment sheets] are more informative than just seeing your mark. Ja, more informative because that tabular form makes you see where you have put a stress on and where you have let things go by. Very much unlike when one was to see 60%. You are ... you are easily tempted to think that you have covered all the demands when you see just 60%. On that tabulated form of marking it shows you. Right you have got 60% but you haven't responded fully to this part which is quite good because it gives you that holistic approach now when you are answering a question.

Veronica considered it unfair that the assessment criteria came after the assignment, "The thing is, we were given the way of writing an assignment after we have written an assignment, that was not right. But the assessment sheet, it ought to go together with the brief so as to know how to do it and how we are marked." Sipho agreed that students were disadvantaged, especially initially, "The first two were the most difficult assignments because I didn't know the style of Rhodes or what was expected of me. Our lecturers' expectations were not clear. For example, my assignment has no headings or sub-headings, it was just one continuous piece."

Yet despite this criticism, most of the students felt that the course, and the assessment criteria, had indeed developed their academic writing abilities. According to Zakhe:

> I think that sometimes when you are writing an assignment, more especially when you are starting a new course, you may not know the style of the tutors. You may not know what is expected. And then when I got the criteria, I realised that these were the issues that I should have looked at. For instance in the assignment [situational analysis] somebody is not supposed only to narrate a story, you have to be critical. I think the word critical, critically analyse, critical thinking, I think those are the words that this course has always emphasised. Even if I did not have grasped them [words like 'critically analyse'] to the point of being an expert, I think that in as far as my development ever since I registered for the course, they [the criteria] have done a lot.

Students entered the course with the common sense understanding of the structure of texts that most of us have, "a sense of the semantic unity of written texts, usually in terms of a staging such as Introduction, Body and Conclusion" (Rothery 1996:97). Both Veronica and Sipho related their

understanding of an introduction and conclusion, and how the assessment criteria extended their understanding of the textual structure of academic assignments, and their writing ability:

> If we write an essay I know we must have an introduction. But the introduction is not always the same, and even the topics are not the same. But you look at your introduction and the conclusion and you try and structure it according to those guidelines [in the assignment brief]. But they differ from essay to essay. You do well with the other one, but you don't do well with the other one because they are not the same topics, but the structure is the same because you must have an introduction and a conclusion. What I'm going to say is going to be indicated in my introduction, what I'm going to talk about and at the end I must sum up what I have said in the essay .... I didn't know it [the expected structure of an essay] for the first time. But I knew I must have an introduction and a conclusion because I've always written essays even in my matric, of course. I knew that I must have an introduction, but it was much clearer when I received my first essay with its comments. I knew that I must have an introduction, my introduction must link with what I'm going to say: what I've written in the introduction must link also appear in the essay .... I'll even write the essay first and then go back to write the introduction so as to write the things I've said in the body of my essay. (Veronica)

> Sometimes I think Rhodes has taught me something which I was not taught from the university that I was from - the writing of an assignment. At my university I used to write an assignment overnight. I used to look for the books that are relevant for this assignment and then put the books on the table. And then, when I write an assignment, I was sure that I finished now, and that assignment was not typed .... So when I got here [as a student for the B Ed course], somehow somewhere there was a difference of some sort. Here everything should come from your mind, not from the book .... It [an assignment] should have an introduction ... and when you read an introduction you should be able to know what is this whole assignment about. And then you go through the sub-headings and then you get to the conclusion, where you summarise the whole thing. (Sipho)

Besides general textual features of academic writing that Sipho and Veronica mention, did students gain a better understanding of particular features of a task (an understanding of the different genres, for instance) or the underlying constructs being assessed? In the quotation below, the approach to academic writing with which Sipho entered the course, "the style that [she] got", seemed to be one of over-referencing, perhaps plagiarism - "you even use the words". She struggled to describe how the writing required for the B Ed course was different, "somehow, somewhere there was a difference". She made no mention of the assessment criteria in explaining the difference, nor did she use the term referencing (one of the sub-criteria of the main criterion

"structure and style"), yet what she described is precisely the crucial academic skill of integrating information from other sources into one's own writing:

> Yes straight from the books. You take this from there, you take this from there, and you compile that ... You even use the words and you can write according to so and so, and you even write a whole paragraph and then you write it sometimes in your own words. So that's the style that I got. So when I got here, somehow, somewhere there was a difference of some sort. Here everything should come from your mind, not from the book. So I think it has helped me in that because we can explain ... in your own words.

Sipho conveys a sense that her own knowledge and 'voice', were valued in assignment writing. However, Veronica's perception of the university and, implicitly, of lecturers' expectations was very different:

> I didn't do well in this assignment [assignment 2] because, and I know that it was because, it was historical and it was something that ... it's history. I know nothing about our South African history. I'm not good at history, ... on the history of politics, even in the exams because I know I'm not good at politics ... I'm running away from writing about something that will make me to write negatively ... I know Rhodes won't like negativity. This is an English university so we must be careful to write anything ... I censor it [what I write]. (Veronica)

In addition to the criteria, students mentioned lecturers' comments as being useful in developing their writing ability. They distinguished between in-text, specific comments and whole class general feedback in the form of a written report, like the one after assignment 2, the academic essay on educational ideologies. In several instances, the students' views corroborate lecturers' impressions, as the comments below show.

Raymond felt that the lecturers' comments were valuable. His routine, to check his mark and then turn to the comments, was typical:

> The first thing I look at ... [are] the marks because the marks is going to show me my performance. Then I looked at the comments from the marker ... By looking at the grading, I see where I am, how I have performed. Then after that I look at the comments, these [the criteria on the assessment sheet]. That is the main thing because then I will

> come to appreciate my work and see if I've done well because it is my work. It is like when you are playing football: you cannot see how well you are playing, except the spectators. The marker is the spectators, he is going to judge whether you played well or you didn't play well. Then I will know what to do next time. Mostly the one that helps a lot is the comment from the marker.

Nora related how the comments on her first research report, the situational analysis, helped her to improve on her second research report assignment. She displays an implicit understanding that the two assignments are of the same genre, both "such a thing", with interviews being an important common component, as well as evidence of reflectivity in wanting to "look back at myself and ... that assignment and ... what was that".

> There were lots of comments on this one [the situational analysis], now these comments helped me to approach this one [the assignment on educational inequalities]. So I could now see from the comments from the first one that to handle such a thing you need to do this and this, these are the steps to follow to make this assignment more ... This is the part [the assessment sheet], ... the most part which helped me, gave me a chance to improve on this one. For example, I understood that from this assignment [the situational analysis] I was told that I didn't read much, the readings were limited. So now I tried to do that so that I could get enough information and get all those views and then make a critical analysis from the various views concerning inequality. So, it's another part of the comments which helped me. Another thing which helped me from this one [the situational analysis] was, I think, interviews. They are here as well. I didn't get as many problems in this one ... because I sticked on what you told me and it was still working well with the interviews. But I think I improved on "clarity of expression" for this one [the assignment on educational inequalities] as compared to this one [situational analysis].... I took it as my level ... Because whenever I want to look back at myself, I look back and say "Okay, let me go back to that assignment and look at what was that."

As Zelda had observed, several students found the whole class written report helpful and, even though it came as summative feedback, they used it formatively to guide their portfolio reflections on that assignment, and others:

> It [Harry's written whole class report after assignment 2] was very useful later. I always referred to it ... because of those terms that were explained in the second assignment (Veronica).

> No, the comments [on assignment 2] didn't help me. They were mere questions: by what,

> whom, when, how? So I didn't know what to do or how to answer those questions.... but when I received the comments from Harry, I was able to comment on the assignment, I could have written much better (Sipho).

