

**IMPLEMENTING THE ANNUAL NATIONAL
ASSESSMENT AT AN ORDINARY PUBLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE EASTERN CAPE: A
CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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September 2016

ABSTRACT

This empirical study describes in rich detail five teachers' perceptions of the Annual National Assessment [ANA] at one level of the school system (Grade Three of the Foundation Phase [FP]) at an ordinary public primary school in an urban area of the Eastern Cape. Secondly, the study described the process of preparing for, implementing and assessing the 2014 ANA at the selected school. In order to generate insights for a deep understanding of how teachers perceive, prepare for and implement the ANA, the challenges that arise, and how the ANA is impacting on curriculum and pedagogy, an interpretive qualitative research approach and case study method were adopted.

The researcher, a participant observer operating from an insider position, used ethnographic techniques to describe, document and analyse teachers' perceptions and experiences of implementing the 2014 ANA tests in a specific context (one school) and at one level of the school system (Grade 3). Data gathered through observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were coded and analysed in order to identify emerging themes. These are compared to trends and developments in contemporary literature on educational assessment.

The findings revealed that while the teachers were compliant and efficient in their implementation and administration of the ANA, they have a narrow perception of the ANA as a summative assessment serving systemic purposes. There was little, if any, evidence of them using the ANA for the formative assessment purposes intended by policy. As a result, opportunities for using the ANA to enhance teaching and learning were lost. The study illuminated the roles and responsibilities of the teachers, the school management team and Eastern Cape [EC] Department of Education [DoE] in the ANA preparation and implementation process, and the need for strengthening the support provided by the EC DoE.

Although context specific, the study sheds light on how Grade 3 teachers in an ordinary public school perceive and implement the ANA. The insights afforded and lessons that can be learned

from this case study may be relevant to other Foundation Phase school contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- To my supervisor, Professor Di Wilmot, thank you for sharing your incredible knowledge and your belief in this research and in me from the very beginning. You have taught me new ways to view the world.
- To the staff and learners from this school, thank you for allowing me to conduct this research project and enabling your experiences to assist in the process of ‘finding answers’.
- To my mother, Anna-Marie, who despite many challenges provided me with a tertiary education that began the road of this incredible journey.
- To my father, Jeremy Daniel, who always said, “If you are going to do something, do it properly or don’t bother at all.”
- To my siblings, Susan and Hayley and their husbands, for always being my biggest champions.
- To my friends and extended family for their patience and encouragement.

DEDICATION

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

DECLARATION

I, Philippa Anne Lascelles, have read and understood the University’s policy on plagiarism. This is my own work and, where I have drawn on the work of others, I have referenced appropriately. This work has not been submitted to fulfil the requirements of a degree at any other university.

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CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the implementation of the Annual National Assessment [ANA] at an ordinary primary school. More specifically, it seeks to describe in rich detail, five Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of the ANA tests and their experiences as they prepare for and implement the 2014 Mathematics and Home Language [HL] ANA tests. This chapter describes the context of the research and its theoretical and methodological orientation.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

My interest in researching the ANA began while studying educational assessment as part of the Curriculum Theory course of my Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree in 2013. The theoretical insights gained in the course made me aware of how theory could help me to improve my classroom practice. The course exposed me to contemporary trends and developments in educational assessment, including the role formative assessment can play in supporting and enhancing learning. This encouraged me to be more reflective and reflexive, and I began experimenting with formative assessment strategies in my Grade 2 classroom.

In 2011 the ANA replaced the National Department of Basic Education's [DBE] Systemic Evaluation programme in schools. The ANA, an external assessment intervention, was developed for systemic and diagnostic purposes (South Africa. National Department of Basic Education, 2011b). The ANA has attracted a great deal of attention and there is a growing body of literature that questions, inter alia, its validity, design, efficacy, purpose, and impact (see, for example, NEEDU, 2013; Spaul, 2013; Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013; Graven & Venkat, 2014; Taylor, 2015). There is little, if any, research on how teachers experience the implementation of the ANA tests at the level of the classroom. This study hopes to contribute to this gap in the literature.

From my experience of implementing the ANA in my Grade 2 class, I was aware that the ANA initiative was impacting on my teaching time, and they were a cause of frustration for my colleagues, some of whom were sceptical about their value and purpose. My engagement with

the literature on formative assessment, and the class discussions that ensued during my B.Ed.(Honours) studies, challenged the assumptions I had made about the purpose of the ANA tests. This provided the impetus for me to start a research project focused on understanding teachers' perceptions and experiences of implementing the ANA at the level of the classroom, and what, if any, impact the ANA are having on what is being taught (curriculum) and how it is being taught (pedagogy).

1.3 RESEARCH GOALS

The overall goal of the research is:

- to describe and analyse how an ordinary public primary school prepares for, implements and uses the Annual National Assessment with a view to understanding teachers' perceptions of the ANA and what, if any, impact it is having on the curriculum and pedagogy at the level of the classroom.

In order to accomplish this goal, I formulated the following three research questions:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the ANA?
- How do teachers prepare for, implement and use the ANA tests in their classrooms?
- What, if any, challenges and issues arise?

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Guided by the research questions, the study adopts a qualitative, interpretive orientation. According to Fleisch (2008), "qualitative research works best when it delves deeply in unfettered ways into the complex processes and contextual realities of teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 141). This informed my choice of a case study method and use of ethnographic techniques. The study is bound by a particular phenomenon (a regulatory state assessment) at a particular time (2014) in a specific place (one ordinary primary school) with a specific focus on five Grade 3 teachers.

For convenience, I decided to undertake the research at the school where I was employed. This meant I was able to work from an insider position in close proximity to the teachers participating in the study. The preparations for the 2014 ANA were spread out over an extended time frame and my daily presence at the research site allowed me to observe, record and participate in all the activities associated with the ANA. This helped me to observe and gain

insights for understanding events and processes linked to the ANA over an extended period of time, namely a year. As an insider and participant observer, I was able to observe and experience events that an outsider researcher would not. I was fully immersed in the life of the school on a daily basis for the entire duration of the ANA preparation and implementation. This prolonged and varied field experience helped to address potential validity issues.

The research design consisted of three phases. Phase 1 (15 January to 14 September 2014) was the period in which the 2014 ANA preparation and planning took place; Phase 2 (15 - 19 September 2014) was the period in which the five Grade 3 teachers implemented the Mathematics and Home Language ANA tests. Phase 3, the post-ANA period (20 September - 17 November 2014), was when the marking and administrative processes took place.

Guided by the case study method, data were gathered using different qualitative methods, including face-to face interviews, observations, field notes, document analysis and a research journal. This was seen as necessary in order to generate a rich description of the case.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

This case study was conducted at one ordinary primary school. The findings are thus context and content specific and cannot be used to generalise across the broader group of which this case is part. The findings of the case may lend themselves to “fuzzy propositions”, which is “one that is neither likely to be true in every case, nor likely to be untrue in every case, it is something that may be true” (Bassegy, 2001, p. 10).

I hope that by providing a “thick description” (Geertz, 1993, p. 3), other primary school teachers may be able to identify with the case. The lessons that are extrapolated may be of value to other educators, policy makers and researchers. It is hoped that the insights this case study provides of the ANA implementation process may be “examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (Merriam, 1991, p. 32).

1.6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review selected literature on contemporary international and national trends and developments in educational assessment, with particular emphasis on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DBE, 2011).

Chapter 3: The Research Site and Participants

This chapter provides a contextual profile of the school and teachers participating in this study, and it justifies my choice of working in an ordinary public school where I was employed as a Grade 2 teacher.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter describes and justifies the research orientation and case study method. It gives an account of the data gathering techniques used, the research process and data analysis. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness are discussed.

Chapter 5: Teachers' perceptions of the Annual National Assessments

This chapter analyses and interprets the five Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of the 2014 ANA. The discussion focuses on the five Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of: the nature and purposes of the ANA; how the ANA impacts on teaching and learning, and their experiences of the ANA.

Chapter 6: Analysis and discussion of the preparation for and implementation of the 2014 ANA

This chapter analyses and discusses the process of implementing the ANA in Grade 3 at the selected school. The events and processes taking place before, during and after the ANA implementation are analysed and interpreted.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes the research and concludes with the lessons that can be learned from this case study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter begins by describing contemporary trends in assessment from an international perspective. This is followed by a discussion of national policy perspectives on assessment in the context of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement [CAPS] and the Annual National Assessment [ANA] initiative, the purpose of which is to improve the quality of learning in South African schools. Finally, emergent issues and challenges associated with policy implementation are considered together with how they are impacting on teaching and learning at the level of the classroom.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Masters (2013) asserts that the traditional role of assessment was “based on the belief that the role of the teachers was to deliver the curriculum, the role of the students was to learn, and the role of assessment was to establish how much of what teachers had taught, students had successfully learnt” (pp. 2-3). Educational quality was measured by analysing the inputs into the schooling system. Inputs included data related to teacher/student ratios, available resources, physical amenities and student enrolment.

Since the 1980s, globalisation evident in the emergence of a global economy and advancement of technology has resulted in a weakening of national boundaries prompted by the need for countries to be economically competitive markets and have skilled citizens. According to Meyer and Benavot (2013), “the meaning of public education is being recast from a project aimed at forming national citizens and nurturing social solidarity to a project driven by economic demands and labour market orientations” (p. 10). The need for skilled workers and a globally competitive economy has impacted on education and assessment. Since the 1980s, countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand have found that increasing economic and political influence over educational policy decisions has led to a variety of administrative and organisational changes within schools (Fuhrman, 1999; Spreen & Vally, 2010). This has affected educational assessment, a consequence of which has been a broader understanding of the different purposes assessment can serve.

Policy makers have recognised that “assessment is a powerful device to help gear teaching and curriculum” (Gipps, 1996, p. 8). The literature describes a shift towards measuring the outcomes of educational institutions in order to determine the quality of learning and teaching (see for example, Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001; Riffert, 2005; Broadfoot, 2007). Importantly, the narrow traditional view of assessment being focused on measuring learning has expanded and contemporary perspectives on assessment include: supporting and enhancing teaching and learning; providing feedback on learning to learners, teachers and schools; as well as selecting and certificating learners. Importantly, assessment is also seen as serving an accountability purpose with state-regulated assessments being used to judge the efficacy of schooling, especially public schooling (Gipps, 1996). A similar view is held by Black (2001), who asserts that assessment may be formative (to aid learning) and summative (for public accountability and certification and transfer purposes).

2.2.1 Assessment as a tool for supporting and enhancing learning

In her inaugural lecture some twenty years ago, Gipps (1996) argued that the primary function of assessment is to aid learning. According to Broadfoot (2007), assessment implemented to serve a formative purpose is “intended to contribute directly to the learning process through providing feedback which models success and guides future efforts, as well as giving encouragement” (p. 7). When implemented for this purpose, assessment is often referred to as assessment *for* learning or *formative* assessment.

Formative assessment occurs throughout the learning cycle and “supports the teaching-learning process” (Gipps & Murphy, 1994, p. 261). Assessment for this purpose must encourage the “the teaching and development of higher order skills, thinking processes and problem solving” (Gipps, 1996, p. 7). Teachers administer formative assessment in order to determine learners’ ability and to plan future instruction activities that ensure progress from the present level of understanding.

Bennett (2011) describes formative assessment as an “integration of process and purposefully designed methodology or instrumentation” (p. 7). Gipps and Murphy (1994) note that diagnostic assessment is “a specific form of formative assessment” (p. 260). Leahy, Lyon and Wiliam (2005) explain that “assessment *for* learning involves adjusting teaching as needed while learning is still taking place” (p. 19). A similar view is evident in a South African context where assessment is seen as a cyclical process that “completes any learning cycle, and simultaneously foreshadows the next cycle” (NEEDU, 2013, p. 52). This learning cycle can be

illustrated as follows (NEEDU, 2013, p. 52):

Figure 2.1 The assessment learning cycle

assess → diagnose → identify learning effects → build → assess

Teachers play a key role in the formative assessment process, which take place informally and formally during lessons. Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Rust, Baratz Snowden and Gordon (2005) assert that in order to integrate formative assessment into the teaching and learning process, teachers must be knowledgeable about learning progression, able to determine students' prior knowledge and set explicit objectives. Furthermore, they observe that feedback must be clear and focus on conceptual over procedural knowledge.

According to Leahy, Lyon, Thompson and Wiliam (2005), “the teacher who consciously uses assessment to support learning takes in this information, analyses it and makes instructional decisions that address the understanding and misunderstandings that these assessments reveal” (p. 19). Formative assessment activities that can be incorporated into teaching include “sharing expectations, questioning, feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment” (Bennett, 2011, p. 9). Formative assessment practices encourage students to develop “internal standards for their work, reflect upon it, and take ownership of learning” (Bennett, 2011, p. 9). Hopfenbeck, Petour and Tolo (2015) assert that students learn better when they receive clear expectations and guidelines on content; obtain feedback on their performance and how to progress, and take responsibility for their own learning.

Advocates of formative assessment believe that it adds valuable “quality assurance” (Leahy et al., 2005, p. 19) and, when implemented correctly, it is capable of developing “students’ meta-cognition, increases self-regulation and levels of achievement” (Cizek, 2009, p. 471). In spite of a body of literature showing the learning benefits of formative assessment, Broadfoot (2007) contends that “most governments have either steadfastly resisted it or found it very difficult to introduce” (p. 39).

2.2.2 Assessment as a tool for monitoring the efficiency of a national system

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) highlights the plight of many countries as they struggle to define the “meaning, purpose and content of basic education in the context of a fast-moving world and of assessing learning through outcomes and achievement” (p. 13).

As the number of children with access to education has increased, the focus of governments has turned towards providing access to quality education. The focus on quality has arisen as policy makers recognise that “education systems can act as pathways to national economic development in an increasingly globalised world” (Postlethwaite & Kellaghan, 2008, p. 9). Quality in educational contexts is understood to be “one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living” (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000, p. 17).

A key element of this movement has been the “development of curriculum standards that served to reinvigorate and elevate what it means to know and demonstrate proficiency in each of the disciplines” (Shepard et al., 2005, p. 280). Assessment plays a key role and is expected to act as a “lever of reform” (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001, p. 29) and a means to improving the quality of teaching and learning.

In order to formulate policy based on outputs, “more reliable data on student achievement” (Riffert, 2005, p. 237) is required. Assessments serve as a tool to make outputs observable and allow for necessary interventions to be timeously incorporated (Riffert, 2005). When performance indicators and results are used to determine the efficiency of an education system, this is referred to as a *systemic assessment*. Kellaghan and Greaney (2001, pp. 29-32) assert that the rise of the standards model has been accompanied by:

- an increased interest in the outcomes produced by learners;
- the adoption of various forms of high-stakes testing; and
- assessment policy being used to improve teaching and learning.

This is seen as manifesting within the education sector as a drive towards regulated accountability systems, often in the form of standardised tests that incorporate a wide range of assessment strategies and consequences for teaching and learning. Spaul (2015) emphasises the importance of professional accountability in education as, “it shifts the focus away from specifying the minutiae of procedures and standards and moves towards a reliance on professional knowledge and judgement” (2015, p. 119). He notes that “only when schools have both the incentive to respond to an accountability system and the capacity to do so will there be an improvement in student outcomes” (Spaul., 2015, p. 136).

As a result, many countries have adopted the approach of implementing national assessments in order “to obtain empirical data that can be interpreted as indicative of learning in specific

curriculum areas at clearly identified levels of the education system” (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001, p. 36). Kamens (2013) reports that first world nations implement high-stakes international achievement tests as “vehicles for national assessments” (p. 119), while less developed nations opt to implement national assessments as they are nervous of the published rankings, and prefer to control policy regulations, timings and costs. Countries are able to retain control of education systems, and national systems are easier and cheaper to implement (Meyer & Benavot, 2013).

When implementing a national assessment many countries have included unique strategies in order to meet the purpose of the assessment (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001). Care must be given to ensure that assessments measure important outcomes, that sampling decisions represent students’ achievements, and that the analysis reports on the outcomes targeted. (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001). Kanjee, Sayed and Rodriguez explain that “such systems deepen understanding of which policies work and which do not and where change is most needed” (2014, p. 85).