4.3.3 Students' difficulties with the assessment processes

There were two instances when students did not understand certain criteria and lecturers' comments were not enlightening. In both cases they did not raise their difficulties with the lecturers. Only in the interview did Nora ask what was meant by 'route map': "The comment ... that I had a problem with, and it was the weakest mark, was the 'end route' [actually 'route map', one of the sub-criteria within the category of structure and style] because I didn't understand actually what was expected of me. What is the 'end route'? Even this year still it's my problem." Her term, 'end route', showed that her misinterpretation of the criterion resulted in her thinking of it as something at the end of the task, rather than as part of the introduction.

Zakhe initially did not understand an assessment criterion used for the research reports relating to the research methodology, which required students to reflect on the way they conducted the research. He arrived, independently, at an understanding of the criterion, and the need to incorporate it into his style of writing:

> But I think that some of the comments, for instance, the comments on the situational analysis. I think, if I remember it well there is something which says 'research process was not explicit'. You see, before I came to do that research I had not known. Because I was a person who likes writing I had thought that it would be easy for me to write, but when I came here, I had to change my style of writing a bit, not just to write like I used to, but to look at something using those emphasised words or phrases like 'critical thinking' or 'critical analysis'.

The criterion that Zakhe singled out, "methodology", is an aspect of the rhetorical process (Geisler 1994), which was included only in the assessment of the research report genre. In noting its significance and that he "had not known" it before, Zakhe demonstrated his growing academic

expertise, even if he felt that he had not yet grasped the notion of critical analysis "to the point of being an expert."

Students worked out which criteria lecturers prioritised, even though the assessment sheets did not weight criteria differently. Like Zakhe, Marcus identified critical analysis as a key skill:

> I think the question of critical thinking and also the question of being analytical - looking at a situation and being able to analyse it - are very important for a student. So I would advise that a person tries to bring out that sense of, must I say, originality because the readings will come and a person will make a reading, a reading, a reading, a reading unless one tries to analyse what is there, and also sort out what is to be used and what is not to be used there. You would think that reading won't have made any necessary academic impact unless a person tries to induct into the reading along those lines, analysing that one [the readings] and using yourself as being critical of that.

Nora noted a similar insight in the August 1998 module evaluation, that "Feedback on assignment 2 was very rewarding. I've learnt from my mistakes. I think I need to learn more about critical analysis and adopt academic writing instead of generalising."

As she mentioned earlier (section 4.3.2), Sipho found some comments unhelpful. She elaborated, and touched on marker subjectivity. Her own perception, criteria notwithstanding, that the marking was not standardised bears out Odette's view that the criteria failed to produce consistency among the markers :

> These comments, sometimes these comments were very general and I hated that: 'You have generalised', and I don't know how to rectify that. And sometimes in these assignments, I discovered that the lecturer marking my first assignment was the same lecturer marking my second assignment. Ooh! That is why I say it's because I've been marked by him. That same person who knows that I failed this one. He explains the same thing. That was my thinking. As a result I complained, 'Why am I marked by the same person in these assignments? It would be better if for this one the other lecturer marked me, different lecturers.' Because I thought that this one [another marker] is more generous. This one [the actual marker] has an attitude - he knows that I'm a failure. There's nothing that I'm doing about that. (Sipho)

Zakhe also complained about how an assignment (on learning theories) had been marked; in fact, he claimed that it had not been marked:

> You see, this question of my assignment not being marked, reflected badly about somebody who does not mark, who did not mark because it made some people to think, 'Why doesn't she mark the assignment?' And it gave a certain stigma on this person because as a tutor or as a teacher some students say, 'This one is nice. This one is cruel.' and so on. And I think that sometimes there are certain things like those where you have to label somebody because of a certain incident. That is unfortunate because these are the things that cause tensions and make tutors or students not very comfortable.

When Zakhe said that his assignment had not been marked, he meant that the lecturer had not given it a quantitative grade. The assignment in question had critical in-text written feedback and the lecturer concerned, Belinda, explained in the interview that when she returned assignments marked in that way she said to the students concerned:

> 'Look I haven't given you a mark because you actually missed the boat on this one. Go and do it again and then we will count that mark in.'... I thought that these students who had gone widely off the mark, that it wasn't fair to give them 20% and then say to them, 'Well, that is your mark.' I gave them the opportunity of going and rewriting. Some of them took that up and some of them didn't.

Her intention was that he should rework and resubmit the assignment as he had done poorly. However, as there was no mark, he felt (and said) that it had not been marked. On the one hand the lecturer felt that her assessment practice was generous as it allowed the student "the opportunity of going and rewriting", while the student, on the other hand, felt that the assignment had not been duly and properly marked. He followed the general student routine of first checking his mark and then the detailed comments. When there was no mark, he felt aggrieved and far from being motivated to rework the assignment, he wondered, "Why doesn't she mark the assignment?"

His articulation of tensions between lecturers and students, and his 'labelling' of lecturers, shows

that lecturers' assessment practice shapes students' learning experience powerfully. As Zelda realised,

> one of the things in the power relationship [between lecturers and students] is that it has the power to really demolish someone's sense of themselves and their sense of their ability to learn ... So it's a real powerful position that you're in [as a lecturer], really to demolish somebody. That has to be taken really seriously, to the extent of really monitoring yourself as a lecturer.

The impact of lecturers' assessment practice is also lasting: Zakhe expressed the view above in an interview in July 1999, and it contrasts with his module evaluation of August 1998, where he wrote, "here tutors encourage us to look at our studies from a positive perspective. For instance, we are not even shouted at, scorned etc, and we are taken away from fearing our studies - failure." His perception, before the incident he refers to in the quotation above, is that the lecturers' attitude encourages a "positive perspective" among students. In terms of Shalem and Slonimsky's (1998:5) moral dimension to authority and criteria, Zakhe considered the B Ed lecturers to be a "respectable group" with "legitimate grounds of authority" because, partly, of their attitude to students. When he deemed a lecturer to have an unfair assessment practice, she lost legitimacy and he felt justified in stigmatising her by labelling her.

Another student, Nora, had an assignment (also on learning theories) with comments and feedback written by Belinda, but no mark. Nora did not even mention it in the interview and I would perhaps not have noticed if it weren't for her profile (Appendix F 1), which showed that no assessment sheet had been used in the marking of the assignment. As in the case of her misunderstanding of 'route map', she did not raise it with the lecturer concerned or with any other lecturer.

4.3.4 The value of the portfolio in developing students' writing

This section, on the value of criterion-referenced assessment for students, ends by examining their experiences of the portfolio. I felt that placing it at the end is appropriate for two reasons: firstly, because the reflective capacity necessary to compile a portfolio can be compared to the reflexive competence regarded as one of three key competencies in the Norms and Standards document (COTEP1998), and secondly, the portfolio, as an assessment tool, specifically requires students to reflect on and assess their own growth (in the case of the B Ed) as writers and as reflective thinkers and/or practitioners. As can be gauged from the last 'and/or' category, the contents of the portfolio were not clearly spelled out: minimally, students had to include all their assignments, with reflections on their strengths and weaknesses, but the contents were not limited to students' coursework. To give students the space to design, in the words of one of the lecturers, a "wow portfolio" that linked the course to their professional lives, students were allowed/encouraged to include any extra material related to the course that provided evidence of their development.

Most of the student participants were completely new to portfolios as an assessment tool and felt that, while they had benefited from compiling a portfolio, the guidelines had not been clear. For Raymond the biggest problem had been identifying suitable additional materials to include in his portfolio:

> Actually the main problem was what to put aside, what to see as being of value for the portfolio. Like I did even when I was picking articles for the portfolio. When I read and I see this is not of value any more, but initially some time I got that article and I thought I must keep this for future revisiting. Then maybe, when after three weeks I revisit and I say, 'No this issue is childish'. So, the problem is also whether what you are keeping is relevant to what you are looking for.

Marcus appreciated the self-assessment required in the portfolio and understood its importance, but also struggled to identify appropriate materials:

> Portfolio - let me start with the ultimate goal of it. It is very, very good because it forms just part of your studies in that you can see yourself develop. It is easy to trace where you started and where you are now. You are getting into a position where you can see the seeds of your development: the stages of your view and how it fits, ... your view of things when you started as compared to how you view things now. Also that drives you now to think of the influences, perhaps theoretical influences, that you have come across that you have changed in your view. I had a problem with the portfolio last year in that when it was introduced, I did not grasp exactly, exactly what was expected of me. What was quite bad was that at the time I thought I knew what was expected of me. Until it was quite some time that I started to realise, you know, I was not doing the right thing because I thought initially that it was something to put whatever thing you come across that has some links to your studies. Also to make some comments, which comments would reflect that really in a way linking with your studies. But as I went along. Oh no, as the time went on, through also interaction with the lecturers down there. I could see that some of the material that I had put there was, in a way, not something that should have been put there like perhaps ... it is a pity that I cannot come up with an example now of things that I had to take out.

Nora elaborated on Marcus's problem of identifying suitable material and pinpointed a common problem. She explained that she had difficulty in integrating the materials so that they formed a coherent picture of growth:

> It was my first experience of portfolios, and I thought that in the portfolio I could gather all the things that I'd learnt about and just make a brief comment, which is what I did .... I didn't integrate some of the things I got from all the work I've done, that was the theory that I failed to do - there was no integration with what I did. It [each item in the portfolio] was just isolated .... This year, ... whenever I come across something ... I look at things and say, 'Okay, how can I fit this into my portfolio? Is it relevant? Is it worthwhile to take to it? Will it bring any meaning to the person looking at the portfolio?' So that is what portfolios have taught me ... Well, I think portfolios are developing a person. In fact, ... you assess yourself ... for me it's on the developing side of you and what you've learnt.

Nora developed a sense of the reflective narrative required to compile a portfolio - the cohesive links between the different texts and the explanatory contextualising of additional material - through conceptualising an audience. The most significant question she has learnt to ask herself in the process of compiling a portfolio is, "Will it bring any meaning to the person looking at it?"

Veronica picked up on the need for ongoing reflection; the importance of recording initial

thoughts so that they can be revisited and refined through subsequent insights:

> It [the portfolio] needs reading. You must read and comment [on assignments] immediately ... your portfolio must be your partner. It must be always next to you so as to make it effective. You must always refer to it as you go. Our mistake was to go late to the portfolio. We concentrated on the work [the assignments] ... So the reflection that I gave on the portfolio wasn't the one that I thought originally, because I reflected later. If you are to start to do it, it must be continuous ... as you go along.

As with the lecturers, no student participants engaged in discussing my construction of themes from the interviews, Carpsecken's (1996) stage of dialogical data generation. Probably finishing the last of their coursework and preparing for the examinations took priority.

4.3.5 Summary: How successful was criterion-referenced assessment in developing students' writing abilities?

Criterion-referenced assessment played a role in developing students' writing, as is clear from students' ability to relate various criteria to their writing. Two students, Veronica and Sipho, explained how they had developed a better understanding of the 'mechanical' aspect of structuring in academic writing, related to the course criterion, "structure and style". Nora, however, after almost 18 months, remained confused about a key aspect of structuring, the sub-criterion "route map".

Four students (Zakhe, Marcus, Nora and Sipho) recognised that "critical analysis", a cognitively complex aspect of academic writing, which related to mastery of domain content in the B Ed assessment criteria, was an important, and necessary, element in their writing. Veronica, on the other hand, felt that because Rhodes was "an English university" she should "censor" what she wrote so as not to write "negatively". I will tease out the implications of unequal power relations later (section 4.4.3), but what she displays is a common sense understanding of "critical analysis"

as negativity, rather than critique.

Both Raymond and Zakhe located criteria within a range of strategies in the course that were intended to empower students, and benefit their writing:

> So actually the whole year's projects have been worth it because it gave us food for thought. We had to do a lot of reading and find out real truths about issues which we did not know initially. Like for me especially since I was not really in South Africa when many things happened. Now I'm beginning to know why things happened and to understand them better ... (Raymond)

> I think that the workshops [of year 1] ... helped me because what was difficult to me first when I came here was the style of lecturing. It was different to what I had known before that. But those [workshops] helped my style of writing .... And then I think that last year's activities, those assignments, those reflections, those assessment forms, I think all those have to improve my writing. I can say that all what I've been writing before last year has improved because of all of last year's activities. (Zakhe)

Comparing the students' profiles with their impressions and comments as expressed above, shows that, for the most part, their marks increased and provide a basis for their general perception that their writing had improved. I examined the genres of the research report and reflective practice because students had done two assignments, which the profile listed chronologically. For the research report half of the students' marks went up and half went down: Nora, Marcus and Sipho show an increase in their marks, while Raymond, Veronica and Zakhe's marks decreased. In Raymond's case, however, his first mark was an outstanding 90%, which is very difficult to maintain or improve upon. For the reflective practice assignments, four of the six (Raymond, Sipho, Veronica and Zakhe) show an increase in marks, one person's (Nora's) stayed the same and only Marcus's marks decreased.

4.4 The extent to which AD met students' needs

In this section I consider firstly, the role of AD (section 4.4.1) and secondly, the marking of the portfolios and their value as an assessment tool (section 4.4.2). There are a number of reasons for including the portfolio marking in this section:

- the marking of assignments, in addition to my more familiar AD role of responding to and making formative, qualitative comments on draft assignments, was a shift in the role AD played in the course. Personally, it was a significant learning experience;
- the marking of the other assignments, included in the portfolio, has already been discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. This background allows a holistic evaluation of the portfolio marking and the discovery of system relations (Carspecken 1996);
- the portfolios were marked differently to the other assignments in that they were marked by only two markers (of which I was one), while the rest of the team moderated. Also, the assessment criteria were given to (not really negotiated with) students before the final portfolio hand-in date;
- besides the criteria, students were given a self-assessment checklist (Appendix G) to guide their final compilation of the portfolio.

4.4.1 The role of AD in the course

Three of the six student participants, (Nora, Raymond and Veronica), used AD support, and the other three, (Marcus, Sipho and Zakhe), did not. This section investigates why this was the case, reports on the AD experiences of Nora, Raymond and Veronica, and also on how lecturers felt AD had contributed to the course.

At the first B Ed session in 1998 when I introduced myself as an AD practitioner, I outlined my idea of AD support: discussing and clarifying an assignment brief and/or giving formative comments on a draft assignment. I was available at the Grahamstown campus and there is a Writing Centre at the East London campus which offers this service to students. However, none of the East London AD staff had a dedicated B Ed focus in the way that I had. I explained that students in East London could go to the Writing Centre or send me drafts between sessions through the free, daily internal mail between the Rhodes East London and Grahamstown campuses. Students in Grahamstown could hand in drafts at the Education Department. All students could, of course, arrange personal consultations with lecturers. However as all the lecturers bar one (the B Ed coordinator in East London) were based in Grahamstown, there were logistical problems for many students.

For two of the three students who did not use AD services, Marcus and Zakhe, distance and transport difficulties were the main reasons. The third, Sipho, lives in East London and the campus facilities were fairly near - why then did she not use AD, especially as she had failed her first two assignments? She noted in an evaluation form, "What I should do in future is to consult my lecturers as much as possible especially on the assignment given to us and it will help me a lot to take it to the Writing Centre first, for correction." Yet she said in the interview that she felt "too afraid of the lecturers" to approach them. Possibly she considered the AD services to be as unapproachable as the lecturers, or perhaps it was a consequence of the fact that no one from the East London Writing Centre was present at the introductory session of the course. Instead, as she explained below, she joined fellow-students in a study group:

> The first assignment, hey after the first assignment I was demotivated. As a result I wanted to leave the B Ed. I didn't want to continue with it. I was demotivated because I said I tried my best .... It was frustrating. So I went to a group after that. We were about

> four. So we discussed what was expected of us to do in that particular assignment, roughly. So we didn't get that in details. So that was why after the third or fourth assignment it was much better.