2.2.3 Assessment as a tool for measuring what has been learnt

Summative assessment (also referred to as assessment *of* learning) takes place towards the end of a learning cycle and is a method of determining what “an individual learner has achieved” (Broadfoot, 2007, p. 7). McTighe and O'Connor (2005) note that formative assessment tends to be evaluative, providing feedback on learners’ understanding after a teaching activity. Black (2015) notes that summative assessment may be implemented as an important stage during a learning process but cautions that “frequent summative testing dulled the message about the means to improve, replacing it with information about successes or failures” (p. 56).

2.2.4 Issues and challenges

2.2.4.1 Teacher knowledge

Broadfoot (2007) maintains that a majority of educators are “almost completely illiterate concerning the development and use of sound assessment strategies in education contexts” (p. 32). Teachers often “regard assessment as a peripheral component of pedagogy” (Black, 2015, p. 163).

The 2013 NEEDU report highlighted four main areas of concern regarding teacher abilities. These include teacher knowledge, subject knowledge, curriculum knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. More specifically, they note:

- Teachers are not fluent readers.
- Teachers' subject knowledge influences learner success.
- Disadvantaged children receive less instructional time.
- Teachers interpret the curriculum according to their expectations of learners.
- Poor utilisation of resources.
- Residual teaching methods.

According to Fleisch (2008), teacher abilities result in the classroom practice that may explain success or failure. It is evident that “teacher quality makes a critical difference” (Kanjee, Sayed, & Rodriguez, 2014, p. 94).

Van Laren and James' findings show that “teachers' belief in how and what to assess is intrinsically interwoven with their understanding of assessment” (2008, p. 301). Brown (2004) relates that teachers hold four different conceptions of assessment that influence their choice in assessment practice. These comprise the following:

- Assessment is able to provide data on teaching and learning. It is useful.
- Assessment can be used to make learners accountable for their own learning.
- Assessment can be used to hold learners and teachers accountable. (Necessary but not important.)
- Assessment is irrelevant to teachers and learners.

Barrett (2009) contends that the shift towards a performance model of pedagogic discourse carries with it the potential to shift teacher pedagogy. A similar view is held by the DBE who argue for the ANA enhancing pedagogy in South African schools (South Africa, DBE, 2014a).

Assessment can be the engine of systemic reform (Barnes, Clarke & Stephens, 2000) particularly when accompanied by initiatives to improve instruction (Fuhrman, 1999). “Learning outcomes must be well-defined in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains, and be continually assessed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process” (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000, p. 20). If variations in policy are not adequately communicated to educators, it may result in failure to implement the intended curriculum (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003).

Black (2001) cautions that if high-stakes accountability tests are prioritised, teachers' assessments will not be valued or used to improve teaching and learning. “These tensions

generate a dissonant professional identity, where a coherent sense of direction is often lost, and a superficial implementation replaces what should be a deep change in pedagogy” (Hopfenbeck et al., 2015, p. 46). In order for teachers “to develop sufficient competency to participate, negotiate and support one another’s (as well as students’) active agency through engaging educational changes, teachers must have experience with these kinds of activities” (Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2014, p. 308).

2.2.4.2 Classroom practices

The ability of an assessment to impact on curriculum and practice is most effective when the intentions are explicitly communicated to educators and they are participants in the process (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Teachers may adopt external policy in “superficial ways” (Fuhrman, 1999, p. 8) or outright reject it as incorrect for their context, especially when policies are implemented in a top-down approach (Black, 2015). It may be the case within the South African educational landscape that “dominant theories of the past continue to operate as the default framework affecting and driving current practices and perspectives” (Shepard, 2000, p. 4). Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) describe how schools embrace “whole-group learning, fixed schedules, emphasis on uniformity of classroom experiences and the students are expected to passively assimilate what the teacher says” (p. 58). This may have occurred with the uptake of Curriculum 2005 [C2005] (the first post-apartheid national curriculum for compulsory schooling) and Outcomes Based Assessment [OBE] assessment policies in the early 1990s within South Africa (Jansen, 2013).

Initiatives to alter assessment practices “whether by mandate or through professional development activities, may be doomed to failure, unless these conceptions are acknowledged, challenged and eventually changed” (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007, p. 101). The NEEDU (2013) reports that the cascade methods of afternoon workshop training appear to be ineffective yet are continuously selected by the DBE as the preferred method of communicating with educators. This may be a result of under-resourced provincial departments (NEEDU, 2013).

Kellaghan and Greaney (2001) describe how teacher practices are influenced by:

- Teacher understanding of the policy
- Understanding of what the standards represent
- Prior knowledge and experience
- Contextual factors

- Student abilities

Sosibo and Nomlomo (2014) reiterate that “teachers’ understanding of educational standards influence their interaction with learners” (p. 86). Kraak (1999) argues that using a criterion-based assessment does not lessen the influence of subjective opinions and when “assessment of performance is seen as an exact science which can be specified through explicit assessment criteria,” (pp. 47, 50) the role of the teacher is largely devalued.

Harlen and James (1997) describe teachers’ use of assessment as “less a technical matter of measurement and more a human act of judgement, albeit based on sound evidence” (p. 378). Volante and Beckett (2011) report Canadian teachers’ application of similar strategies to their external assessment data.

2.2.4.3 Importance of high-stakes assessments

Many countries involve themselves in international studies in order to have technically sound research that will provide accurate information that can be used as a basis for improving the system and the efficiency of the investment in education (Postlethwaite, 2004). In order to compete in a global political economy, developing countries have to rely on their school system to produce the ‘cultural capital’ required. This creates tensions and pressure on educational systems in developing countries, as they do not have the resources required to implement policies. Broadfoot (2007) describes western-style examinations, a feature of globalisation, as “one of its most pervasive and powerful engines” and reports that there is no nation “that does not have a system of formal examinations and certification” (p. 36).

The struggle becomes evident in the number of symbolic policies that are introduced. Spreen and Vally (2010) maintain the acknowledgement of the existence of symbolic policies and “their political currency without any real commitment to their implementation were an important shift in understanding and examining the policy outcomes over the last decade and a half” (p. 437).

Likewise, tensions may arise when international standards do not match cultural views of the citizens of a developing country, making change difficult to impose within the schooling context (Carrim, 2013). It is important to ensure the inclusion of local assessment cultures when formulating assessment policy (Hopfenbeck et al., 2015). Sosibo and Nomlomo (2014) explain “the implications of disregarding contextual diversity in the discourse on standards are huge, as these differences may drastically affect the educational standards, depending on the context in which they are implemented” (p. 85).

The performance-driven discourse is propelled by social, economic and political pressure and has continued to gain momentum “despite the fact that almost all experts in early childhood education condemn this practice” (Kohn, 2000, p. 2). Hopfenbeck et al. (2015) report that there is “a constant struggle involving teachers and policy makers regarding the need for trust in the system and the need for accountability” (p. 57). Postlethwaite (2004) questions the need for individual testing to be implemented in the lower grades where learners are too young to deal with individual tests. Learners’ low achievement scores may be a result of a lack of familiarity with the testing process (Vinjevold & Crouch, 2003).

Schools’ uptake on accountability systems varies according to school and teacher capabilities (Fuhrman, 1999). Schools with high levels of internal accountability may display resistance to external forms of accountability as teachers with high levels of accountability feel the external measures ‘downplay professional values’ and impact on teacher professionalism (Mausethagen, 2013).

Schools are unique contexts and experts advise that initiatives to improve education are influenced by politics within individual school contexts (Fleisch, 2002). Effective instructional leadership is essential to the successful implementation of an external assessment. Stiggins (2010) contends that “for school leaders, assessment competence includes mastery of the same principles of sound classroom assessment that teachers must master so that they are able to support their teachers as they face the challenges of day-to-day classroom assessment” (p. 234).

The NEEDU report (2013) recognises a continuous challenge within a school context is the “slippage between the intended use of procedures as a *means* to improving student learning, to the situation where the procedures and their attendant paperwork become *ends* in themselves” (p. 14).

2.2.4.4 Developing and implementing a national assessment programme

In order to ensure validity and reliability, a number of technical criteria must be met when implementing a national assessment. These may include aspects of “instrument design, sampling, test administration, data preparations, data analysis, or data interpretation” (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001, p. 45). Developing countries often face a lack of technical expertise (Meyer & Benavot, 2013). Financial constraints and technical expertise must be given careful consideration (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001).

Kanjee, Sayed and Rodriguez (2014, p. 92) highlight three key issues:

- How the national assessment is aligned to national curriculum
- When and how often it is implemented
- How the data is used to support improvement

Language plays an important role in the formulation of assessments as “the development of items in multiple languages decrease the sensitivity of the tests to instruction in ways that are not fully understood, and which may vary in important ways from language to language” (Wiliam, 2008, p. 256).

It is important that the Language of Learning and Teaching [LoLT] is given adequate consideration when developing national assessments. Schollar (2013) demonstrates that the “better learners understand and communicate in the language of instruction, the more chance they have of achieving a higher level of competence in any subject taught in that language” (p. 252). The effects of language on learner success have also been acknowledged by Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003).

2.2.4.5 Effects on pedagogy

When key role players fail to perceive policy correctly, it has an effect on classroom practice and may result in a decline in standards (Sosibo & Nomlomo, 2014). Attempts to alter teacher practice will not succeed unless these are addressed (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007).

National assessments are implemented by policy makers who expect that an increase in assessment for learning practice will lead to an increase in student achievement levels (Hopfenbeck, Petour, & Tolo, 2015) and lessen the attitude of compliance (Fuhrman, 1999). Improvement in results may not always reflect an increase in performance. Improvement may result from an increase in learner ability or a variation in degree of difficulty of the question paper. Broadfoot (2007, p. 27) explains that learner achievement may be influenced by:

- Form of assessment
- Response mode
- Contextual conditions
- Social dynamics

Lunt (1993) notes that while it is possible to integrate criterion or curriculum based assessments

into instruction to determine students' achievement levels; this does not provide information about their schemes or the contextual factors of the classroom. According to Sosibo and Nomlomo (2014), policy makers presume a link between teacher proficiency and learner performance, and disregard the evidence that socio-economic conditions may shape learner achievement levels.

There is further concern that “current enthusiasm for alternate measures of assessment may be based on the flawed assumption that new high-stakes assessments will drive instruction in a positive direction” (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001, p. 26). High-stakes assessments may discourage the inclusion of “higher-order thinking and problem solving” (Shepard, 1992, p. 1), which encourage students to memorise and adopt surface learning strategies (Gipps, 1996; Kohn, 2000; Broadfoot, 2007). Harlen and James (1997) caution that:

The straightforward reproduction of knowledge rather than its application favours rote learning, and assessment which demands no more than this will inevitably shift teaching and learning away from understanding towards the memorisation of the information necessary to succeed in the assessment (p. 370).

As a result, “instruction that conforms to high-stakes tests in content and format will become more patterned and predictable and less responsive and adaptive” (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001, p. 490). Shepard (1992) explains the effects of drill and rote learning on classroom practices:

When teachers teach to traditional tests by providing daily skill instruction in formats that closely resemble tests, their instructional practices are not just ineffective but detrimental. By following a theory that postpones the development of higher-order thinking skills until after the basics have been mastered, teachers deny learning opportunities in two ways. First, learning isolated facts and skills becomes more difficult because without context there is no meaningful way to chunk or organise information and make it easy to remember. Second, learning decontextualized skills means that later application of skills to solve real-world problems becomes a separate and difficult learning hurdle (p. 5).

This view is shared by Gipps who explains that “using performance-based together with teacher assessment, will mitigate the worst effects on teaching, but even this, if stakes are too high, will over-promote the assessed activities and run the risk of narrowing the curriculum” (1996, p. 19). The narrowing of the curriculum may result in tested subjects, concepts and scores being prioritised over all else (Shepard, 1992; Gregory & Clarke, 2010).

Tensions may be created when an assessment is implemented to serve mixed purposes, both as a

tool for communication (parents, teachers, learners) and as a driver of curriculum policy (Broadfoot, 2007; Haywood, 2015). It is important to bear in mind that while policy may attempt to distinguish between the “purposes of individual, institutional, and system assessments, in practice it may be blurred” (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001, p. 21). Black (2001, p. 34) asserts that they may be understood as “two ends of the same spectrum” though one purpose may be prioritised over another. However, there is a view that summative purposes ultimately dominate over formative purposes with negative consequences to both teaching and learning practices (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2005).

The difficulty in administering an assessment that serves as both a systemic and diagnostic assessment has been documented in Norway (Mausethagen, 2013) where the systemic purposes dominate. Masters (2013), however, argues that if assessment is understood to be a method of establishing where learners are in their learning then there are not different forms of assessment because assessment becomes “different ways of interpreting information about where students are in their learning” (pp. 6-7).

The tensions between summative and formative purposes are further complicated by a paradigm shift in the theory of learning, of assessment and measures of performance from traditional definitions and understandings (Gipps, 1996). Masters (2013) explains that learning is “an ongoing, potential lifelong process ... with the potential for further progress” (p. 3). Learning is understood to be a complex and diverse process of meaning making and personal knowledge construction (Gipps, 1996). This requires an adjustment of traditional assessment philosophies. Critics such as Bennett and Gitomer (2008) explain that “many experts in assessment, as well as instruction, claim we have unintentionally created a system of accountability assessment grounded in an outdated scientific model for conceptualising proficiency, teaching it and measuring it” (p. 4).

Broadfoot (2007) encourages policy makers and teachers to question the dominance of educational assessment strategies that are so entrenched they are accepted without discussion as to the suitability of their purposes (2007). Their introduction may limit the opportunities for teachers to participate as critical professionals (Gregory & Clarke, 2010). In response, there appears to be an incremental shift away from the scientific performance discourse and the acknowledgement that policy makers need to introduce more teacher autonomy.

Finland’s successful education system (Varjo, Simola, & Rinne, 2013) and recent legislation in Norway acknowledge the importance of autonomy and are beginning to lessen the

accountability tools implemented by policy makers (Hopfenbeck et al., 2015). Le Cordeur (2014) explains the effects of decentralisation of the education system and the shift towards “empowerment of teachers and recognition of their role as professional educators” (p. 151). Similarly, Black (2015) argues that the solution lies in placing responsibility back in the hands of teachers, as is evident within the Australian system.

2.3 NATIONAL POLICY PERSPECTIVES ON ASSESSMENT

2.3.1 The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework [CAPS]

In response to poor achievement levels on international assessments and poor Grade 12 results, the national curriculum was revised and in 2012 the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements [CAPS] were implemented in Grades 1 to 3 (South Africa. DBE, 2012a; Carrim, 2013; NEEDU, 2013; Pausigere & Graven, 2013).

According to Pausigere and Graven (2013), “CAPS did not forego the political pedagogical intentions that initially set the groundwork for curriculum reform in South Africa and these are carried through” (p. 29). The Department of Education acknowledges that, “without substantial improvements in learning outcomes, the future development of the country will be seriously compromised. As a result, there is increasing public pressure and strong emphasis by the government on improving learning outcomes” (South Africa. DBE, 2011b, p. 11). Policy makers believe that “provided every school teaches the same subject-matter in the same way using the same teaching and learning resources, the results of education will be the same” (Frame, 2003, p. 20). There is little acknowledgement of the vast social differences within unique schooling contexts (Soudien, 2010).

2.3.2 Development and implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements

There are clear guidelines and much stronger classification within the CAPS curriculum (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). Each learning area is a separate document (Home Language; Mathematics; Life Skills and First Additional Language) that includes “the provision of work schedules detailing content, sequence and pacing on a weekly basis” (Venkat & Bowie, 2013, p. 1).

The National Protocol of Assessment explains assessment as “a process of collection, analysing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making

decisions about the progress of learners” (South Africa. DBE, 2012a, p. 3). Assessment within the CAPS documents is described within the glossary as “a continuous planned process of gathering information, formally or informally, on child performance” (South Africa. DBE, 2011c, p. 131). Assessments are further broken up into both formal and informal tasks (Pausigere & Graven, 2013).

Individual CAPS policy documents do not all contain the same explanations regarding assessment. The English Home Language CAPS document contains a paragraph referring to the formal and informal aspects of assessment (South Africa. DBE, 2011c). The Mathematics document gives the reader detailed information relating to the steps required when assessing as well as the technicalities of assessment (South Africa. DBE, 2011d). Assessment within the Life Skills document mentions the need for formal and informal assessment and describes the purpose of assessment as being “to support and encourage the learners and to assess the learners’ holistic development” (South Africa. DBE, 2011e, p. 67).