One of the two East London students who used AD regularly, Raymond, was in the same study group that Sipho joined. He made the effort to send drafts or came in person for consultations in Grahamstown, while Veronica, the other East London-based student who used AD, handed in draft assignments to the Writing Centre in East London and to the B Ed coordinator. It was no small effort for Raymond to maintain contact with AD in Grahamstown as it meant that he had to make an arrangement with a receptionist at the East London campus from whom he could collect his returned draft assignments. Veronica, who had studied in East London and was familiar with the Writing Centre, described her practice:

> I handed in a first draft. I managed to hand in a first draft but I couldn't manage to do it with a second draft, but they [the AD staff at the Writing Centre] helped me a lot. Especially when Zelda is not here, because I always went to her before I wrote my essay, especially those with many theories. I happened to know that she knows a lot about the learning theories. I usually give her my first draft but I didn't manage a second draft. So I give it straight to the lecturer.

Nora was a Grahamstown-based student who came for AD consultations to clarify assignments and for comments on drafts. She related how useful AD feedback on a draft assignment had been:

> The comments on the learning theories [assignment] that you [AD practitioner] made I think contributed to me getting to the second year because I sticked to the comments [on the draft assignment] to improve on what I did on [the final version of] the paper, because I could at least get satisfying marks on the final paper at the end of the year.

While most of the students spoke about AD in their interviews, not many lecturers commented on the part that AD had played in the course. Perhaps it was because much of the AD work took place outside of the contact sessions and lecturers were not aware of it. One of the few lecturers

who spoke about AD mentioned that it had been useful in clarifying the different genres required in the assignments and in developing the writing abilities of students. My own understanding of the role of AD in the course corresponded with the views of Harry, below:

> ... the more different types of writing they [students] do in their assignments, I think, the better equipped they are going to be in terms of the development of the skill of writing. And I think that is where you played such an incredibly important role, and that is in terms of the layers of competencies that were involved, and to develop those competencies. And it made me far more aware of those different layers.

4.4.2 Portfolio marking

I examined the portfolio marking in particular detail, using Brown and Hudson's (1998) systemic questions, because I felt that these could lead to an incisive explanation of the findings. Firstly, with regard to design decisions: the assignments and assessment criteria were decided by lecturers. Of all the assignments, only the portfolio had criteria that were made available to students before the due date. However, I do not feel that even the portfolio criteria were effectively negotiated with the students as they were not given an opportunity to use the criteria to assess the portfolios of peers, for example, which would have given them the necessary experience from which to negotiate the criteria. I wish to explore the meaning of the word 'negotiate' so as to underline why this was such an important shortcoming in the assessment process. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982) defines negotiate as having the primary meaning of "confer with a view to compromise or agreement" and another meaning, "clear, get over or through ... an obstacle". Now, if students did not fully grasp the meaning of the assessment criteria, i.e. if the course did not allow them to negotiate agreement on the terms used in the assessment sheets, were they in a position to negotiate the greater hurdle of understanding portfolios as an assessment tool within the paradigm shift in assessment?

Davis (1998) would argue not, on the grounds that the criteria were not transparent. He quotes Messick (cited in Davis 1998:134) who holds that "not only should students know what is being assessed, but the criteria and standards of what constitutes good performance should be clear to them in terms of both how the performance is to be scored and what steps might be taken or what directions moved in to improve performance".

As compiling portfolios was a first-time experience for all the students, effectively negotiating assessment criteria would have needed more than the invitation to discuss the criteria, which was what happened in class. As was clear in some of the students' comments quoted above, Zakhe's comment below related how new portfolios were to him, and raised further problems in negotiating criteria:

> First of all when I came here, I had not known anything about a portfolio. I've never been involved in anything related to it and I was saying that I like to write ... because making an introspection about my failure and success is what I usually do .... I'm not very much afraid of being told of my weaknesses because I used to tell people of my [study] group so they should not always say that it is good good, because I know that maybe they would not do it very easily to say now weak weak. I need to do it myself. This option [the portfolio] was giving me this type of thing to say 'I'm weak in this' or 'I don't like this', because in as much as I need to pass, but also this helped me particularly with whom I'm dealing with: that is the tutors, who have known my strengths and weaknesses.

He mentioned that students in his study group were reluctant to be critical of one another's work "to say weak weak" even if they realised, as he did, that critical commentary could be constructive and was necessary to develop their reflective capacity. Critical analysis and reflectivity, (as has been noted in earlier sections of this chapter), were important aims of the course and assessment criteria. If students were reluctant to critique one another's work in the relative safety of a small study group, it would be difficult to get them to do so in class and even more difficult for them to critique and suggest changes to criteria presented to them by lecturers, with whom the power

differential is greater. As this experience shows, even though democratising assessment may be the policy, it cannot simply be legislated into place. In reality, implementation is problematic and, before negotiating a common understanding of criteria (and of the paradigm shift in assessment), we need to take into account how the habits of authoritarian schooling continue to affect the space in the classroom for students and lecturers to speak honestly and critically, yet respectfully.

Secondly, an examination of the logistical issues of time and training for criterion-referenced assessment, shows that lecturers underestimated how time-consuming criterion-referenced assessment is. Throughout, there was insufficient time in meetings for lecturers to work out criteria before-hand, or to meaningfully discuss how they used the criteria in marking, or in class for students to read and rate each others' portfolios. As Wendy explained, "But think of it, in the B Ed programme, where has there been the time for the reflection on your assessment sheet when we've hardly found the time to reflect on a session and plan for the next one?" The portfolios, however, were not marked with the same time constraints as the other assignments. Portfolios were marked early in January, probably the least pressured time of the academic year, as the students handed in their portfolios on the day of their last examination in December. The markers were able to devote a total of about 56 hours to marking 53 portfolios.

Thirdly, there are interpretation issues:

- grading and setting standards, which in the case of the portfolios was done by two markers while the rest of the team of lecturers moderated.
- interpreting criteria was systematised in the process of the two markers assessing together in one venue and discussing their interpretation of the criteria. The first step in the process was an initial qualitative sorting of the portfolios on the basis of their contents and overall

professionalism. The second stage was a joint marking session to convert the qualitative 'sorting' into a quantitative grade/mark. Since the portfolio allows a great deal of scope for the person compiling it to express his/her individuality, the markers found that it was useful to have a general guiding metaphor to balance the way in which quantitative assessment necessarily standardises and norm-ranks. The report which they wrote and gave to the students describes the metaphor and its purpose:

> Our metaphor was that of a tapestry. A portfolio had to be more than a file of the year's course work .... These constituted the materials for the tapestry - the yarn as it were - but the real skill lay in weaving these threads together to form a picture of growth and development over time .... A further dimension to the usefulness of this metaphor is that a tapestry can be framed. This conveys the importance of the compiler/weaver standing back from the completed portfolio/picture and viewing the finished product.

- reporting assessment results was done individually for each student via the assessment sheet and also through a whole-class report which went to students and to all the lecturers concerned, both foundation-year lecturers and electives-lecturers, all of whom constituted 'interested audiences'.

The fourth and fifth issues were reliability and validity. Davis (1998:124) notes that "it is very difficult if not impossible to achieve assessment results which are both reliable and valid at one and the same time". Traditionally reliability has to do with the consistency of assessment results, across students and markers, and validity has been defined as "the extent to which a test [or task] measures what it was designed to measure" (Stobart and Gipps 1997:40).

On the issue of validity, Stobart and Gipps (1997:42) suggest that rather than breaking it down into four types, predictive, concurrent, construct and content, validity be considered as a unitary concept, and that it includes the **use** to which the assessment results are put. Together with the

need to relate validity in assessment to its social uses, Davis raises a cognitive-philosophical consideration. He questions whether it is possible validly to assess rich knowledge (as distinct from thin procedural learning) since "knowledge and understanding simply cannot be equated with finite sets of performances" (Davis 1998:136). While it is necessary for teachers and markers to bear this caution in mind, it cannot be used to argue against attempts to assess rich knowledge and understanding, or "integrated competencies", (COTEP 1998).

The portfolio makes the strongest case for the validity of assessment in the B Ed: it included all the coursework, exemplifying students' skills across a range of genres and, more generally, their professional abilities, as well as giving students a means of assessing their own development during the year. The biggest problem was that these outcomes were not clear and unambiguous for all the students. Arguably, since understanding the language in which criteria are framed is integral to transparency, ESL students were particularly disadvantaged.

On the issue of reliability, this chapter has detailed the flaws in the marking processes during the B Ed foundation year: the difficulty of standardising markers' interpretation of assessment criteria and the need to institutionalise moderation for all assignments in some form or other, despite the time constraints. There are two, inter-related factors that complicate standardising lecturers' interpretations of the assessment criteria: firstly, the difficulty of articulating and matching the genre and construct(s) within each task, and secondly, the further complication of framing criteria to measure adequately the complex competencies and knowledge embedded in the tasks.

In addition to these design factors that militate against absolutely reliable assessment procedures, there are larger societal factors such as the impossibility of ensuring equality of access to

resources (libraries and computers, for instance) for all students. Again, it is the same ESL students, especially those based in rural areas, who are disadvantaged in this regard. I have already mentioned that two student participants could not use the AD services provided because they lived too far from either campus. The comment below, from a student who lives in Keiskammahoek, explains more vividly the additional problems of rural isolation:

> Ja, because you won't get a single one [computer] here.... You go to the businesses down here and they have one computer. It is a question of literacy ... because you have one [a computer, it doesn't mean] that you will be able to produce anything .... In King [Williams Town, a neighbouring town] the person I know who does the service [has a computer that] is not programmed for study purposes ... I have given her some work to do and I could see many, many errors and mistakes ... spelling mistakes and all that, whereas I had spelt them correctly. (Marcus)

4.4.3 Summary: The extent to which my interpretation of AD met the needs of the B Ed students and made higher education more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For my own reflections on the role of AD I used Ivanic's (1997) notion that developing students' academic literacy meant more than teaching them the conventions, but should also entail questioning academic conventions and expectations. I realised that my interpretation of AD was to focus on helping students meet academic conventions in their writing, rather than encouraging them to develop their writing in ways that would challenge the accepted notions of academic discourse.

My own assessment is that AD in the B Ed did not come close to achieving Carter's (1996) balance in genre-based teaching between the reactionary teaching of the conventions and the revolutionary challenge to, or replacement of, them. Most of the assignments were a genre-mix

which required students to incorporate their own local knowledge into their assignments. This type of assignment can be empowering when the experiences of people usually marginalised in terms of academic discourse (like the ESL speakers who, ironically, made up the bulk of the students on the B Ed) can be conveyed with an authorial 'voice'. In assessing the role of AD on the course, one needs to look precisely at whether my involvement in responding to students' writing helped students develop the authorial authority to experience the mixed genres as empowering. At the same time, one needs to acknowledge that acquiring authorial authority is a process which is **potentially** revolutionary for students. While students are in the process of acquiring authority, their oral interactions in the classroom may lag behind their confidence and growth in the written mode, or vice versa.

As noted in an earlier section of this chapter, Luke (1996:320) disagrees that "mastery of the 'genres of power'" produces social and cognitive gains for students, or that possible cognitive benefits are necessarily translated into a social setting. If one regards the classroom as an aspect of the social sphere, then assessment seems an intractable instance of unequal power relations between students and lecturers. Despite the alternative forms of assessment in the B Ed course, students like Zakhe and Sipho did not feel empowered to question what they considered an unfair marking practice. Veronica chose not to "write negatively" in her assignments because she perceived constraints in studying at "an English university" like Rhodes. She did not relate her perception of institutional constraints, her reading of Rhodes University as "English", i.e. conservative (not liberal), to the B Ed course. Accordingly, she did not see any contradiction between her characterisation of Rhodes and the intentions of the lecturers, as formulated in the course assessment criteria, for students to use critical analysis in their writing. Three students (Sipho, Veronica and Zakhe) raised the issues when questioned in an interview, but in the public,

social sphere of the classroom they were silent about their concerns. Nora was equally silent in class and in the interview about the marking of one of her assignments (on learning theories), and she only raised her uncertainty with regard to the meaning of a particular criterion (route map), in the interview.

Hinchey (1998:31) refers to education at school, but the way in which she relates issues of silence and power within the classroom to a wider institutional context applies equally to tertiary education. The questions she raises merit asking by lecturers and AD practitioners:

> Teachers would do well to ask themselves whether this outcome [that schools are places where students are seen and not heard] matches their own intentions in working with students, and which of their practices effectively silence students. They would also do well to ponder why teachers themselves are often powerless and voiceless in the face of administrators as students are powerless and voiceless in the face of teachers.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the implications of this research on the assessment practices within the foundation year of the B Ed for three vital areas: curriculum design, teaching and learning in postgraduate courses generally and, thirdly, the role of AD within such courses. Often the implications raise questions rather than provide answers, especially in terms of how qualifications in higher education will be articulated within the NQF. The chapter ends by extrapolating the main conclusions of the research.

5.2 Implications for curriculum design

In terms of curriculum design, this study demonstrates the importance of clearly articulated course outcomes, especially for a course which sought to model OBE. Such outcomes can form the basis of aligning curriculum design, i.e. they provide a means for checking that the course content, tasks and assessment criteria all work together to achieve the intended outcomes. A holistic evaluation of this sort could also develop course designers' and lecturers' understanding of the unintended outcomes which invariably result, and which of these impede or benefit learning and teaching. As Wals and Van der Leij (1997:16) argue, "curriculum change results from practitioners' struggles to understand their own values, theories and intentions, and how these are played out in their own particular setting".

Ramphele (1999:1) summarised the way that the NQF challenges tertiary institutions as a series

of questions: "What makes a degree worth having? What are the competencies, skills and values that graduates will require to succeed in a rapidly changing environment?" While I feel that the NQF challenge could be useful to universities in better understanding the nature of the learning that they promote, Ramphele's formulation points to a grey area within educational policy: that of content. Competencies are tied to particular content and settings - they are not decontextualised, transferable "skills". For universities it may not be a problem for lecturers to design courses, as tertiary institutions have a tradition of academic autonomy. However, at the primary and secondary levels of education, most South African teachers are used to pre-designed syllabi, prescribed textbooks and, for many years, have been denied using their initiative and creativity in terms of the **content** that they teach. Thus, the silence of OBE and the NQF on content and the delay in getting Standards Generating Bodies fully functioning is particularly problematic for schools and teachers. For universities, it means that the general progression within courses from first year to second to third, and the progression from a first degree to honours, masters and doctoral level studies has to be worked out from the specific detail and content of the courses, without any general guiding policy principles.

Since the B Ed is a professional qualification, its course outcomes need to relate to the competencies spelt out in the Norms and Standards documents (COTEP1998 and 1999). All qualifications need to be registered on the NQF by June 2000, and if this is to be more than a technical exercise, then course designers need to grapple with several tricky issues, such as the nature of the balance between academic requirements and professional considerations in designing qualifications, especially professional qualifications.

Another grey area is the link between initial teacher education, like the HDE, and subsequent

professional education, like the B Ed. Is the common sense understanding that the initial qualification (HDE) should have a practical focus, the Honours level qualification (B Ed) a greater theoretical focus and the Masters degree at least a 50% research focus, sufficient?

The NQF is also not clear on the differences between diplomas and degrees and certificates in terms of academic/theoretical complexity or notional hours. Can one formulate the same COTEP competencies as generic outcomes for qualifications at all Further Education and Training levels of the NQF? Is it sufficient, or necessary, to differentiate between levels through range statements? If the HDE is at level 6 on the NQF while the B Ed and M Ed are both at level 7, where do postgraduate diplomas and certificates go?