The introduction of the technical understanding of the curriculum with a strong classification between different learning areas mitigates the global acknowledgement of the importance of learners’ ability to transfer knowledge between different contexts (Masters, 2013). CAPS “provided stability in the sector by providing teachers with clear guidelines on content, pedagogy and assessment” (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 18).

2.3.3 Effects on teaching and learning

The CAPS and the ANA have been introduced to improve classroom practices and learning outcomes. These initiatives have not been without their challenges. There is a view that teachers struggled to adapt to the conceptual changes introduced by curriculum revisions, as they “did not have sufficient knowledge content to inform their change and shake their beliefs” (Henning, 2013, p. 144). The same may be true for the ANA. Carl contends that teachers have been ‘receivers’ of a curriculum in which they have little input (Carl, 2005). Frame (2003) cautions that this may reify the curriculum, the consequence of which is a focus on measurable and observable aspects of teaching and learning. The learning environment becomes focused on “following the rules and knowing the answers so that the manager can make sure that teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing” (Frame, 2003, p. 4). The NEEDU report (2013) expressed concern that bureaucratic interventions can sometimes take the place of valuable learning and teaching. The extent to which this is applicable in this study, is discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.3.4 Influence of the standards-reform movement

Since democracy, the South African education system has been increasingly shaped by international trends (Soudien, 2013). South African learners began participating in a number of international testing programmes. These included the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study [PIRLS], Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies [TIMSS], and the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality [SACMEQ I and II] (Chisholm, 2004; South Africa. DBE, 2010; South Africa. DBE, 2011a; South Africa. DBE, 2013a; South Africa. DBE, 2013b; South Africa. DBE, 2013c; Carrim, 2013; Spaul, 2013; South Africa. DBE, 2014a).

Initially, participation in international assessments was implemented to obtain a benchmark for South African learner performance. Findings indicated that, overall, top-achieving institutions were performing below sub-Saharan and international counterparts (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Spaul, 2013). Fleisch (2008) warned that “South Africa’s primary education achievement gap; with its distinct bimodal distribution, begins in the Foundation Phase, at the very earliest days of formal schooling, and continues unbroken to the end of primary education and beyond” (p. 30). Reports continue to indicate that South Africa has “the worst education system of all middle-income countries that participate in cross-national assessments of educational achievement” (Spaul, 2013, p. 3).

2.3.5 DBE initiatives to improve teaching and learning within South Africa

The post-apartheid political imperative to produce citizens who are able to compete in a global economic market continues to shape the South African education system. This global shift has come about because “economic growth and social development depend on human knowledge rather than the availability of natural resources” (Carnoy, 2008, p. 15).

Chisholm & Wildeman (2013) contend that current policy needs to be understood:

...not only within the context of borrowing from northern, developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, but also the broader context of target-setting within the development agencies and international testing as conducted by the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) (p. 92).

Lockheed (2013) reports that the increase in participation in international achievement assessments may be attributed to the fact that once most developed countries had participated in

international assessments the only way to increase the data pertaining to countries was to support and include less developed countries. She reports that participating countries benefit in the following ways:

- Increased knowledge relating to human capital that may be used to inform further policy, and
- improving technical, administrative, analytical and communicative capacity with regards to assessment (pp. 171-175).

Gumede (2013), through his analysis of the different models used in South Africa, shows how the adoption of the ‘new public management’ and ‘third generation reforms’ has shifted public services to adopt “principles of management traditionally associated with the private sector or market economy” (p. 63). According to Gumede (2013) “the rationale for such a curriculum within a new democracy makes not only political but also economic sense, given the country’s aspirations of establishing itself as a strong, globally competitive knowledge economy” (p. 73). A recent response from the DBE has been Schooling 2025 and a supporting Action Plan to 2014 (South Africa. DBE, 2010). The plan outlines the DBE’s strategies for achieving its goals. These are formulated as four main outputs. Importantly, the second of these outcomes refers to the intention to “use standardised assessments and systemic evaluations to measure whether learning is achieving the curriculum outcomes and to identify the key areas in the curriculum that require improvement” (South Africa. DBE, 2011b, p. 4).

The strategic plan is emphatic that through “regular assessments of educational quality, a sense of accountability is strengthened” and “everyone from learners to educational administrators need to feel that his or her good efforts will be reflected in reports that reliably measure progress” (South Africa. DBE, 2011b, p. 12). The main emphasis is on raising learner achievement levels to the extent that, by 2014, at least 60% of learners in Grade 3, 6 and 9 should have achieved acceptable levels of competency in Language and Mathematics (South Africa. DBE, 2012b; South Africa. DBE, 2014a).

The DBE’s intention is to use the performance of South African learners in the 2015 TIMSS Numeracy study and the SACMEQ IV study to affirm the trends observed in improving the Numeracy and Literacy skills of all learners (2014a). The economic agenda, coupled with South African’s participation and experience in international assessments, was influential in the DBE’s decision to develop a national assessment programme (South Africa. DBE, 2010; South

Africa. DBE, 2012a; South Africa. DBE, 2014a).

2.4 THE ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

It is argued that without a form of measurement it is not possible to evaluate the success of teaching or the curriculum (Kanjee, Sayed, & Rodriguez, 2014). A similar view is held by Taylor (2015) and the DBE (2012b), who acknowledge that:

while assessment by itself cannot improve learning, it provides important evidence to inform planning and the development of appropriate interventions, especially in terms of remedial learning, teacher development and improving subject knowledge, for improvement at all levels, from national through to provinces and districts, down to individual schools (2012b, p. 4).

Internationally, there are two main models of assessment adopted by countries implementing a national assessment system. Each model has implications regarding cost, interpretation and impact. South Africa has formulated the Annual National Assessment on the United Kingdom or census model (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001; South Africa. DBE, 2014b). The ANA are aligned to CAPS (South Africa. DBE, 2012b, 2013a), the latest iteration of the national curriculum, which replaced the Revised National Curriculum Statement [RNCS] Systemic Evaluation programme which was implemented in Grades 3 and 6 between 2001 and 2007 (South Africa. DBE, 2010). The design of the ANA was also shaped by the milestones as identified in the Foundations for Learning Campaign and the experience of participating in international assessments (South Africa. DBE, 2014a).

2.4.1 Purpose of the Annual National Assessment

The importance of the ANA being valued by all stakeholders is recognised (NEEDU, 2013). Kellaghan and Greaney maintain that “a national assessment may be defined as an exercise designed to describe the level of achievements, not by individual students, but of a whole education system, or a clearly defined part of it” (2001, p. 33). According to the DBE:

the ANA is premised on the principle that effective testing will afford learners the opportunity to demonstrate relevant skills and understanding and also assist the education system with diagnosing learner shortcomings. ANA is a testament that effective testing can provide valuable feedback to schools, teachers, learners and parents (2014a, p. 6).

Furthermore, the DBE (2010) stresses that information obtained from the ANA will be used from the “Minister all the way to teachers who need to plan their work in the classroom” (p. 5).

According to the DBE (South Africa. DBE, 2010; 2013b), the ANA should:

- be used by teachers to assess learners using appropriate standards and methods
- enable better scaffolding and support from national, provincial, and district levels
- motivate and highlight successful practices
- encourage greater parental involvement and support for learners

District officials and school principals are tasked with providing relevant support to teachers to ensure that the ANA results are used to formulate improvement programmes targeting areas of poor performance (South Africa. DBE, 2013a). This suggests an expanding role for principals, which, according to Stiggens (2010), includes being an instructional leader and an authority in assessment strategies to raise learners' performance. The DBE (2011a; 2013b) requires the ANA results to be integrated into all programmes in schooling including schools' academic improvement plans.

South Africa, like France and Brazil, has adopted a national assessment strategy that is intended to serve both systemic and diagnostic purposes (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001; NEEDU, 2013). This dual purpose is meant to ensure that the ANA is used as both a measuring device and one that encourages better teaching practices (South Africa. DBE, 2011a).

2.4.1.1 Systemic purpose of the ANA

The ANA was developed to serve an important accountability purpose, namely assessing how well the school system is performing in relation to national curriculum standards (South Africa. DBE, 2011a; 2013a; NEEDU, 2013). The Minister of Basic Education, Angelina Motshekga, emphasises the systemic purpose in the foreword to the Report on the 2011 ANA:

...it is critical that the ANA data be effectively utilised at all levels of the system to sustain Government's solid electoral mandate and the hopes and aspirations of all South Africans in the medium to long term and to demonstrate that measurable delivery is taking place in the basic education sector (p. 4).

More specifically, the systemic purposes of the ANA include:

- informing policy decisions
- providing support at a provincial and a national level
- identifying and introducing interventions at under-performing schools
- informing parents of learner ability

- allowing for comparisons across province/districts and schools
- benchmarking and tracking learner progress
- enabling teacher training to be improved
- allowing for the development of learner support materials
- providing learner feedback and engaging with district official and principals on the best methods to provide adequate support for schools

(South Africa. DBE, 2010; 2011a; 2012a; 2013a; 2014a; Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013; NEEDU, 2013).

Spaull (2015) cautions that “for the ANA to fulfil their role as a means of targeting support and holding schools accountable, they must be a valid and reliable indication of student learning” (p. 134). In order to be a successful systemic evaluation tool it is important that the ANA “enjoys the highest levels of confidence among teachers, academics and the general public” (NEEDU, 2013, p. 78).

2.4.1.2 Formative purpose of the ANA

The ANA is also intended to serve a formative assessment purpose. The assessment is a diagnostic tool that can be used to inform, plan and improve classroom practice (South Africa. DBE, 2010; 2013a; 2013d; Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013; NEEDU, 2013). The DBE explains the importance of the formative purpose within the ANA programme as follows:

The most important objective of this assessment programme is the effective utilisation and application of the data emanating from the national assessment. Teachers must fully understand the implication of the statistical information and the diagnostic information so that learning gaps can be identified and addressed. In 2015, the DBE will increase its monitoring and evaluation of the utilisation of ANA data by district officials and practising teachers. This will also include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention programmes that are implemented at school level (2014a, p. 104).

Formative uses of the ANA results include:

- providing teachers with a baseline of learners’ abilities within each subject area that will allow them to plan adequately for the year
- allowing teachers to recognise weaker areas and readjust their teaching strategies accordingly
- providing a benchmark that will allow teachers to develop appropriate school based

assessment tasks

- assisting school management teams when selecting appropriate interventions to improve teaching and learning (South Africa. DBE, 2011a, pp. 5-6)

The formative uses listed above are linked to quantity and quality orientated goals, namely increasing average performance and minimum competencies (South Africa. DBE, 2011a).

2.4.2 Development of the Annual National Assessment

The implementation of a national assessment system requires careful planning to determine clear objectives and design (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001). There is a view that countries implement their own national assessments in order to maintain control and manage costs (Meyer & Benavot, 2013). Trial runs of the ANA were carried out in 2008/9 with the introduction of the Foundation for Learning Campaign (South Africa. DBE, 2011a). The ANA was implemented in primary schools in February 2011. The results were used for diagnostic purposes to plan further instructional activities. Training was cascaded down to district officials and principals (South Africa. DBE, 2010). Assessments were administered by teachers and verified by the Human Sciences Research Council [HSRC] (South Africa. DBE, 2010; Spaul, 2013). The focus was on exposing educators to better assessment and marking practices (South Africa. DBE, 2010).

The ANA consists of Home Language and Mathematics assessments, which are administered on separate days within the same week. The tests are set on the CAPS content of the first three school terms (South Africa. DBE, 2012a; 2014a). All the tests consist of 20% easy, 60% moderate and 20% difficult questions; or 40% easy, 40% moderate and 20% difficult questions, depending on the requirements of the curriculum policy (South Africa. DBE, 2013b; South Africa. DBE, 2014a). The Mathematics paper questions require “simple recall of knowledge while others demanded the demonstration of routine applications and complex problem-solving skills” (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 29). The Language assessment, available in all South Africa’s official languages, is designed to test knowledge of basic language concepts, comprehension skills and the application of language concepts (South Africa. DBE, 2012a). The 2014 ANA consisted of questions requiring short answers and longer ones to demonstrate creative skills. The DBE explains the process of test development as follows:

The test development process was centrally based at the DBE offices in Pretoria, under the management of the DBE officials. The subject experts who were appointed as test developers included teachers currently teaching the grade and the subject, as well as subject advisors and curriculum specialists. Each panel

comprised two examiners, a chief examiner, a moderator and an editor. This team developed the test prototype in English, and a panel of ‘versioners’ were responsible for versioning the English test to the other 10 languages in the foundation phase and into Afrikaans for the intermediate [IP] and senior phases [SP] (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 29).

During 2014, a test specification framework, similar to the 2013 model, was developed. This included “the learning content area, the number of items per skill, question types, the cognitive levels to be tested and the difficulty levels of questions” (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 29). The 2014 tests were moderated and reviewed by an “advisory committee that comprised of both local (national) and external (international) experts”, based at the National Centre for Education Statistics (United States of America) (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 31).

In order to expose teachers to good testing standards and practices, teachers mark their learners’ scripts and samples of these are verified by peer teachers. Learners’ results are registered on the national database (South Africa. DBE, 2013a). It is hoped that by reflecting on the results teachers will identify the “strengths and weaknesses of their learners and come to understand the efficacy of their own teaching” (NEEDU, 2013, p. 52). Spaul (2015) cautions that reflection and changes to pedagogy are unlikely to occur if teachers and schools lack the capacity and competencies to effect change.

The verification process included the monitoring of the administration of the tests, collection of the tests directly from the schools, independent marking and moderation of the tests, data capture, analysis, and report writing. The results emanating from the verification stream were then used to confirm the reliability of the tests administered (South Africa. DBE, 2014a).

ANA test results were analysed in two ways – both quantitatively and qualitatively. The qualitative, or diagnostic analysis, is based on learner processes and responses. Results are used to inform and improve classroom practice (South Africa. DBE, 2013a).

Three official ANA diagnostic reports have been released since the first implementation. These analyse learner responses to determine areas of weakness. This feedback should inform teaching and learning strategies at the level of the classroom (South Africa. DBE, 2013d). According to Spaul (2015) the current debate focuses on whether or not reporting should focus on the absolute performance of a particular child and particular school (this is current DBE policy) or whether it there should be an element of comparative performance.

2.4.3 Implementation of the Annual National Assessment

The third ANA, implemented in the third week of September 2014, involved 7,3 million learners in Grades 1 to 6 and 9 (South Africa. DBE, 2014a). The 2014 implementation timeframe was not aligned to that specified in the CAPS English Home Language and Mathematics documents, which state that the ANA is a baseline assessment that will be conducted during the first term of the academic year (South Africa. DBE, 2011c; 2011d).

Each answer booklet contains a cover page and a practice question that allows learners to familiarise themselves with the methodology of the assessment. Teachers invigilating in Grades 1 and 2 read the questions to the learners before they write answers while learners from Grade 3 upwards read and answer the questions independently (South Africa. DBE, 2014b). In order to ensure standardisation in the 2014 ANA, marking guideline workshops were conducted by the DBE for Grades 3, 6 and 9 (South Africa. DBE, 2014a).

Schools are provided with assessment content guidelines and exemplars of question papers (South Africa. DBE, 2013a; 2013b). In order to ensure standardisation, a number of procedures needed to be followed. These included:

- a common timetable
- providing training and a manual to assist in tests administration
- invigilation controls
- monitoring the test administration
- providing memorandums and marking guidelines
- strict marking and moderation controls at school level
- centralised moderation of marks
- double capture of marks

(South Africa. DBE, 2014a, pp. 32-25)

The 2014 ANA tests were verified and moderated at the School Management Team [SMT] level and a selection of learners' scripts was forwarded to the DBE for verification (South Africa. DBE, 2014b).

2.4.4 Emergent issues and challenges

2.4.4.1 Perceptions and understandings of the purpose of the ANA

The DBE intends for assessment to be used as tool to improve learner performance through the modification of pedagogy (South Africa. DBE, 2011b). There is a view that it is difficult “to reconcile formative and summative assessment in relation to external assessments over which teachers have little control” (Hopfenbeck, Petour, & Tolo, 2015, p. 46). Bennett (2011) maintains that the “effectiveness of formative assessment will be limited by the nature of the larger system in which it is embedded and, particularly, by the content, format, and design of the accountability test” (p. 19).

According to the NEEDU report (2013):

ANA tests are having a positive effect on planning and monitoring instruction, both within schools and as a systemic tool. The DBE guidelines on how to do this are useful, but most schools seem unaware of their existence, and most who know about them seem not to understand how to use them (South Africa. DBE, 2011c, pp. 77-78).

The report asserts that it is difficult to design a system that will serve both summative and diagnostic purposes, and that teachers should not be too far removed from the process (NEEDU, 2013). It also notes that there are concerns that most teachers are unaware of the formative purpose of the ANA. Negative perceptions appear to be exacerbated by the adoption of a cascade training model, which is described by Jansen and Taylor (2003) as “... short, information-driven, removed from classroom contexts and realities, and thin on substantive content” (p. 41). Principals appear to lack the pedagogical knowledge surrounding the new purposes of assessment and struggle “to use assessment results for productive program evaluation and improvement, as well as accountability purposes” (Stiggins, 2010, p. 234).

The Strategic Plan 2011-2014 acknowledges that a number of reviews report that policies are not being adequately communicated to key role players (South Africa. DBE, 2011b). The implementation of new policy is a complex task and history has shown that the “diversity of support or dissent depended on the audiences’ political affiliations, ideologies, self-interest and positions regarding policy” (Naicker, 2013, p. 332).

2.4.4.2 The teacher’s role

Teachers’ perceptions are seen as influencing all pedagogical acts. Their beliefs, conceptions and perceptions all act as filters and these may result in an inability to effect change within the classroom. Vandeyar and Killen (2007) contend that “the reluctance of many South African educators to change their assessment practices in response to new policies and curriculum

guidelines may be due to their ingrained conceptions of assessment” (p. 101).

Frame (2003) argues that teachers are disempowered by the hierarchical power relations between policy makers and teachers and “a dependent relationship develops between teachers as mere implementers of the curriculum and the state as decision-maker and provider of education in the country” (p. 22). Teachers begin to see educational problems as not their responsibility to address. Herholdt and Henning (2014) maintain there must be a move away from a compliance-based approach towards a developmental approach.

Mausethagen (2013) reports teachers use of legitimation strategies when faced with external accountability policies and notes that it is of “interest to investigate micro discourses as a means to understanding how teachers make sense of being accountable when professionalism is reconstructed in policy” (p. 428). Henning (2013) notes that teachers’ discourse surrounding their practice was restricted to CAPS policy issues, curriculum administration and the “omniscience of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) in South Africa” (pp. 139, 149).

2.4.4.3 Development and implementation of the ANA

The ANA are intended as a means of tracking disciplinary or subject knowledge of teachers (NEEDU, 2013) and should be used to “provide SMTs with objective evidence to identify areas in which individual teachers need specific support in terms of both content knowledge and various methods of facilitating learning” (South Africa. DBE, 2013a, p. 6).

Postlethwaite (2004) maintains that efficient data collection requires a large financial investment. Limited knowledge of assessment design, implementation and administration and analysis by educational planners and administrators may hinder the process (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001). This is also noted by Kanjee, Sayed, and Rodriguez (2014). Chinsamy (2013) highlights the valuable role of the district office in driving change within the schooling system. Unfortunately, value is often undermined when departments are segmented and responsibilities are divided. As Chinsamy explains:

what complicates the problem here is the lack of knowledge and relevant skills by the ‘specialists’ in the district offices. Taken together, the result is confusion, disillusionment and a lack of faith and confidence in the district on the part of school personnel (2013, p. 191).

Spaull (2015) contends that, “unfortunately, the ANA have not been implemented properly to date” (p. 133) and acknowledges that there are “... serious technical matters that must be

addressed” (p. 134). The DBE acknowledges the need for “separate instruments to allow for the data to be reviewed separately for systemic and ... diagnostic purposes” (South Africa. DBE, 2013b, p. 7).

The DBE’s 2014 ANA report states that:

ANA tests for each cycle are left exposed to schools and learners and new tests are developed for the next cycle. There is, therefore, no control over the comparability of the tests and, consequently, on the comparability of the results on a year to year basis. To curb this limitation, the DBE has started a process of reviewing the assessment design to provide separate instruments, one set that will be used for systemic purposes and the other for diagnostic purposes. One distinguishing feature of the systemic assessments will be strict confidentiality so that the same instruments can be used over time to ensure that comparisons are based on a defensible design (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 15).

The NEEDU (2013) report advises that poor results can be attributed to a number of different reasons. Gipps contends that variations in reliability and validity may be the result of individual administration and classroom practicalities (1996). The relevance of this concern in this study is discussed in Chapter 6, as is NEEDU’s contention that “the system needs to achieve tighter standardisation of administration and data collection, and give careful psychometric comparability of succeeding tests” (NEEDU, 2013, p. 78).

2.4.5 Critique of the ANA

2.4.5.1 Perceptions and understandings of the purpose of the ANA

Presently, the DBE view the ANA as a unique intervention:

...designed to address national educational realities within the uniqueness of both historical and socio-economic contexts of the Republic of South Africa. As such then, the DBE views ANA as a journey rather than a fait accompli. Key milestones on the journey will include continual improvements in the design and methodology of the ANA, enhancements in the utilisation of the assessment results and eventual establishment of a world-class system of standardised assessments (South Africa. DBE, 2013b, p. 5).

The ANA is described by Spaul (2013), as “one of the most important policy developments in the last 10 years” (p. 3). The ANA initiative supports the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s [OECD] view that teachers have too much autonomy and that there are few methods of monitoring teachers’ implementation of policy (Hopfenbeck, Petour,

& Tolo, 2015, p. 47). It is evident that the systemic purpose of the ANA is dominating key role players' understanding of the ANA, which Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2005) caution has negative consequences for teaching and learning practices. On a national level, Taylor (2015) expresses similar concerns that by including different purposes for the ANA "we will achieve none of them".

The DBE (2013b) continues to report an increase in performance levels, as is evident in the following:

South Africa's participation in TIMSS involved the testing of Grade 9 learners in Mathematics and Science in 2002 and again in 2011. South Africa's average in Mathematics improved over this period from 285 to 352 score points on the TIMSS scale that has a mean score of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 points. A similar trend was seen in Science. The size of South Africa's improvement in the 2002 to 2011 period, around 7 points a year, is about as large as one could hope to achieve. This is the rate of change that has been seen amongst the fastest improvers in the world. If South Africa continues at this rate, the country should be able to achieve the target put forward in the Action Plan, which was to reach the level of the best developing countries seen in 2009, by around 2023 (p. 5).

Past ANA results have been disputed by Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011). They point out that it is not possible to compare ANA results, as there is no inclusion of anchor questions. Suggestions advocate the use of the Rasch analysis tool, as used in many countries such as Australia. They point out that evidence from the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations from 2011 and 2012 (which have controls to allow for comparisons) show no improvement in learners' performance. The ANA, in comparison, show that there was an increase of 14 percentage points. Carrim (2013) cautions against the uncritical use of indicators to make "causal claims about how people learn" and to assess the quality of the South African education system.

Key to the success of the Brazilian national assessment system has been ensuring a "high level of credibility enjoyed by the results among stakeholders" (NEEDU, 2013, p 78), which is not the case in South Africa. The DBE does acknowledge the limitations of the ANA results within their reports (South Africa. DBE, 2010; South Africa. DBE, 2012b; South Africa. DBE, 2013b; South Africa. DBE, 2014b). In order to ensure better implementation of the ANA, the DBE will need to ensure that teachers' perceptions of the ANA are improved and that the diagnostic value of the ANA is communicated effectively to teachers (Vilakazi, Mohohlwane, Pillay, & Taylor, 2013).

2.4.5.2 The teachers' role

Ratnam-Lim and Tan (2015) describe how teachers “tend to administer tests with the aim of improving students’ test taking abilities rather than diagnosing children’s learning. This results in a “superficial implementation” of the assessment instead of an adjustment of pedagogy (Hopfenbeck, Petour, & Tolo, 2015, p. 46). Currently, it appears that teachers are reliant on exemplar papers to prepare learners (Graven & Venkat, 2014). Concerns have also been expressed about the similarity between the exemplar papers and final ANA tests (Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013). These researchers are of the view that it may encourage South African teachers to teach to the test, thereby excluding valuable concepts and skills from day to day activities simply because they are not included in the ANA question paper.

Another concern raised by Graven and Venkatakrishnan (2013) is the extent to which teachers and schools may be prioritising the CAPS Home Language and Maths curriculum at the expense of Life Skills and First Additional Language. Hopfenbeck et al. (2015) caution that this may result “in a rhythm of work that is mostly centred on check listing test content” (2015, p. 46). Rote learning and drill pedagogies are contradictory to the CAPS curriculum aims (South Africa. DBE, 2011d).

Graven and Venkat (2014) noted teachers’ concerns about the ANA preparation encroaching on teaching time. This pressure is further complicated by time required to mark and administrate the ANA within large class sizes. It is encouraging to note that “... marking at school was fairly consistent and in line with the approved memoranda” (South Africa. DBE, 2012b, p. 66). The findings of research on the Numeracy ANA indicate that the ANA may be encouraging teachers to accept concrete counting methods instead of encouraging learners to adopt more abstract methods. Learners continued to resort to basic counting strategies when solving multiplication or division problems within higher number ranges. This may be resulting in the sharp drop in achievement levels evident at the end of the Grade 3 level (Weitz & Venkat, 2013).

The ANA include four literacy benchmarks found in the PIRLS 2011 (South Africa. DBE, 2013a). Teachers are encouraged to include various aspects of these four benchmarks in their teaching activities. Evidence suggests that a majority of learners are able to complete activities found on the first level but struggle with higher levels (South Africa. DBE, 2013a). Le Cordeur (2014) reports that measuring learner performance and reading levels is counterproductive to learner progress and the introduction of standardised tests has “not produced the expected

change in our literacy levels” (pp. 144-145).

Spaull (2015) argues that increasing a bureaucratic form of accountability may not improve classroom practices if the underlying reason for progress is teacher capacity. He maintains that providing key stakeholders with ANA results will not lead to increasing achievement levels if staff core competencies are not improved. Spreen and Vally (2010) contend that:

In order for policy aims to effect change, policy design and implementation has to reflect the needs, understandings and social realities of its primary constituencies – not powerful stakeholders, protected interest groups or articulate policy crafters – ‘good policy’ should be measured by its relevance and applicability to those at whom it is aimed (pp. 443-444).

There is a dearth of research on how teachers perceive and implement the ANA in their classrooms. This empirical study addresses this gap by describing in rich detail the ANA implementation, at one level of the system, in an ordinary primary school.

2.4.5.3 Development and implementation of the ANA

Positively, the implementation of the national assessment policy ensures the curriculum is articulated (Gipps, 1996). Graven and Venkatakrishnan (2013) report that the ANA have resulted in an improvement in the standardisation and monitoring of content coverage and have ensured that assessment expectations are more explicit. This ensures learners are exposed to and encouraged to recall specific content or concepts.

It is intended that the implementation of the ANA will introduce a more robust sense of accountability (South Africa. DBE, 2011a), but Vandeyar and Killen (2003) caution that an emphasis on accountability may be to the detriment of individual learner needs. “Moreover, pressure to improve learning outcomes, which is necessary, can have the unintended effect that schools pay less attention to enrolling learners who do not perform well” (South Africa. DBE, 2011b, p. 13).

Language barriers also prevented learners from accessing the paper and administration procedures and caused disruptions to curriculum implementation (Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013). In a similar vein, albeit in a different context, Gipps (1996) warns that the introduction of standardised assessments within younger grades may cause stress for learners, which may result in “lower self-esteem, lowering of standards and a switch off from learning” (p. 13). Further consequences reported by Graven and Venkat (2014) include the ANA encouraging a

narrowing of the curriculum with an emphasis being placed upon core subjects to the neglect of other non-assessed subjects, and it negatively impacting on teaching time (pp. 300-301).

The demands of the ANA impact heavily on school resources as exemplars, administration documents, learner reports and improvement plans must be printed or photocopied. This “raises issues of equity across the system of education” (Graven & Venkat, 2014, p. 306). The NEEDU Report (2013) expresses concern that by introducing high-stakes accountability, schools would be encouraged to alter results in their favour. Shepard (1992) maintains the influence of political and media attention may lead to inflated results, leading to a false impression of learner improvement. There is thus a tension between eliciting best performance and getting standardisation for reliability (Gipps, 1996).

Concerns relating to the validity and reliability of the ANA have been raised. Dr Surette van Staden (personal communication, July 2014), at the University of Pretoria, who is a member of the Advisory Committee (South Africa. DBE, 2012a), confirmed that there is little data available on the techniques applied to ensure validity and reliability of the ANA, despite her repeated requests. Spaul (2013, p. 3) expresses the view that “the implementation and lack of external verification reduces the value” of the ANA initiative, and until the current implementation of the ANA (formulation, marking, invigilation and moderation processes) improves, they cannot reliably be used as an “indicator of progress” (p. 4). Despite the NEEDU (2013) report and DBE documents cautioning readers to avoid comparisons between different year tests, learner, school or provincial results, DBE reports continue to be presented in this format.

There have been numerous recommendations put forward as a method of improving the ANA. These include excluding efficient schools from the process (Van der Berg et al., 2011) or improving the implementation of the ANA by focusing on a single grade (Spaul, 2013). NEEDU (2013) and others recommend that the ANA be externally administered and moderated in at least one grade of primary school, and the findings presented to parents in a measurable format to allow for cross school/district/learner comparisons (Van der Berg et al., 2011). These researchers encourage the ANA to be “used as part of a formal Gr 9 qualification to prevent high dropout rates and to prevent learners from spending years in the school system only to leave with no formal qualification” (2011, p. 16).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed selected international and national literature to identify and discuss trends and developments in educational assessment. More specifically, it has described how the ascendancy of standards-based educational reform has given rise to new systems of accountability in which state-driven assessments play an increasingly important role and have far reaching effects on classroom practices. The chapter has provided a critical commentary on the development and implementation of an externally set but internally administered ANA introduced to support teaching and learning at the level of the classroom and gather information on the efficacy of the national system. Emergent challenges and issues associated with the ANA have been discussed.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines and justifies the selection of the research site and the participants in this case study research. The research site, an ordinary public primary school, is described in terms of its location, physical resources, ethos, and management structure. The selection of the class (Grade 3) and teachers that participated in the study is explained, as is the demographic profile of the five teachers and the Grade 3 learners.

3.2 THE SCHOOL PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

The research site is an ordinary public primary school located in an urban area of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Urban sprawl has altered the suburb from being located on the outskirts of town into a busy suburban location with large shopping complexes. Since 1994 the suburb has become increasingly multi-cultural reflecting the diversity of post-apartheid South African society.

The school opened in 1964 with 14 classrooms and five teachers. By 2014, 903 learners were enrolled in Grade 1 to 7. The school is dual medium offering English and Afrikaans. A former Model-C school, it is a quintile 5 level school, which means that it falls in the top 20% of public schools financially. The school fees are currently R6 800 per year. Concessions and subsidies are available.

3.2.1 Physical resources

The school has the basic school infrastructure, including access to running water and sanitation, and electricity is available throughout the school. There are sufficient classrooms, many of which have broken floorboards or ceilings that leak when it rains. The school has a large hall, however, the growth in enrolment has meant that it is not possible to accommodate all the learners. Assembly is therefore rotated between phase groups. The floor is in need of repair. If a large meeting is held, chairs are loaned from the neighbouring church. The school has two old prefabricated classrooms which are used as an aftercare facility. The school does not have art or music classrooms.

Since 1970, when expansions were made, there have been limited renovations at the school. Three small classrooms (for 24 learners) were built in 2011, bringing the total number of classrooms to 33. Modern technologies, including for example data projectors and smart boards, have not been introduced into the classrooms. Teachers rely on chalkboards and overhead projectors. The computer classroom was upgraded in 2013. At present there are three computers available for staff use and 32 computers available for the 903 learners.