All of these questions have profound consequences for assessment within courses, but perhaps the most contentious assessment issue raised by the NQF is its recommendation that prior learning be recognised. What this means in reality is **assessment** of prior learning, since it is not feasible that learning can be recognised for the purposes of accreditation without its being assessed in some way. Designing tasks to assess rich and complex prior learning when prospective students have different prior learning experiences, will doubtless be more difficult than designing such tasks where the material learnt is common to all the learners and known to the designer.

5.3 Implications for teaching and learning

One of the most important insights with regard to teaching is the need for lecturers to provide the assessment criteria to students, together with the actual task. It could give lecturers greater clarity about the genre of the task as well as the underlying abilities and skills that the task requires.

Firstly, they could ensure that the course activities and materials prepare students adequately for the task at hand. Secondly, clarity about the criteria could make lecturers' assignment briefing more consistent, an important consideration for a course that is run in two centres with students who have limited contact with each other and lecturers.

In terms of learning, providing criteria up-front would benefit the students in that they could use the criteria to self-assess their performance. Adult learners, in particular, need to be involved in assessing their own growth (Ivanic 1997) to become independent learners. What applies to all learners (and learning), is that an awareness of and ability to articulate what one has learnt, metacognition, is an important part of learning itself. In addition to giving students a means to evaluate their own achievement on a particular task, self-assessment develops metacognitive skills and language. It is important that a course provides students, especially ESL students, with numerous opportunities to use and develop reflective, metacognitive language as scaffolding for tasks which entail mixed genres. The data from the ESL student participants in this study reveal how difficult they found it to examine their professional experience critically, and to frame their own knowledge in terms of theoretical understandings. Stobart and Gipps (1997:17) note that metacognitive tasks, or assignments that incorporate reflective and evaluative elements, encourage deep as opposed to shallow learning. If one holds a Vygotskian view, that learning takes place in activity, then assignment tasks are the primary means by which students learn, and the nature of the tasks will determine whether students engage in deep or shallow learning, and acquire rich or shallow knowledge.

However, simply providing assessment criteria is no guarantee that lecturers' assessment practice will be transparent or that students will participate democratically in the assessment processes.

Encouraging the participation of students in formerly forbidden curriculum areas like assessment and opening up these "secret gardens" (Allen 1998:241) to intellectual scrutiny is part of the vision informing the NQF (Isaacs 1997) but, as this study has shown, it cannot be legislated, or wished, into place.

Some of the ways that assessment of the portfolio could be improved in the B Ed course include the following:

- clearer guidelines for compiling the portfolio, and better linking of the journal to the portfolio, spelling out how the journal can provide evidence of reflectivity.
- ways of negotiating portfolio criteria and empowering students as assessors. I would suggest introducing an initial self-assessment profile where students evaluate themselves in terms of the course outcomes (their knowledge, skills and values), coupled with a written statement of where they feel themselves to be at, as well as their motivation for doing the course (based on guidelines in the Programme Handbook: Durham University 1998). At mid-year students could peer review each other's portfolios in small groups using assessment criteria designed by the lecturers. Finally, students would complete a concluding profile where they would again evaluate themselves in terms of the course outcomes, and compare the two profiles in a concluding written statement. This process could address several gaps in the B Ed foundation year of 1998 - it would make self-assessment a more rigorous component of assessment, it would allow students to share systematically the challenges of compiling portfolios as work in progress. The peer review would involve students in assessing the work of others and provide classroom practice in speaking openly and critically with each other and, in the process of engaging with the criteria to assess the work of peers, students might gain the necessary experience

from which to negotiate criteria with lecturers.

Generally, I am arguing for deliberate strategies to deal with the damaging effects of years of teacher-tell behaviourist pedagogy. It has both disempowered students in the classroom and produced teachers who, while they may be aware of the shortcomings of their current practices, have difficulty in adopting more democratic, interactive classroom styles. For the students on the B Ed, since they are teachers, it is particularly important that the course should provide a lived experience of classroom practice that is democratic and accessible. Assessment may not be the easiest area of the curriculum to democratise, but there can be no fundamental change in pedagogy unless the forms of assessment promote rich and complex learning and the process of assessment allows students a real 'voice'.

5.4 Implications for the role of AD

This study shows that if AD is to be effective, it needs organic involvement in a course. In the case of a semi-distance course, because student problems need to be identified and responded to quickly, an AD practitioner needs to have a sense of curriculum alignment. This is facilitated by being involved in assessment. Pedagogically there is the possibility of the AD practitioner, who is usually a skilled respondent to students' writing, playing a role in formative or summative assessment. Rothery (1996:87-88) speaks of an "educational linguist", but she could equally well be describing the role of an AD practitioner:

> to be sensitive to and knowledgeable about where the teacher is coming from in terms of an orientation to language and learning. This promises the possibility of agreement between the educational linguist and the teacher on the issue of teaching/learning goals, enabling them to negotiate the knowledge and practice required for achieving these goals.

At present, competing demands on the limited social welfare budget have resulted in educational institutions having to weigh the cost effectiveness and efficiency of courses, which is readily done, against far more difficult-to-measure course outcomes such as the growth of rich learning in students or their reflexive competence. AD is at the interface of students and lecturers, ideally placed to explore whether the curriculum combines course content, delivery and assessment to achieve its outcomes. Illuminative evaluation (Shay 1998a) has the potential to provide evidence whether the complex outcomes of postgraduate studies have been achieved, giving a sound pedagogical reason for an evaluation role for AD.

Current research (Moore et al. 1998, Rothery 1996) argues for AD to have a strong language development focus, which links with the political imperatives of equity, access and redress (NCHE Report 1996) in higher education, because English is the language of higher education. Unfortunately, the coincidence of the pedagogical and political do not necessarily make a strong case for AD. Cynical considerations may well carry more weight; for instance whether the investment of time and resources of an AD practitioner becoming familiar with the content and concerns of one course is offset by having another potential marker to share the often onerous process of marking. In addition, there is the possibility to improve student throughput because of the richer, added support to students' writing. As the full state subsidy per student depends on successful throughput, this is an important institutional factor.

5.5 Conclusion

On the question of criteria as a means of standardising lecturers' marking, my research shows that criteria help individual markers to be more consistent within their own practice, but that it remains

difficult to establish consistency across a range of markers for the same assignment. This latter problem could be addressed in two ways: firstly, if lecturers jointly design criteria for assignments or an individual lecturer explains his/her criteria for an assignment; secondly, if lecturers compare their interpretation of the criteria through systematic moderation of their marking or indeed, double marking. Both of these require dedicated time, always in short supply.

The problem of time makes it even more difficult to establish the same shared understanding of criteria between lecturers and students since students bring far greater numbers and a greater diversity of language and academic backgrounds to the process. As this research has shown, these factors, coupled with unequal power relations, mean that some students are silent in the classroom and do not raise their problems with understanding criteria. Nor do they question the manner in which lecturers have used the criteria in marking. It is precisely in this area that this study has shown that AD can inform lecturers' practice and can play a role in helping to transform unequal classroom relations.

For students, academic expertise, and the acquisition of authorial 'voice', is a process. As mentioned earlier, Geisler's (1994) study found that it takes most students their entire under-graduate period to develop academic expertise, and that many graduate without having developed academic expertise. Student participants in this research felt that the criteria used in the assessment process had played a part in developing their writing in terms of both mechanical aspects, like structuring and referencing, and more cognitively complex aspects like critical analysis. Reflective portfolios can be a useful part of the process of developing academic expertise in a post-graduate course (or developing as a reflective practitioner, for the B Ed students) as they give students a means to articulate their development and identify areas where they need to grow.

they need to grow.