Amenities at the school include a soccer field, two rugby fields, and four netball courts – two of which double up as tennis courts. The school has a swimming pool and a changing area which does not have ablution facilities. The two rugby fields are used for a variety of extramural activities including a walking group, and athletics and cricket practices. The Foundation Phase playground is small, with one jungle gym that is rotated weekly between the 160 Grade 1 learners.

The school has three 16-seater busses that transport the learners going on educational outings and attending sporting events. On a cultural level, the school has a number of clubs, such as drama, art, bible/youth, and chess. The school library is under-utilised and contains outdated books owing to a small budget allocation. From Grade 3 upwards, learners have a timetabled weekly library period, which is at the discretion of the class teacher. Learners are allowed to borrow one book from the library.

The school has a Parent Teacher Association [PTA], the members of which are mostly Afrikaans-speaking parents who live in the local community. Fundraising opportunities are planned to assist with school maintenance and financial assistance for learners who are chosen to represent the province for sport or cultural activities. Sponsorship is obtained to provide sports teams with uniforms. Two teachers voluntarily manage a stationery shop in order to provide cheaper stationery supplies for learners. In addition to this, the school also has a second-hand clothing ‘bank’ to support parents with cheaper uniform options. Grade 7 learners are encouraged to donate uniforms back to the school. The school does not have an official feeding scheme. However, a local church assists by providing sandwiches for learners who the staff members judge to be in need of a nutritional supplement.

Overall, the school’s facilities and apparatus, like that of its buildings and classrooms, are in general need of maintenance and/or repair. Challenges faced by this ex-Model C school include unusual pupil migration patterns, financial constraints and overcrowding and are similar to those described by Dr Hofmeyr in her research into the changing landscape of schools within

South Africa (Hofmeyr, 2000).

Unfortunately, because these schools were still perceived to be rich, white, 'ex-Model C' schools by officials, they have received no state assistance since 1994 other than the salaries of most teachers. From the school fees charged, the school had to pay the salaries of a few additional teachers to keep class sizes from exceeding manageable limits in classrooms built to accommodate far fewer learners, and fund all the other running costs. They had inherited good facilities from the past but now had to meet all the maintenance costs.

3.2.2 School management

Since opening in 1964 the school has had five principals, all of whom have been white, Afrikaans-speaking males. The current principal has been in the position for the past two years and was previously deputy principal at the school. This continuity has ensured a particular ethos which includes a responsible work ethic and professionalism and a compliance with official protocols and policies. School leadership is seen as playing an important role in forming and maintaining the ethos of the school since the "ideological orientation of the school leadership often shapes a schools' sociocultural and socio-political climate" (Carter, 2012, p. 74).

The school, an ex-model C school, has an active and efficient governing body. The management team is efficient and has appropriate systems in place to implement the 2014 ANA in the DBE's timeframes. The principal was supportive of this study and gave permission for me to attend all departmental meetings. He provided copies of important communications regarding the 2014 ANA. It would appear that the school ethos is one of policy compliance.

My decision to focus on the Foundation Phase was motivated by Fleisch's (2008) assertion that "South African's primary education achievement gap; with its distinct bimodal distribution, begins in the Foundation Phase, at the very earliest days of formal schooling and continues unbroken to the end of primary school and beyond" (p. 30). The Foundation Phase [FP] is headed by an experienced Head of Department [HOD]. A second experienced teacher was appointed as a FP HOD position during the 2014 school year. The Foundation Phase is well managed with each teacher receiving a budget to provide reading and apparatus resources for their class. Purchases are overseen by the HOD and teachers are required to maintain an inventory system. This system is not replicated in the Senior Phases.

3.2.3 Human resources

The school is staffed with by 38 teachers, four administration staff, one caretaker and six cleaning staff. Twenty teacher posts are funded by the EC DoE, with the rest being funded by the school's governing body. There are two female coloured members of staff with the majority consisting of Afrikaans-speaking white females and seven Afrikaans-speaking white male members. Apart from the six black cleaning staff, all the administrative staff are Afrikaans-speaking white females. The current teaching staff lacks diversity. Carter (2012) comments that "the last vestiges of apartheid schooling in contemporary South Africa is the lack of diversification of the teaching staff in former white-only schools" (p. 137). This is evident at the school.

Teachers are qualified and viewed as authorities in their fields. All teachers have attended CAPS training. Each grade is managed by a grade head, who takes responsibility for planning and administrative tasks. There are three subject advisors (Literacy, Maths and Life Skills) in the Foundation Phase. These roles are mostly symbolic, as advisors are only required to attend subject meetings arranged by the DBE and report back at staff meetings.

The CAPS curriculum is implemented and learner performance is reported to the EC DoE each term. From my teaching experience at the school, I identify with Ornstein and Hunkin's description that this school is characterised by "whole-group learning, fixed schedules, emphasis on uniformity of classroom experiences and the students are expected to passively assimilate what the teacher says" (2009, p. 58).

There is a strong emphasis on CAPS assessment requirements, namely that assessment is continuous and completed during daily class activities using oral, practical or written activities. This means that most teachers follow their regular teaching and assessment routine for the first six weeks of the term, with the remaining weeks dedicated to completing formal assessment tasks [FATS]. There is little time left for consolidation of concepts (Refer to Chapters 5 & 6 for further discussion).

3.3 THE SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE

I chose this school as it was convenient for my role as an inside researcher and I know from my experience of working there that the school has all the prerequisites for implementing the ANA according to the DBE timeline and directives. This school meets Christie, Butler, and Potterton's (2007, p. 82) criteria for a 'School that Works', as there is evidence that it:

- Focused on its central tasks of teaching, learning, and management with a sense of purpose, responsibility and commitment; it had strong organisational capacity, including leadership (in various forms) and management; and professionalism was valued.
- Carried out its tasks with competence and confidence.
- Had organisational cultures or mind-sets that supported hard work, expected achievement, and acknowledged success.
- Had strong internal accountability systems in place, which enabled it to meet the demands of external accountability, particularly in terms of Senior Certificate achievement.

3.4 MY ROLE

I selected this site as it would allow me to situate myself as an inside researcher. Unluer explains that this is beneficial as “insider-researchers generally know the politics of an institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it ‘really works’” (2012, p. 1). As a member of staff I had insight into the intricacies surrounding the non-rational and unconscious forces, of micro-politics, of emotions in workplaces, of power relations, and of the importance of organisational culture in setting norms and expectations as well as patterns of behaviour (Christie, Butler, & Potterton, 2007). I was able to approach participants in a manner that would “enable access, empathy, rapport and trust to be built up with a diversity of participants” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 296). I would also be on site to attend meetings and record informal events and communications. I used a critical friend and peer-review to minimise the potential for bias. This assisted in increasing the reliability of the data analysis and my interpretation of the findings.

The decision to focus the research at the Grade 3 level ensured I was able to maintain my distance from the case and I did not get too involved with the participants. At times I found it challenging to maintain the roles of an inside researcher and a member of staff with a workload of responsibilities to complete (Yin, 2009). I overcame this by adopting a more formal researcher persona when carrying out researcher duties and ensuring school responsibilities were organised and up to date, in order to ensure time was utilised effectively. My role as a participant observer is described further in Chapter 4.

3.5 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

3.5.1 Teacher profile

Table 3.1 describes the five Grade 3 teachers included in this study. Table 3.1 indicates all the Grade 3 classes are taught by qualified teachers. Teaching experience ranges from newly qualified to very experienced teachers. Two teachers were new to the group, one being the grade head who previously occupied a remedial teaching position within the school. The second, a newly qualified teacher, completed her qualification as an in-service teacher at the school during the course of 2013. It is evident that teaching roles within the Grade 3 classes are dominated by Afrikaans-speaking white females.

Table 3.1 Grade 3 Teacher Profiles

Teacher code	Years of experience	LoLT of the classroom	Teacher HL	Teacher qualification
T1	14 years	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	B.Prim.Ed
T2	6 years	English	English	B.Ed. (Hons) B. Journ.
T3	12 years	English	Afrikaans	B.Prim.Ed.
T4	9 years	English	English	B.A. (Social Work) P.G.C.E.(Foundation Phase)
T5	9 months	English	Afrikaans	B.Ed. (Intermediate Phase)

3.5.2 Grade 3 learner profile

The study was located within the five Grade 3 classes (see Figure 3.1: Demographic Information of Learners). The Foundation Phase is acknowledged as being a critical phase of schooling. The most compelling reason to focus on the FP is the fact that it is here that the base for all future learning is established. If the rudiments of reading, writing and calculating are not

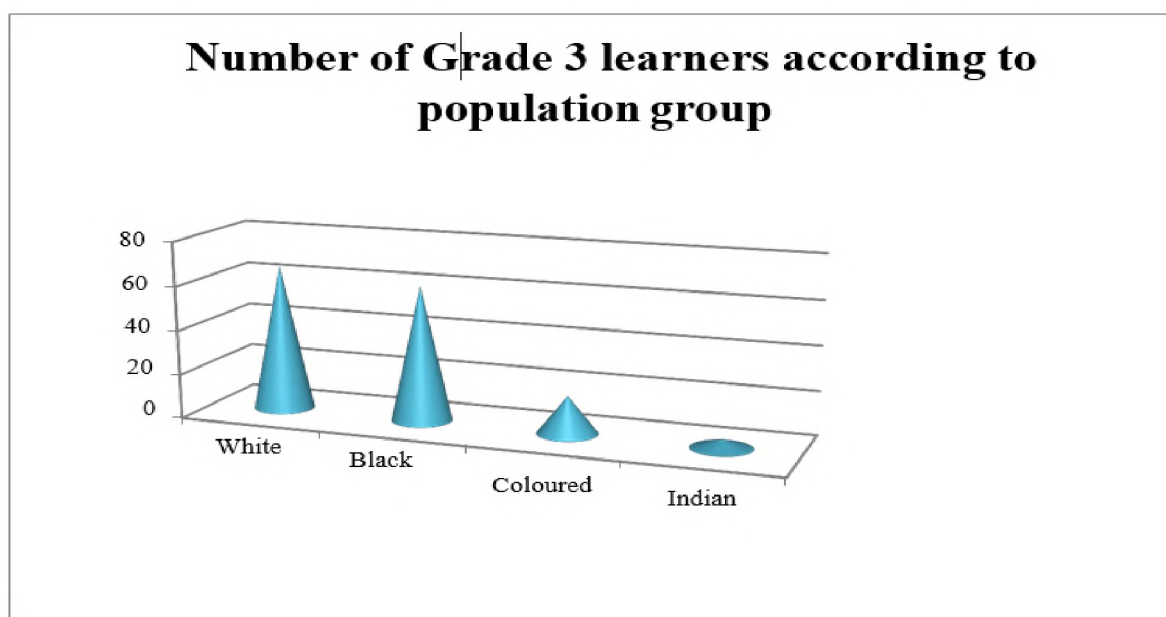
firmly entrenched by the end of Grade 3, then both learning opportunities and the larger life chances of young citizens will be curtailed (NEEDU, 2013).

In 2014 there was a total of 903 learners at the school, 404 of which are enrolled in the Foundation Phase. Four of the Grade 3 classes (118 learners) use English as the LoLT, and one uses Afrikaans as a LoLT (30 learners). This group of Grade 3 learners have written the ANA annually since 2011 and are accustomed to the implementation and formal format.

Figure 3.1 indicates a majority of the Grade 3 learners are representatives of the white or black population groups. The school is an aspirational school for emergent middle class families and one of a select few that offer Afrikaans as a LoLT.

This research site reflects the diversity within the South African education system. It has unusual pupil migration patterns as “parents, realising the importance of education for the life chances of their children, are making huge sacrifices to taxi them to school far from where they live, often spending more on taxi costs than school fees” (Hofmeyr, 2000, p. 5). Carter (2012) reports that these migration patterns have mitigating effects on the school community, as parents are not able to attend important meetings or meet extra-curricular responsibilities. This migration also introduces a number of learners whose home language may not align with the LoLT within the school.

Figure 3.1 Demographic Information of Grade 3 Learners

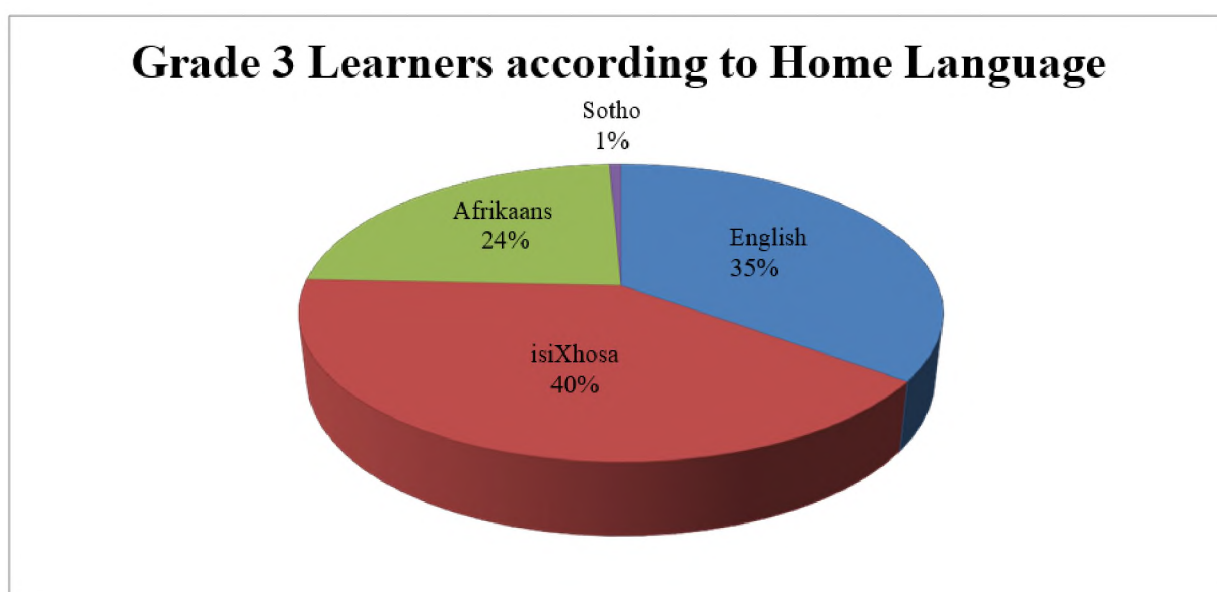


School policy allows parents to select the LoLT for their child. As a result, many learners are receiving instruction in a language that is not their home language, which occurs predominantly when isiXhosa and Afrikaans speaking learners are placed in a classroom where the LoLT is English. This is depicted in Figure 3.2. on the previous page.

Classes that are conducted in Afrikaans as the LoLT comprise a homogenous group of learners, while the classes conducted in English comprise speakers of a mixture of home languages. The majority of the Grade 3 learners speak a home language different to both the LoLT used within their classroom and the home language of their teacher. Learners in the classes where the LoLT is Afrikaans are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and are Afrikaans home language speakers. Their parents are active participants in the school community as many reside in the neighbourhood.

A number of learners have access to the school because their parents work at the local shopping centre or as domestic workers in the adjacent suburbs. As a result of the migration of many learners from other communities, Carter (2012) explains the difficulties for some learners as “not only do they now cross spatial boundaries but also they must navigate and negotiate different social and cultural norms and practices” (p. 6).

Figure 3.2 Grade 3 learners according to Home Language



Christie, Butler, & Potterton (2007) explain that schools such as this “do not overcome unequal

backgrounds, but do have greater effects on those who most need them and that teachers make the greatest difference of all ‘in-school factors’” (p. 16).

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described and justified the selection of an ordinary primary school and the participants of this case study. The decision to focus on Grade 3, a grade I do not teach, was purposively done to ensure that I was able to maintain some distance from the case. My role as a participant observer was described, as were the strategies used (critical friend and peer-review) to minimise the potential for bias.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an account of the methodological orientation of the research study. A description of the research goals and questions are provided. The selection and use of the case study method is discussed as well as an explanation of the associated data gathering methods incorporated within this study. The techniques used for data analysis are explained. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how issues of quality and rigour are addressed.

4.2 RESEARCH ORIENTATION

Given that this research is concerned with understanding a particular phenomenon (a regulatory state assessment) in a specific place (five Grade 3 classes at one school) and time (2014), a qualitative, interpretive orientation and case study method were selected. I was guided by Henning (2004), who asserts that the choice of a qualitative approach allows for the “natural development of action and representation to be captured” (p.3). According to Fleisch (2008), “qualitative research is best when it delves deeply in unfettered ways into the complex processes and contextual realities of teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 141).

My decision to use five Grade 3 teachers enabled me to maintain a “concern for the individual” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 17) while seeking to uncover the “multiple perspectives of all the players in a social setting” (Henning, 2004, p. 21). The use of multiple participants meant that I could collect “substantial situational information” (Henning, 2004. p. 20) about the implementation of the 2014 ANA. This would provide me with insights into “the subjective world” of individual teachers’ perceptions, intentions and choices surrounding the ANA (Cohen et al., 2011, p 17).

4.3 RESEARCH GOALS

This study describes and analyses how an ordinary public primary school prepares for, implements and uses the Annual National Assessment (ANA) with a view to understanding teachers’ perceptions of the ANA, and what, if any, impact the ANA is having on the curriculum

and pedagogy at the level of the classroom.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are as follows:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the ANA?
- How do teachers prepare for, implement and use the ANA tests in their classrooms?
- What, if any, challenges and issues arise?

4.5 CASE STUDY METHOD

Guided by the research goals and the focus on understanding a specific phenomenon (the ANA) at one level (Grade 3) in a particular context (one ordinary school), a case study method was used for this empirical study. According to Thomas (2013):

Case studies are analysis of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of inquiry will be an instance of a class or phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates (p. 594).

I was attracted to a case study method because “the case study presents a view of inquiry that takes a pragmatic view of knowledge, one that elevates a view of life in its complexity” (Thomas, 2013, pp. 590-591). The use of a case study method would enable me to generate a “thick description” (Geertz, 1993, p. 3) of the five teachers' perceptions and implementation of the 2014 ANA. This would help me to gain insights of the choices teachers made when implementing the ANA in their classrooms, and what, if any, issues they experienced.

A descriptive case study according to Merriam (1991) is “... useful in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted” (p. 27). The DBE publishes annual reports documenting school and learner performance results of the ANA but to date there is little, if any, research on the process of implementing the ANA at the micro level of the classroom. This study seeks to address this gap. The next section describes my role within the research process and the factors that were taken into consideration when adopting the role of participant observer.

4.6 MY ROLE IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

My role in the research required careful consideration as I was a teacher at the school and I was responsible for implementing the ANA at the Grade 2 level. In order to lessen bias of my personal understandings and opinions surrounding the 2014 ANA, I choose to focus my research on teachers at a different level (Grade 3) to my own (Grade 2). Nevertheless, I was aware of Yin's (2003) caution that participant observer carries with it a potential threat to the credibility of the research. I was able to benefit by having a prior knowledge of the "politics of the institution" (Unluer, 2012, p. 1), which provided an authentic understanding regarding the realities of the research site and insight into how best to approach participants. My role as participant observer and the factors I considered when undertaking the research are discussed in the next section.

4.6.1 Participant observation

A participant observer role was seen as appropriate because it "means that the researcher is explicitly situating him or herself in the midst of the research process" (Merriam, 1991, p. 99). As a participant observer I was on site for the entire 2014 ANA implementation process. Simons (2009) explains the benefit of this as:

... often the meaning is not contemporaneous. It is embedded in events, stories, incidents that preceded the particular observed event. Frequently we cannot tell the exact meaning without knowledge of the contexts and history before our arrival on the scene (p. 58).

Being on site meant that I was able to collect different kinds of data. I attended all DBE Foundation Phase and grade meetings, I held informal conversations and was able to observe the teachers, and I was able to conduct formal interviews. Because of my insider status, I have built good relationships with and was trusted by the Foundation Phase teachers. This helped to reduce the potential risk of the teachers 'window dressing' or 'telling' the researcher what they think she wants to know (Merriam, 1991).

When conducting observations, the researcher gets to "see things first hand and to use his or her own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is being observed" (Merriam, 1991, p. 88). As a participant observer I was able to interpret observations and events based upon my knowledge of the ethos and school environment. The role of participant observer deepened my understanding of the phenomenon as an "individual's behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individual's interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 15).

I was able to access events and participants that an outsider (external researcher) would have struggled to obtain (Yin, 2003). This helped with the authenticity of the data because “as far as other participants are concerned, [I] am simply part of the group” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 297). The participants were comfortable with me assuming the role of participant researcher. They recognised that my interest in the topic was genuine (Green & Thorogood, 2009).

I was able to observe the school setting, participants, activities and interactions, frequency and duration of events as well as the non-verbal, more subtle factors (Merriam, 1991). This yielded different kinds of data that are “more direct and less dependent on inference” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 244). This knowledge allowed me to “rule out spurious associations and premature theories” regarding the Grade 3 teachers’ beliefs and understandings of the 2014 ANA (Maxwell, 2009, p. 244).

The choice of participant observer requires careful consideration of a number of factors that may harm the credibility of the investigation. Firstly, it becomes difficult to adopt an external researcher role (Yin, 2003). The dual nature of being a member of staff and a researcher may lead to tensions. I experienced this initially when requesting to attend DBE meetings and obtain copies of official memos. It was assumed I would assist in providing feedback at staff meetings and adopt a leadership role amongst the Foundation Phase in the 2014 ANA implementation. In response I ensured my role as an observer took on a more explicit role. I was careful not to participate in conversations pertaining to the ANA in my personal capacity. When the ANA were discussed during meetings, I adopted an outside position and only responded factually.

The difficulty in maintaining a balance between being a ‘participant’ and an ‘observer’ requires deliberation as the role of participant may overshadow the observer role with less time allocated to “take notes or raise questions about events from different perspectives” (Yin, 2003, p. 96). The decision to focus the study at a Grade 3 level rather than within my own Grade 2 classroom assisted in maintaining this balance. These challenges were increased as a result of the extensive time period required to document the 2014 ANA process.

As a participant observer I was aware of the “highly subjective and therefore unreliable nature of human perception” (Merriam, 1991, p. 88). It may be the case that “an observer cannot help but affect and be affected by the setting and this interaction may lead to a distortion of the real situation” (Merriam, 1991, p. 103). As a teacher who has implemented the ANA since its introduction in 2011, I had to ensure my research did not “substantiate a pre-conceived position”

(Yin, 2003, p. 61). The use of member checking and a critical friend assisted me by offering alternate explanations and opinions. This had the potential to influence the quality and rigour of the research, which is explained in section 4.11.

After determining the orientation and methodology that would assist this case study to attain the research goals, the focus could turn towards the research design. The design would enable answers to the research questions to emerge. The following section details the research design implemented in this study.

4.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

Maxwell (2009) notes that when conducting qualitative research, a number of processes occur simultaneously. These are illustrated in Table 4.1, which summarises the three phases of the study. Data collection and analysis occurred throughout the three phases.

Phase 1, 15 January 2014 to 14 September 2014, consisted of the planning and preparation for the ANA implementation. Phase 2, 15 to 19 September 2014, was the period during which the ANA tests were implemented. Phase 3, 20 September to 17 November 2014, the post-ANA period, was when the marking and final grading of the ANA tests were done by the teachers, and the results were recorded and submitted to the DBE.

4.7.1 Phase 1: Pre-ANA planning and preparation

During this phase I observed and documented how the school and teachers prepared for the 2014 ANA. The preparation began with the process of registering the learners. The process was hindered by omissions and incorrect learner details being provided by the EC DoE. Teachers were frustrated by the confusion that this caused. This is discussed in Chapter 6.

As shown in Table 4.1, a number of meetings were held and administrative activities took place. The EC DoE held two ‘ANA Readiness’ workshops for school FP subject heads, the aim of which was to support subject heads in the preparation of their teachers for the ANA implementation. These were underpinned by a cascade model of teacher training, the efficacy of which has been questioned (Jansen & Taylor, 2003) (see Chapter 6: 6.3.4). The first workshop, held on 18 June, focused on Maths, while the second, held on 25 June, focused on English Home Language. Having attended these workshops, it appeared that the ‘workshops’ were in fact meetings at which the subject heads were briefed about the ANA and the weaker areas of learner performance, as reported in the ANA 2013 Diagnostic Report and 2014 Framework for

Improvement. Presentations on how to run Maths/Reading clubs were the main focus of the meetings.

Table 4.1 Research and design process

	TIMELINE	ANA ACTIVITY	RESEARCHER ACTIVITY	DATA GATHERING	ANALYSIS
PHASE 1: ANA Preparation	15 Jan – 14 Sept 2014	Registration of learners with EC DoE Preparation & planning for ANA implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC DoE principals' meeting • Math and Literacy subject advisor workshops • Parents are informed of ANA dates 	Obtain permission from EC DoE to conduct research Attend departmental & school meetings Interview 5 Grade 3 teachers Collect official communications & documentation	Methods of ethnography (especially participant observation) Field notes Research journal Conduct Pre-ANA teacher interviews Formulate case study data base	Transcribe interviews in order to begin preliminary analysis that would inform the next stage of data gathering Consider validity and ethical factors Formulate analytical memos
PHASE 2: ANA Implementation	15 Sept – 19 Sept 2014	Mathematics & English Home Language ANA tests implemented HL and Maths EC DoE Grade 3 memo marking meetings conducted by EC DoE	Observe ANA implementation Audio recording of HL and Maths ANA implementation Attend memo marking meetings Collect all official documentation	Field notes Research journal Audio recordings of ANA implementation Write up audio recordings Organise and store case study data base	Maintain immersion and familiarisation with data generated Rereading transcribed interviews to remain close to data Consider validity and ethical factors
PHASE 3: Post-ANA	20 Sept – 17 Nov 2014	ANA papers are marked & graded ANA scripts are verified by peer teachers Administration is concluded Selected scripts are forwarded to the EC DoE for verification Marks are submitted to the EC DoE Feedback is provided to parents	Attend Grade 3 teachers' marking sessions Conduct follow-up post-ANA interviews with five Grade 3 teachers Interview HOD Interview Principal Collect all official documentation	Field notes Research journal Conduct interviews Organise and store case study data base	Inducing themes Interpretive analysis Coding Analysis of all the data Elaboration Interpretation and checking

	Jan – Sept 2015		Retreat from research site Interview EC DoE participant Grade 3 teacher feedback and focus group discussion	Field notes Research journal	Writing up report Reflect on validity, ethics and limitations of research Continue process of data analysis and interpretation Begin to draw up written report on research study
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At a school staff meeting (21 July 2014), the important dates for Term 3 were discussed including how the timetable would be adjusted to accommodate the ANA tests. At a subsequent Foundation Phase meeting (25 July 2014), the subject heads gave feedback from the EC DoE meetings.

The EC DoE held a principals’ meeting on 28 August 2014. This was attended by the Deputy Principal, an FP HOD and me. Attendees received the ANA administration manual, the pages of which were not sequential and an official notice of the Grade 3 and 6 memorandum discussion sessions (as discussed in Chapter 6: 6.4.3). The school took the responsibility to ensure that a single copy of the ANA administration manual was distributed to all grade heads. As required by the EC DoE, the school informed the parents in writing of the 2014 ANA dates.

During Phase 1, I interviewed the five Grade 3 teachers, the purpose of which was to elicit their ideas and perceptions of the ANA (as analysed in Chapter 5). The interviews were transcribed. Throughout this phase, I continued to immerse myself in the literature on educational assessment. This helped with the initial analysis of the interviews and the follow-up questions that needed to be asked.

4.7.2 Phase 2: ANA implementation

I observed and audio-recorded the writing of the ANA tests on 16 September (Home Language) and 18 September (Maths).

Audio recording devices were placed in each Grade 3 classroom on both days that the ANA tests

were written. The five Grade 3 teachers started the audio recording at the time the scripts were handed out and the recording continued until the scripts were collected by the teachers. I observed T5 implement the English Home Language ANA and T3 implement the Maths ANA. I recorded my observations as field notes and used my research journal to reflect on my observations.

The audio recordings were not transcribed. Instead, I listened to the recordings a number of times and made detailed notes. These were used to draw a timeline documenting what happened in each classroom while the tests were being written. Reflections were recorded in my research journal. The following extracts (Figures 4.1 and 4.2) from my research journal illustrate my thoughts during Phase 2:

Figure 4.1 Research journal extract 1

Tuesday 16 September 2014

The Grade 3 learners appeared relaxed about having me observe in their class as they know me from when they were in Grade 2. The teacher begins by going over the cover page and having the learners fill in their details. She appears flustered when trying to get them to fill in their date of birth as the format is not familiar to the learners (year/month/day). She allowed a child to go to the bathroom (twice) and he did not return until she sent another learner to fetch him. She collected the papers before the learners had had a full hour to write. She did not start the ANA at the stipulated time because the cover page took longer to complete. She reminded one learner about “what they spoke about yesterday” when he queried a punctuation question. I observed two children assisting each other while she was distracted. Some learners shared stationery, such as erasers.

NOTE: Teachers receive the exact number of question papers for the number of learners in their class. This makes reading of the questions challenging for them, as they need to read questions from a learner’s test book during the implementation.

Figure 4.2 Research journal extract 2

Thursday 18 September 2016

Today's observation was an interesting experience. T3 seemed to struggle to control the class and resorted to shouting. The learners were scattered around the classroom, with some working at desks and others seated on the floor in ways that could enable them to copy from each other. The teacher started by reading a question and then allowing learners to write their responses. Later on she did not read the printed questions and switched instead to mediating the question for learners. She gave the class extra time to complete the ANA and helped them by giving clues when they asked questions.

Audio recording of T2: T2 did not provide answers for practice questions. Her learners were given a lot of autonomy. No mediation of questions. Class settles and works independently. Thoughts to explore: Are teachers mediating too much? What effect is this having on learners?

Audio recording of T3: Initial emphasis is on the placement of learners around the classroom. It appears loud and disorganised. She moves quickly through the cover page. Learners become confused. She moves through the practice section. T3 begins by reading each question as per test but begins to mediate and eventually rephrases questions as she reads to ensure learners' understanding. Good pace is maintained but learners are allowed to negotiate and interrupt the process. This causes frustration for some learners and the teacher. Little emphasis is placed on implementing ANA requirements. Teacher makes reference to prior instruction.

The EC DoE verified the ANA tests writing at 13 primary schools and it held two Grade 3 memo marking meetings, which were attended by a representative of the Grade 3 teachers and me. The teachers were required to take a sample of tests scripts from their classes. These were marked at the meeting. I attended both these meetings and the subsequent teacher feedback sessions.

The EC DoE distributed a Compact Disc [CD] containing all the administrative documents and forms pertaining to the 2014 FP ANA tests. This was the first time FP teachers had sight of forms they needed to complete. These forms were different from those given to the Senior Phase teachers prior to the writing of the 2014 ANA tests, and there were errors on the forms, all of which resulted in confusion among the FP teachers.

4.7.3 Phase 3: Post-ANA activities

During this phase, the Grade 3 teachers marked, graded, and completed the administrative paperwork of the ANA. Repeated errors on the EC DoE's mark sheet analysis were a source of frustration with requests for correct templates being overlooked (refer to Chapter 6: 6.3.3).

Moderation of the scripts was done internally by select teachers. A sample of Grade 3 and Grade 6 scripts were sent to the EC DoE for external moderation. The process was overseen by the School Management whose responsibility it was to submit the results timeously. According to the EC DoE (email communication, 17 November 2014), only eleven schools in Circuit Nine had submitted their results. The school participating in this study met the submission date. The school management collected and stored the ANA test scripts.

During this phase, I continued to observe the unfolding process, and I conducted follow-up interviews with the five Grade 3 teachers, the HOD and the Principal. Transcription of the interviews and further document analysis was also done. Guided by Geertz (1993), I realised that interviewing an EC DoE official, outside of the case, would help me to gain insights for understanding the case (See Appendix D). The findings are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION

According to Yin (2012, p. 10), "good case studies benefit from having multiple sources of evidence". I used multiple data sources because, as Cohen et al., (2011) assert, it enables one to generate a 'thick description' of the case and enhances the trustworthiness of the data. I used ethnographic techniques, especially participant observation and semi-structured interviews to observe, and examine all aspects of the case. Making field notes and keeping a research journal enabled me to record and reflect on the research process, and document my thoughts and hunches during this process. By employing different tools, I was able to record authentic, rich details involving all aspects of the case as recommended by Cohen et al. (2011).