The real measure of whether the alternative forms of assessment in the course have achieved their outcomes is the extent to which students' own assessment practices in their classrooms have shifted from a steady diet of traditional testing of factual information. This study does not even begin to explore this dimension of the B Ed students, as teachers. While it may have illuminated interesting and, I hope, important aspects of the B Ed course, and produced "full and frank" discussion about assessment, this study has not come significantly closer to establishing a code of practice as regards assessment that "could be passed on to a teacher" (Hoeg 1994:79). My findings have limited generalisability, but show that a code of assessment practice for teachers cannot be legislated. It will result from teachers and students sharing, reflecting on and researching their own experiences. Hoeg's quest remains, as yet, elusive.

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Appendix A

7 August 1998

Dear BEd student

I invite you to participate in my research on the writing aspect of the BEd course. I am particularly interested in the different kinds of writing required: journals, assignments and the portfolio. My research will entail photocopying all the writing that you do for the course, and possibly interviewing you. I promise to acknowledge the help of those who participate, but I will respect the confidentiality of your written work.

I have identified the field but not the exact research questions. If you have questions, comments or ideas about the written work that could inform my research questions please write them down in the space below.

I don't think that participating in the research will take up very much of your time, instead I hope that the research focus will be of benefit to those who participate.

Many thanks
Monica Hendricks

Suggestions for Research Questions (Feel free to fill in your ideas whether you agree to participate in the research or not.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby volunteer to participate in the research on the written work in the BEd course. I agree that my writing can be photocopied and used in analysis, but I want to remain anonymous in any article or document that may arise from the research.

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Appendix B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR B Ed STUDENTS

ASSIGNMENTS - ATTITUDES

1. What is the first thing that you do when you get back an assignment?

2. Which assignment(s) did you find the most difficult and the easiest? Why?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - VALUE

3. As there were no assessment criteria accompanying each assignment, did you go back to the criteria for the first or any other assignment when doing subsequent assignments?

4. Did you use the criteria when reflecting on your assignments after they were marked, i.e. for portfolio entries? Explain how/Why not. Refer to particular assignments.

5. Did you use the criteria to assess your development as a writer? Why/why not?

6. Be very honest. How do you respond to lecturers' comments on your written work? Look for examples from your portfolio. Which comments were useful and which were not?

7. What did you learn from compiling a portfolio? What were the problems? What advice would you give someone compiling a portfolio for the first time?

8. What do you think of the assignments and assessment criteria/assessment sheets for the B Ed course?

Appendix C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR B Ed LECTURERS

1. Do you feel that one form/mode of assessment dominated the B Ed foundation year? Why, or why not?

2. Did you change the form of assessment for your assignment in the B Ed? Why, or why not? How?

3. Sambell and McDowell (1998:392) regard the different messages that students get from lecturers about assignments and assessment as part of the "hidden curriculum".

- How useful were the criteria in giving students a consistent message about assignment requirements, or the skills that the assignments were meant to develop?
- What do you see as the main purpose of the comments that you make on assignments?
- Do you think that criterion-referenced assessment helped to standardise marking?
- Were there consistent differences among the markers or did the differences emerge for certain assignments only?

4. Do you mark coursework assignments differently to exam answers? How and why?

Appendix D

Your Writing Experience Prior to the B Ed. **Your name:**_____

I need to gauge the kind of writing you have done prior to your studies this year, 1998. I am especially interested in your writing in English, but if you write in any other language please indicate this at the appropriate places.

1. In your personal life do you keep a diary, write poetry, short stories, letters, news or magazine articles or do any other form of creative writing? Please circle those which apply to you (if any) and give some detail, for example how many times per month you do this and for how many years you have done so.

2. In your studies before the B Ed did you write academic essays, research reports, a reflective journal, a review of an academic book or article, multiple choice tests or engage in any other form of writing? Please circle those which apply to you and give some detail, for example what course you did and how many pieces of writing you did?

3. In your professional life do you write reports about your work, funding or project proposals, your own teaching material, progress reports for your learners, a professional journal, or engage in any other form of writing? Please circle those which apply to you and give some detail about your context, how often you do this and for how many years you have done so.

Feel free to add an extra page if you need to. Thank you for taking the time to fill in the questionnaire, Monica Hendricks.

Appendix E Number 1: Assessment criteria for the research report

BEd ASSESSMENT FORM : ASSIGNMENT ONE

In an effort to ensure consistency amongst the members of the marking team, the following criteria have been negotiated between tutors as the most appropriate for the assessment of the first assignment.

The overall mark for the assignment will be according to the profile provided by the individual scores awarded for each criterion category. This means that if you score an average of 5 for each category, your mark will be 75% + (a First Class pass - 1); if you average 4, your mark will be between 70-74% (an Upper Second pass - 2A); if you average 3, your mark will be between 50-59% (a Third Class pass - 3); if you average 1, your mark will be below 50% (Fail - F).

Explanation of 1 - 5 point scale used for the various criteria

1	-	no evidence or low level of competency
2	-	some evidence of competency
3	-	adequate level of competency
4	-	competent
5	-	exceptional level of competency

A. THE CONTENT OF THE ASSIGNMENT	1	2	3	4	5
Historical overview					
Socio/political					
Biophysical					
Interelatedness of the various components					
Description					
Depth of analysis					
Critical reflection					
Richness of perspectives					

COMMENT:

B. LINKING THE STORY TO BROADER THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	1	2	3	4	5
Read and understood readings					
Makes links between theory and story					

COMMENT:

C. STRUCTURE AND STYLE	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction and route map					
Logical development of the story					
Conclusion					
Referencing					
Clarity of expression					
Syntax (spelling; punctuation, etc.)					
Presentation (layout, refinement, proof reading, appendices)					

COMMENT:

D. METHODOLOGY	1	2	3	4	5
Literature analysis					
Observation					
Document analysis					
Interviews					
Reflection of methodology					

COMMENT:

GENERAL COMMENT

GRADE:	1 75 + %	2A 70-74%	2B 60-69%	3 50-59%	F1 45-49%	F2 40-44%	F3 39% (or less)

Tutor's signature: _____ 95 Date: _____

Appendix E Number 2: Assessment criteria for the academic essay

BED ASSESSMENT FORM : ASSIGNMENT TWO

In an effort to ensure consistency amongst the members of the marking team, the following criteria have been negotiated between tutors as the most appropriate for the assessment of the first assignment.

The overall mark for the assignment will be according to the profile provided by the individual scores awarded for each criterion category. This means that if you score an average of 5 for each category, your mark will be 75% + (a First Class pass - 1); if you average 4, your mark will be between 70-74% (an Upper Second pass - 2A); if you average 3, your mark will be between 50-59% (a Third Class pass - 3); if you average 1, your mark will be below 50% (Fail - F).

Explanation of 1 - 5 point scale used for the various criteria

1	-	no evidence or low level of competency
2	-	some evidence of competency
3	-	adequate level of competency
4	-	competent
5	-	exceptional level of competency

NAME

A. THE CONTENT OF THE ASSIGNMENT	1	2	3	4	5
Identification, discussion and analysis of ideology in education					
Impact on the educational system generally					
Impact on your own institution					
Evidence of having read, understood and critically engaged with academic papers					

COMMENT:

B. STRUCTURE AND STYLE	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction and route map					
Logical development of the story					
Conclusion					
Referencing					
Clarity of expression					
Syntax (spelling; punctuation, etc.)					
Presentation (layout, refinement, proof reading, appendices)					

COMMENT:

C. CRITICAL INSIGHT	1	2	3	4	5
Links between theory and institution					
Interrelatedness of the various components					
Critical reflection on practice in your institution					

COMMENT:

GENERAL COMMENT

GRADE:	1 75 + %	2A 70-74%	2B 60-69%	3 50-59%	F1 45-49%	F2 40-44%	F3 39% (or less)

Tutor's signature: Date:

Appendix E Number 2: Assessment criteria for the reflective practice assignment

B Ed ASSESSMENT FORM: COOPERATIVE LEARNING

In an effort to ensure consistency amongst the members of the marking team, the following criteria have been negotiated between tutors as the most appropriate for the assessment of the first assignment.