4.8.1 Interviews

One way to understand what is occurring in schools is to seek to "access school-based actors' experiences and perceptions of their encounters in schools through use of qualitative instruments, such as interviews" (Carrim, 2013, p. 45). I interviewed the five Grade 3 teachers before and after the ANA tests were written in order to understand their perceptions and experiences of the ANA. I also interviewed the school Principal, and the FP HOD for the

purpose of gaining broader insights into how the school and its management were responding to the ANA. In order to gain additional insights for understanding the case, I interviewed an EC DoE official (Appendix D). This provided me with “... powerful human scale data on macro-political decision making, fusing theory and practice” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 291).

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), the object of qualitative interviewing is “... learning how people construct their realities – how they view, define, and experience their world” (p. 101). Interviews are seen as appropriate for a qualitative case study because they enable one to “uncover all versions of the truth” (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 95) and gather specific information (Merriam, 1991; Green & Thorogood, 2009).

However, Rule and John (2011) caution that interviews require “preparation, interpersonal skills and communicative competence” (p. 64). This informed my decision to use semi-structured interviews which, according to these authors, “involve a pre-set of questions which initiate the discussion, followed by further questions which arise from the discussion” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 65). I also gave a lot of thought to the type of questions I asked and was flexible and accommodated interviewees by rescheduling interviews to suit them. I was also able to get “people to relax enough to answer a predefined series of questions completely” (Taylor & Bodgan, 1998, p. 88), and was able to establish and maintain a casual atmosphere in the interviews. As a colleague, my insider status meant that I was trusted by the teachers. They responded well, were open to the process and eager to share their views and experiences of the ANA. I had to remind the teachers to express their ideas and not assume that because I was a colleague, I already knew the answer to questions asked. This flexibility helped me to “capture the uniqueness and complexity” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 65) surrounding each participant’s experience of the ANA.

I found the interview process with the five teachers encouraged them to “articulate things that they have not articulated before” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 98) and encouraged further reflection surrounding the purpose of implementing a standardised assessment at this level. This was evident from the participants’ responses. They used discursive language to explore issues and returned at a later stage to comment on a previous question. These experiences are analysed in Chapter 5 and 6.

When conducting interviews with the Principal, I experienced Green & Thorogood’s (2009) observation that:

similarities and differences both in aspects of social identity and experience and in social power will clearly have a major impact on the social encounter that is ‘the interview’, and shape which particular experience interviewees choose to discuss, and how they talk about them (p. 7).

The interview with the Principal was initially shaped by our roles within the school rather than as a researcher and a participant. I felt that I had to establish my credibility as a researcher rather than a Grade 2 teacher during the interview before the social identity transformed further. In this situation I experience the tension between the role of researcher (researcher persona) and educator (practitioner persona) (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2012).

In order to obtain a richer perspective on the 2014 ANA, I chose to conduct follow-up interviews with all five Grade 3 teachers. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) caution that it may be difficult to “gain the same ambiance” (p. 74) when selecting to conduct subsequent interviews. Follow-up teacher interviews were conducted during Stage 3 (see Table 4.3) in order to provide an opportunity for clarification and reflection on the 2014 ANA experience. I was able to rely on my role as a participant observer who had established meaningful relationships with respondents to ensure that a similar confidential, comfortable ambiance was maintained (Henning et al. 2004).

As a long-time member of staff, I had insight into different teachers’ personalities and the way they may respond within different situations. Teachers were less inclined to “manage the impression” I may form of them (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 98) and less concerned with being perceived as ‘good people’ (Henning et al., 2004). I was able to read non-visual cues and subtle nuances in language use and could relate and interpret contextual cues, as I was responsible for implementing the ANA within my own Grade 2 classroom.

My insider status and role as a participant observer helped me to overcome the perceived limitations of interviews noted by Taylor and Bodgan (1998). I had the contextual cues to comprehend the significance of the participants’ language and jargon use. Insider knowledge assisted me when formulating assumptions about events during the ANA implementation that I was not able to observe or that an outsider may not have been privy to.

As the interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format requiring personal opinions and perceptions surrounding the ANA to be expressed, consideration of the ethical aspects that could arise had to be given (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Some participants expressed sensitive opinions regarding colleagues, management and learners. This issue is discussed in 4.12.

4.8.1.1 Interview Schedule

The research goals guided me in the formulation of the semi-structured interview questions. It was important to formulate good questions, as “specific information that may become relevant to a case study is not readily predictable” (Yin, 2003, p. 59). I interviewed the five Grade 3 teachers twice: in Phase 1 (see Appendix A) and Phase 3 (see Appendix C). I relied on my prior experience of implementing the ANA as a frame of reference when determining the questions and seeking clarification of respondents’ answers. Merriam (1991) contends that the “way in which questions are worded is a crucial consideration in extracting the type of information desired” (p. 79).

I chose to use open-ended questions because they are flexible and enabled me to probe participants’ perceptions and opinions (Cohen et al., 2011). I followed the advice that the “sequence and framing” of the questions should flow logically; beginning with less threatening questions that encouraged respondents to feel comfortable in expressing their views and experiences (Cohen et al., 2011). Questions were structured in terms of the topics covered but each participant was able to “determine the kinds of information produced” (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 94). As the interview progressed, I allowed participants to respond before seeking further clarification (Rule & John, 2011). The schedule was altered slightly when interviewing the Principal, FP HOD and the EC DoE official in order to elicit data pertaining specifically to their roles (see Appendix B & D).

My prior teaching experiences and personal relationships, together with the use of open-ended questions, encouraged a rapport to develop from the start of each interview. The structure of the interviews schedule permitted opportunities for flexibility and clarity of meaning to be established. This technique encouraged respondents to respond truthfully (Cohen et al., 2011).

4.8.1.2 Informed consent

I submitted a Research Application form to the Eastern Cape Department of Education requesting permission to conduct the study within the selected primary school.

Permission was obtained from the Principal for permission to access the research site. I discussed the study with members of staff. Each participant was provided with a detailed description the purpose of the research and an explanation of the research goals and questions prior to beginning the study. Participants were assured that the research would be conducted in a sensitive manner that assured them of their right to privacy (Henning et al., 2004).

The HOD, EC DoE participant and all five Grade 3 teachers gave their informed consent without participants feeling “coerced or pressurised to volunteer” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 80). I availed myself to the participants to answer questions and conducted the research in an open manner among all members of staff.

4.8.1.3 Recording & transcription of interviews

Interviews were recorded with participants’ consent using an audio device. In order to gather a thicker, rich description of each participant’s perceptions and experiences of the 2014 ANA, I chose to transcribe each interview without translation (Cohen et al., 2011). Transcribing of interviews occurred during the data collection stage as Merriam (1991) upholds that “simultaneous analysis and data collection allows the researcher to direct the data collection stage more productively, as well as develop a data base that is both relevant and parsimonious” (p. 145). When attending meetings, I obtained permission to audio record events but did not transcribe the recordings. This allowed me to return to the data at a later stage for clarification and reflection.

The process of transcription allowed me to work closely with the data (Henning et al., 2004), as “transcriptions are decontextualized, abstracted from time and space” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 426). As illustrated in Figure 4.3, my reflections on some of the teacher interviews, contextual factors and non-verbal aspects pertaining to each interview were recorded in the research journal in order to ensure a more comprehensive record of the event (Henning et al., 2004). I used my research journal and field notes to reflect on and improve further interviews. The extract in the text box shows how, after the T1 interview, I was able to adjust the interview introduction in order to reassure the teachers that I was not looking for ‘correct’ answers. I drew their attention to the fact that as a participant observer some of their answers may seem obvious to me, but their perceptions of the ANA were important.

Figure 4.3 Reflections on teacher interviews

9 September 2014

I interviewed T1 today. It went well. Two of the interview questions seemed similar. I will have to adjust the interview schedule. The teacher was nervous and tried hard to give me the “correct” answers. She was not familiar with the term formative assessment and asked me to explain the meaning after I had turned off the recording device. She went on to share a few strong opinions regarding the EC DoE and assessment with both the CAPS and ANA.

10 September 2014

I interviewed T3 today. She provided an interesting comparison with the implementation of the ANA in the Western Cape. She shared strong opinions of assessment in terms of CAPS and ANA. She struggled to comment on formative assessment. She expressed concern regarding management’s view of the ANA results.

4.8.2 Observation using field notes

Field notes are able to “provide contextual information which is salient but perhaps not immediately obvious and not part of the formal data collection procedures” (Merriam, 1991, p. 102). The advantage of recording observations through field notes is that they are written both “in situ and away from the situation” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 235). In order for my field notes to be effective, I followed Taylor & Bogdan’s (1998) recommendations that field notes should include descriptions of people, events, and conversations as well as descriptions of the observer’s actions, feelings, and hunches or working hypotheses.

The use of field notes allowed the sequential process of the ANA to be recorded as it unfolded. In this case study, field notes included informal conversations with other members of staff and my observations regarding verbal and non-verbal aspects of meetings or interviews. I was careful to try and record and reflect on observations before returning to the field. Cohen et al. (2011) encourage researchers to follow this process “as there is little point in returning to the classroom or school and reducing the impact of one set of events by superimposing another more recent set” (p. 301). I found the research journal, field notes and audio recordings useful during later stages of the case study as I could return to confirm an event or comment, or to clarify proceedings.

4.8.3 Document analysis

Official documents are factual reports, easily available on-line and inexpensive to access (Cohen et al., 2011). The use of documentary data ensures that the research is situated within “context of the problem being investigated” (Merriam, 1991, p. 109). I found that official documents provided valuable insights and were able to contextualise the 2014 ANA within the present education landscape of South Africa.

Documents are “a product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world,” (Merriam, 1991, p. 109). I adhered to Yin’s (2003) advice that researchers must ‘read’ between the lines of documents. My attention was drawn to key issues such as the reliability of the data reported within the DBE diagnostic reports, which is disputed by experts such as Taylor (2015) and Spaul (2015). Unlike other methods of data collection (e.g. interviews), meanings within documents are not co-constructed and can be a reliable source of information (Henning et al., 2004). I found this useful as “analytical judgements have to be made throughout the data collection phase” (Yin, 2003, p. 61).

Documents used as data sources included:

- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (Foundation Phase English Home Language, Mathematics and Life Skills)
- ANA Administration Manual
- DoE’s ANA Diagnostic Reports (2011-2014)
- NEEDU Report (2013)
- DHET/DBE Action Plan 2025
- National Protocol for Assessment Grades R to 12
- The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments
- ANA exemplars and test scripts
- Communiqués from the DBE and District Office
- Minutes of meetings
- Field notes
- Research journal

4.9 ORGANISATION AND STORAGE OF DATA

It became evident during the research process that the amount and pace of data generated could become overwhelming if not recorded and organised in a methodical manner. Data had to be stored in a safe location. I used two files to store hard copies. Table 4.2 illustrates the files' contents.

Table 4.2 Contents of data files

FILE 1	FILE 2
Departmental data	Grade 3 group data (copies of verified results)
School management data	T1
Correspondence to parents	T2
ANA data (HL & Maths scripts, exemplars)	T3
	T4
	T5

I was mindful that data needed to be classified in a way that was easily retrievable. As illustrated in Table 4.2, I assigned each teacher a subdivision that contained interview transcripts, my notes and hard copies of communications they shared with me. Guided by Merriam (2002), the case record facilitated a case audit trail, which enables other researchers to validate or challenge the findings of my study.

4.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis within case studies allows “for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290). Merriam explains that data analysis within a case study is a “complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation” (1998, p. 178).

My role as a qualitative researcher required “the ability to collate and synthesize data from different sources, to make inferences and interpretations based on evidence, to know how to test inferences and conclusions (and how to test them against rival explanations)” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 296). The research questions and use of a critical friend guided me in this process.

Researcher priorities when working within an interpretive epistemological framework include “searching for understanding rather than knowledge; for interpretations rather than measurements; for values rather than facts” (Watling & James, 2002, p. 267). It is important to note that data analysis was not a separate process but occurred throughout each phase of this study, slowly emerging as events and situations pertaining to the ANA unfolded (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) (refer to Table 4.1). The “principle of fitness for purpose” determined the method of analysis (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 538). By adhering to this process of analysis, a thick, rich description of events began to emerge (Geertz, 1993).

4.10.1 The process of data analysis

Merriam (1991) maintains that during the process of analysis:

...the outline begins with a search for regularities – things that happen frequently with groups of people. Patterns and regularities are then transformed into categories into which subsequent items are sorted (p. 131).

With this in mind, the initial analysis involved reading through all the field notes, journal entries, and transcribed interviews, which also helped me to remain close to the data. Through this process, I developed hunches and ideas. I used initial ideas to draw up tentative themes without being overly concerned, at that stage, with their relevance to the research goals.

It was important to acknowledge the influence of personal bias during the process of analysis as my role as a participant observer may lead to “being over-selective, unrepresentative, and unfair to the situation in hand, to the choice of data and the interpretation placed on them” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 540) (see Section 4.11). It was important that I reflect on my prior knowledge and assumptions of the ANA with the “knowledge emerging from inquiry of systematically obtained material” (Materud, 2001, p. 484).

I found Taylor and Bogdan’s (1998, pp. 142-150) suggestions useful for developing themes and categories. These include:

- Read and reread your data
- Keep track of hunches, interpretations, and ideas
- Look for emerging themes
- Construct typologies
- Develop concepts and theoretical propositions
- Read the literature

- Develop charts, diagrams, and figures to highlight patterns in the data
- Write analytic memos

As illustrated in Tables 6.1 to 6.3, events of the ANA were further organised into chronological order (time-series analysis in quantitative research), as “the resulting array (...) may not only produce an insightful descriptive pattern but also may hint at possible causal relationships, because any presumed causal condition must precede any presumed outcome condition” (Yin, 2012, p. 16).

I found that the EC DoE, school management and five teachers each had unique timeframes that overlapped and relied on each other. I was able to identify similarities and differences, which were useful. The descriptive pattern allowed for the process of implementing the ANA, and further challenges and difficulties experienced, to be determined (see Chapters 5 & 6). The use of diagrams and flow charts in my research journal helped me to see the links between individual teachers and the practices they employed during the ANA implementation. Further themes and categories emerged by reflecting on the research questions and goals of the study.

The process of letting themes and categories emerge from a variety of sources was important as Yin (2012) maintains that the researcher must “define the codes to be used and the procedures for logically piecing together the coded evidence into broader themes – in essence creating your own unique algorithm befitting your particular case study” (p. 15). This process led to the formulation of analytical memos, which allowed me to discern contrasting patterns and trends from which central categories or themes emerged. Merriam (1998) explains that, “devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study’s purpose, the investigator’s orientation, and knowledge and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves” (p. 179).

Koro-Ljungberg, Mazzei, and Ceglowski (2013) described this as a “bricolage approach, blending theories and methods in different and pragmatic ways” (p. 135). By portraying participants’ views and experiences of the ANA, a deeper, thicker description of the case began to emerge, “as the analysis involves the development of conceptual categories, typologies or theories that interpret the data for the reader” (Merriam, 1991, p. 133). Emergent themes were as follows:

- Teachers’ perceptions of the purposes of assessment
- Teachers’ perceptions of the CAPS assessment requirements

- Teachers' roles and responsibilities in the 2014 ANA preparation, implementation and administration
- Teachers' prior experiences of the ANA
- Pedagogy/classroom activities
- Language challenges
- Logistical challenges

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) in the analysis “concepts are used to illuminate social processes and phenomena that are not readily apparent through the descriptions of specific instances” (p. 144). By analysing and noting the discourse used by participants, I was able to determine their views towards the ANA (see Chapter 5: 5.5). I was conscious of “discrepant evidence and negative cases” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 244) and care had to be taken that I recognised both obvious and more subtle themes, as Cohen et al. (2011) maintain that “significance rather than frequency is a hallmark of case studies, offering the researcher an insight into the real dynamics of situations and people” (p. 294).