The overall mark for the assignment will be according to the profile provided by the individual scores awarded for each criterion category. This means that if you score an average of 5 for each category, your mark will be 75% + (a First Class pass - 1); if you average 4, your mark will be between 70-74% (an Upper Second pass- 2A); if you average3, your mark will be between 50-59% (a Third Class pass - 3); if you average 1, your mark will be below 50% (Fail - F).

Explanation of 1 - 5 point scale used for the various criteria		
1	-	no evidence or low level of competency
2	-	some evidence of competency
3	-	adequate level of competency
4	-	competent
5	-	exceptional level of competency

NAME:	G'Town	E L

A. THE CONTENT OF THE ASSIGNMENT	1	2	3	4	5
PHASE ONE:					
• Critical reflection					
• Evaluation					
PHASE TWO:					
• Identification/ appropriate application of theoretical model					
• Careful planning					
• Management and organisation					

COMMENT:

B: OVERALL EVALUATION	1	2	3	4	5
• Reflection of Weaknesses					
• Reflection of strength					
• How activity could be improved					

COMMENT:

C: STUCTURE AND STYLE	1	2	3	4	5
• Introduction and route map					
• Logical development of the story					
• Conclusion					
• Referencing					
• Clarity of expression					
• Syntax (spelling, punctuation, etc.)					
• Presentation (layout/ refinement/ proof reading/appendices)					

COMMENT:

Taken cognisance of ideas/suggestions of peers given in feedback session: YES / NO
COMMENT:

GENERAL COMMENT:

GRADE	1 75 + %	2A 70 - 74%	2B 60 - 69%	3 50 - 59%	F1 45 - 49%	F2 40 - 44%	F3 39% (or less)

Tutor's signature: ..... Date: .....

Appendix F Number 1

WRITING PROFILE OF NORA

GENRE	AVERAGE MARKS FOR CRITERIA	
	Domain Content	Rhetorical Process
Research Report • Situational Analysis *(Monica)*	content: 2 theory & practice: 2 ½	structure & style: 3 methodology: 3 (50%)
• Educational Inequality *(Rose)*	content: 3 ½ critical insight: 1 ½	structure and style: 3 ½ conduct of research: 2½ (67%)
Academic Essay • Ideologies Applied ... *(Odette)*	content: 3 critical insight: 3	structure & style: 2½ (54%)
Reflective Practice • Learning theories ... *(Belinda)*	units of work: *no assessment* critical reflection: *sheet used, and no mark, but 40% recorded.*	
• Cooperative learning activity ... *(Monica)*	content: 1 overall evaluation: 1	structure & style: 2½ (40%)

Appendix F Number 2

WRITING PROFILE OF MARCUS

GENRE	AVERAGE MARKS FOR CRITERIA	
	Domain Content	Rhetorical Process
Research Report • Situational Analysis *(Odette)*	content:2 ½ theory & practice:1	structure & style: 3 ½ methodology: 3 ½ (59%)
• Educational Inequality *(Monica)*	content: 2 ½ critical insight: 2 ½	structure and style: 3 ½ conduct of research:3 ½ (67%)
Academic Essay • Ideologies Applied ... *(Zelda)*	content: 3 critical insight: 1½	structure & style: 2 ½ (59%)
Reflective Practice • Learning theories ... *(Zelda)*	units of work:3 critical reflection: 4	structure and style:3 (69%)
• Cooperative learning activity ... *(Belinda)*	content: 2 overall evaluation: 2	structure & style: 2 (52%)

Appendix F Number 3

WRITING PROFILE OF RAYMOND

GENRE	AVERAGE MARKS FOR CRITERIA	
	Domain Content	Rhetorical Process
Research Report • Situational Analysis *(Rose)*	content: 5 theory & practice: 5	structure & style: 5 methodology: 4 (90%)
• Educational Inequality *(Monica)*	content: 4 critical insight: 3	structure and style: 4 conduct of research: 3 ½ (73%)
Academic Essay • Ideologies Applied... *(Odette)*	content: 4 critical insight: 4	structure & style: 4 (68%)
Reflective Practice • Learning theories ... *(Zelda)*	units of work: 3 critical reflection: 2 ½	(60%)
• Cooperative learning activity ... *(Wendy)*	content: 3 ½ overall evaluation: 3 ½	structure & style: 4 (64%)

Appendix F Number 4

WRITING PROFILE OF SIPHO

GENRE	AVERAGE MARKS FOR CRITERIA	
	Domain Content	Rhetorical Process
Research Report • Situational Analysis *(Belinda)*	content: *no assessment sheet* theory & practice:	structure & style: methodology: (44%)
• Educational Inequality *(Odette)*	content: 2 ½ critical insight: 2	structure and style: 4 conduct of research: 2½ (48%)
Academic Essay • Ideologies Applied ... *(Belinda)*	content: critical insight:	structure & style: (40%)
Reflective Practice • Learning theories ... *(Zelda)*	units of work: 2 ½ critical reflection: 2	(55%)
• Cooperative learning activity ... *(	content: overall evaluation:	structure & style: (60%)

Appendix F Number 5

WRITING PROFILE OF VERONICA

GENRE	AVERAGE MARKS FOR CRITERIA	
	Domain Content	Rhetorical Process
Research Report • Situational Analysis *(Monica)*	content: 4 theory & practice: 3	structure & style: 4 methodology: 3 (70%)
• Educational Inequality *(Odette)*	content: 2 ½ critical insight: 3	structure and style: 4 conduct of research: 3 (58%)
Academic Essay • Ideologies Applied ... *(Wendy)*	content: 3 critical insight: 2	structure & style: 3 (59%)
Reflective Practice • Learning theories ... *(Zelda)*	units of work: 4 critical reflection: 3	structure and style: 4 (69%)
• Cooperative learning activity ... *(Odette)*	content: 4 overall evaluation: 4	structure & style: 4 (75%)

Appendix F Number 6

WRITING PROFILE OF ZAKHE

GENRE	AVERAGE MARKS FOR CRITERIA	
	Domain Content	Rhetorical Process
Research Report • Situational Analysis *(Rose)*	content: 3 ½ theory & practice: 2	structure & style: 3 methodology: 1 ½ (62%)
• Educational Inequality *(Rose)*	content: 1 critical insight: 1 ½	structure and style: 3 conduct of research: 1 (50%)
Academic Essay • Ideologies Applied ... *(Wendy)*	content: 3½ critical insight: 2½	structure & style: 3 (62%)
Reflective Practice • Learning theories ... *(Belinda)*	units of work: *no assessment*	
• Cooperative learning activity ... *(Odette)*	critical reflection: *sheet used, and no mark* content: 3 overall evaluation: 4	structure & style: 3½ (70%)

Appendix G

1998
B Ed Portfolio
Self Assessment Sheet

To What Extent does my portfolio provide evidence of:	Where I started from				Where I am now			
1. think critically, analytically, reflectively and creatively	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. communicate in a variety of forms their understanding	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. relate and integrate their learning with their personal experiences	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. work both as individuals and as a member of a team of professionals	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. evaluate existing and emerging theories underpinning education both globally and within a South African context	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
6. develop an understanding of the dynamics and implications of change in a period of transition both nationally and globally, as well as demonstrate an understanding of the implications of change	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
7. challenge the assumptions underpinning the why, what and how of teaching, learning and assessment through a process of accessing, analysing, evaluating and synthesising information from a variety of sources	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
8. participate in debates on education in general	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
9. practise a variety of teaching skills, strategies and techniques	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
10. identify constraints to change and search for possibilities for change in an education context	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

KEY TO GRADINGS USED:

1. No evidence of competency
2. Developing competency
3. Competent
4. Extremely competent