The process of data analysis allowed me to determine patterns and to “generalise from them” (Conole, 1998, p. 14). According to Cohen et al., (2011) emergent theory is a key characteristic of the interpretive paradigm, as it provides “sets of meanings which yield insight and understandings of people’s behaviour” (p. 18). This process allowed me to make conceptual links that allowed the process to move from descriptions and events within the data towards an interpretive level. This shift from a descriptive towards an interpretive level is essential within qualitative research as it allows the “data to be interrogated” (Henning et al., 2004, p. 102). These authors caution that if this shift is not included in the data analysis process, it “may lead to superficial and naïvely realistic findings” (Henning et al., 2004, p. 102). This stage of “formative analysis” allowed me to “seek to provide understandings and explanations” of the data (Watling and James, 2002, p. 272). As this stage concluded the writing up stage could begin.

I followed advice by Cohen et al., (2011) that the portrayal of real incidents is essential to support key points. I included transcripts of participants’ interviews and reflections from my research journal as this allowed events surrounding the 2014 ANA “to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290). Yin (2012) concludes that this “will allow readers to judge independently your later interpretation of the data” (p. 15).

4.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to ensure quality and rigour, consideration had to be given to ensuring that issues of validity, reliability and triangulation were addressed. According to Henning et al., (2004), to validate is to check (for bias, for neglect, for lack of precision and so forth), to question (all procedures and decisions – critically), to theorise (looking for and addressing theoretical questions that arise throughout the process – not just towards the end) and to discuss and share research actions with peers as critical in-process reviewers.

Merriam (1991) maintains that “rigour in a qualitative case study derives from the researcher’s presence, the nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of the data, the interpretation of perceptions, and rich, thick description” (p. 120). My presence as a participant observer assisted in ensuring that rigour was maintained. I relied on member checking and a critical friend to identify issues of validity, and worked closely with my supervisor to address the questions that arose during the study.

4.11.1 Validity

Yin (2003) contends that validity and quality are compromised when “a case study investigator fails to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures and that ‘subjective’ judgements are used to collect data” (p. 35). I addressed potential threats to external validity during the research design stage through the use of theory. I relied on case study methodology and the creation of strong boundaries by focussing on the research goal and the research questions (see section 4.4) (Maxwell, 2009; Yin, 2012). Maxwell (2009) advises that reflection on the research goals may assist to uncover “potential validity threats or sources of bias” (p. 16).

Internal validity refers to assumptions that may be incorporated into the research design and methodologies used to conduct the research (Materud, 2001). Cohen et al. (2011) encourage careful consideration of the participant observer role in relation to validity. My supervisor and a research journal enabled me to work through personal biases. These included:

- Prior events within the classroom – social or ANA related
- Researcher presence altering teacher/learner behaviour
- Researcher inability to balance the alternate roles of teacher/researcher

My prior experience of the ANA made it important for me to consider potential researcher bias and reactivity. Maxwell (2009) maintains that the concern is not with eliminating the bias but

rather with ensuring that there is understanding and reflection on how the researchers' values may influence the "conduct and conclusions of the study" (p. 243). My decision to focus on a grade where I was not teaching (Grade 3) helped me to avoid the potential risk of bias and reactivity.

Rule and Jon (2011) caution that "researchers need to be aware of how their presence as researchers who make observations may be influencing the behaviour and response of research participants" (p. 68). I had to develop my researcher identity when interviewing colleagues and friends. Initially this was difficult and I had to be explicit when starting each interview. Owing to our different professional roles I experienced challenges when interviewing the Principal (see Section 4.8.1). There were times when relationships between teachers and management appeared strained (for personal or professional reasons). I had to remain neutral without appearing disinterested.

It was a challenge working within the tension of being a teacher and a researcher at the school. I found that reflecting in my research journal helped me to work within this tension. The literature of ethnographic research methods helped develop my confidence as a researcher and it helped me to avoid being reactive during interviews. Merriam (1991) explains that "interviewing, especially semi-structured and unstructured formats, fares well when compared to other data collection techniques in terms of the validity of the information obtained" (p. 86). The interview schedule was piloted on an ex-teacher (Grade 3) using open-ended questions. I transcribed these audio-recordings and noted non-verbal details within the research journal in order to maintain validity of the data.

I used tactics of pattern-matching and explanation building when analysing the data from interviews (Yin, 2009). When analysing data, I had to ensure I did not make assumptions based on my insider knowledge because I was aware that "familiarity can lead to loss of objectivity" (Unluer, 2012, p. 6).

Interview transcripts were made available to participants for member checking and comment. This helped to clear up misunderstandings and lessen bias (Maxwell, 2009). Yin (2012), writes that "they (researchers) may not seem to protect sufficiently against such biases as a researcher, seeming to find what she or he had set out to find". I used peer review and consultation with my supervisor to overcome this potential bias.

I returned to meet with the Grade 3 teachers during the writing up process and led a focus group

discussion on their experiences and reflections on the study (see Section 4.12.2) to ensure issues of validity were addressed.

4.11.2 Member checking

Henning et al. (2004), explain that “the researcher remains accountable for the ethical quality of the inquiry and should take great care and, when in doubt, ask advice” (2004, p. 74). The authenticity of the description was important and the analysis of the 2014 ANA in an ordinary public school needed to provide reliable evidence that could, given the same criteria, be replicated at a later stage. I used member checking and peer review to enhance the reliability of my interpretation of the data.

Cohen et al., (2011) caution researchers to be aware that:

...the danger of interactionist and interpretive approaches is their relative neglect of the power of the external – structural – forces to shape behaviour and events. There is a risk in interpretive approaches that they become hermetically sealed from the world outside the participants’ theatre of activity – they put artificial boundaries around subjects’ behaviour (p. 21).

The risk associated with this study was the narrowing of focus to specific events within the data that are not interpreted within a larger educational context. By including a participant (the EC DoE official) from outside the artificial school boundary, I was able to situate the research in a wider field and provide a more reliable perspective of the 2014 ANA.

Yin (2003) explains that the “goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (p. 37). Participants reviewed interview transcripts and I returned to the research site to conduct a follow up focus group discussion during the writing up process. A critical friend was able check the plausibility of my interpretations. During the writing up process I followed Merriam’s (1998) advice that “...by leaving readers to draw their own conclusions, researchers risk misinterpretation” (p. 179).

4.11.3 Triangulation

Triangulation “requires the researcher to view the situation through different methods or data types as part of the analysis process” (Richards, 2005, p. 140). This study included a variety of participants and data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews, participant observation, field notes, document analysis, and the use of a research journal.

Yin (2009) emphasised the importance of the inclusion of multiple sources of evidence within a case study design (p. 115). In this way, I was able to use triangulation as a method of assessing the “generality of the explanations” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 236) or findings that were emerging. This strategy “reduces the risk of chance associations and systematic biases” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 245).

4.12 RESEARCH ETHICS

Maxwell (2009) contends that “ethical concerns should be involved in every aspect of design” (p. 216). Cohen et al., (2011) explain further that:

Ethical considerations pervade the whole process of research; these will be no more so than at the stage of access and acceptance, where appropriateness of topic, design, methods, guarantees of confidentiality, analysis and dissemination of findings must be negotiated with relative openness, sensitivity, honesty, accuracy and scientific impartiality. (p. 83)

I obtained permission to undertake this case study from the EC DoE and the Principal. The five Grade 3 teachers provided informed consent and maintained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Pseudonyms ensured confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen et al., 2011).

As the location was ordinary, public school non-maleficence was an important factor. The research project had to consider the consequences for both the researcher and participants (Cohen et al., 2011) as the context is a public organisation with obligations to the EC DoE. Throughout the study, my supervisor ensured that application of ethical consideration.

4.12.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

It was important to design the research in a manner that would ensure the anonymity of the institution and the participants. Careful planning was required to ensure that there was no compromising of data in the process of ensuring anonymity (Richards, 2005). Consultation with my supervisor ensured careful consideration of each aspect.

A key factor was ensuring confidentiality for participants when conducting the interview process (Cohen et al., 2011). I have presented participants’ opinions and perceptions in a manner that is not identifiable. This included transcribing participants’ interview comments into English during the writing up phase. These factors assisted in ensuring non-traceability for the institution and participants of the study (Cohen et al., 2011).

4.12.2 Dissemination

Barnes, Clouder, Pritchard, Hughes, & Purkis (2003) maintain that dissemination is “ubiquitous and on-going in much qualitative research” (pp. 153, 154). My role as a participant observer meant that discussions and conversations surrounding the ANA process could not be isolated into precise categories; this meant that dissemination occurred unintentionally during the interview process or during informal conversations.

It was important to “demonstrate how particular kinds of knowledge are valued and taken up in everyday discussions that occur between participants and in particular knowledge communities” (Barnes et al., 2003, p. 152). I experienced that “by virtue of being interviewed, people develop new insights and understandings of their experiences” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 98) (see Chapter 5: 5.3.4). The inclusion of participants’ opinions and experiences within Chapters 5 & 6 enables the reader to experience the participants’ everyday realities concerning the 2014 ANA and to form their own opinions.

By returning to the site and meeting with participants during the writing up stage, I assisted the process of dissemination by sharing my findings without compromising the data collection and analysis stages of the study. I used this opportunity to explain the purposes of the ANA initiative and need for standardisation.

When dealing with issues of dissemination, it is often difficult to ascertain how the findings will be shared and received as these processes are out of the researcher’s control (Barnes et al., 2003). Data that I felt was of a sensitive nature was shared with individual participants. In order to limit misrepresentations, I will avail myself to discuss and explain my assumptions and findings. Barnes et al. (2003) caution that research of this nature is only able to represent a small sample and often the complete picture is not represented. This is a limitation of this research orientation, which is discussed in section 4.12.4.

4.12.3 Language challenges

This research took place at a dual medium school. The participants were thus English and Afrikaans mother tongue speakers. This meant that consideration had to be given during the planning stages of the research design to ensure participants’ opinions, perceptions and understandings would not be compromised due to language differences. When interviewed, participants were invited to respond in the language that they were most comfortable in. The

interviews were transcribed in the chosen language (see Section 4.8.1). Extracts from the interviews included in this report were translated into English.

There is evidence that learners writing in their home language perform better in the ANA (South Africa. DBE, 2012a). It was important for the study to include examples of Grade 3 classes where the LoLT is the same as the learner's home language and where it differs in order to describe and document similarities and differences that may occur.

4.12.4 Particularity and generalisability

By providing a “thick description” (Geertz, 1993, p. 3), I hope other educators may be able to identify with the case. Merriam (2002) explains that through a process of “vicarious experience” (p. 28), teachers may relate to and contextualise findings. The lessons that are extrapolated from the case may be of value to other teachers, the DBE policy makers and researchers in that they may help to deepen our understandings of standardised assessment and classroom practices in similar contexts.

This study makes no claim to provide solutions to the complex issues surrounding the ANA. However, it is important to “acknowledge that this kind of research can provide rich and significant insights and that identifying problems and tensions can be as valuable as finding ‘answers’” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2012, p. 62). It is hoped that this case study may shed light on emergent issues and challenges associated with the ANA that can be “examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (Merriam, 1991, p. 32).

The goal of a case study is to learn as much as possible from a single case for its own sake (Stake, 2000). As this research will be conducted at one level of the school system (Grade 3) in a selected ordinary urban public primary school, the findings are context and content specific. They are not generalisable to the broader group of which the case is part. However, the findings of the case may lend themselves to “fuzzy propositions”, which is “one that is neither likely to be true in every case, nor likely to be untrue in every case, it is something that may be true” (Bassegy, 2001, p. 10).

4.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined and justified the research methodology adopted by this study to achieve the research goals. The qualitative interpretive research orientation and case study

method have been explained, as have the data collection methods and data analysis processes. Strategies to enhance trustworthiness have been discussed, as have ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the findings of the analysis of the Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of the ANA.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews with the five Grade 3 teachers. More specifically it discusses the teachers' prior experiences of the ANA, their perceptions of the different purposes of the ANA, and how they perceive it to be impacting on teaching and learning. Emergent issues and challenges are identified and discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

5.2 THE TEACHERS' PRIOR EXPERIENCES OF THE ANA

In order to gain insight into the five Grade 3 teachers' prior experiences of the ANA, I posed the following question during the pre-ANA interview:

“Could you tell me how you have experienced the ANA at your school and in your class?”
(Appendix A, Question B).

Table 5.1 summarises the teachers' responses and key findings.

Table 5.1 Teachers' prior experiences of the ANA

Finding	Evidence
Different prior experiences shape teachers' perceptions and practices.	<p><i>Well I go on as I normally do and now, just before the time, I do two ANA papers and see where the problem areas are and maybe do some examples of those (...) It is not everything to me. I mean, for me, it just has to be done. It's just like we must do this now so we do it. (T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>Well it's my first year in Grade 3 so all I have experienced up to now is the preparation for it. (...) For this year it's been interesting to watch, more so than in Grade 2. (...) In Grade 2 I felt it was less, there was less, it wasn't as, um, concern. They weren't as worried about it. I don't feel the same pressure. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, I've done ANA for Grade 1 so this is my first year Grade 3 year with ANA and in the Western Cape we had to cover up all our posters and we had to cover the desks with brown paper and then we had to print the names and the exam number and the birth date</i></p>

	<p><i>on stickers and then you paste it on the desks and we also swopped classes at one stage but then they also complained and then the next year we just wrote it in our own classes but as I said, we had to clean up everything and then we wrote the tests and the learners didn't do so bad. We just had to remember to write as you mark it, to immediately start with the analysis because they ask that afterwards and it's annoying to go back and as a grade head you have to go, get all of it together. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>It was fine. The learners are anxious initially, we try to go through, I try to review the ANA format just to put them at ease, (...) and your child that has barriers to learning will struggle, but I know they do consider that but you know, and often it's not always, err, it's a completely different reflection to the ANA and the Formal Assessment Tasks [FATS]. The marks, they differ. (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>Nothing yet, last year I was with (Mr W as an intern) and they did the ANA but I just observed, so this year is my first ANA. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p>
<p>EC DoE training and support for the ANA is limited and narrow.</p> <p>Teachers rely on exemplars and old ANA tests to prepare for the ANA.</p>	<p><i>Oh my word, I didn't really have training. It's just that the thing gets given and you look through the question paper and you try to cover what's there. (Translated from T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>From the school level our HOD has provided us with exemplars to practise with the children and so she has said that she doesn't want it to be a big deal. That she doesn't want us to be drilling children prior to it but maybe if we want to and working anyway to incorporate those questions in our work. As so she has provided us with those. I think from a departmental level I am not really involved in the management of the school so I think there are teachers that are selected for it. I think they have been involved in the department and have gone to meetings and I think they seem prepared and I am assuming that they will inform us. They always have before the time, they have received the appropriate training. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, they basically told me I am not allowed to assist the learners to, well, basically give them the answers but I can assist them if they do get stuck with certain words, explain what they mean because what we instruct the learners to do, and maybe what is on the paper is maybe different words, so we can just help them get to the answer on their own or give them an example of maybe a different word so maybe they understand the question.. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>I think from the department um they, when we went to our grade 3 assessment, um, they told us, they gave us those, um, those preparation kind of...Ja, the exemplar. They gave us, I think it was Maths (pause) and they didn't have a Language one but I just used the previous year's Language ones, so from the department they gave us the Maths ones and</i></p>

	<p><i>they told us we've got to prep them so they gave us specific instructions. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 7)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, we had a meeting yesterday, just to check that everyone knows what is going on about the ANA, they told us when we are writing, what times and things and then we also, um, discussed the preparation we want to do and one or two colleagues felt they didn't want to do anything and then, others wanted to do like, too much again where they want to copy stacks of papers and um, give it to the learners and then I just decided no, so I told them I chose, I chose a few pages out of the Maths and a few out of the English and we are going to get that copied and they can do that either in class or with homework and we, there is also a mental maths test that is like, similar to ANA questioning, that we have also been doing in class. That the learners must learn to, we do it, what I've been doing is I give it to them and I ask them to do it themselves without me helping them at all and then we mark about three or four questions and then we do again. Just for them to learn to read the questions. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, pp. 3, 4)</i></p> <p><i>... basically I feel that the department needs to be maybe more in the schools while it is happening ... rather than just sending the exam and then you know, leaving it. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>The department in the Western Cape is really adamant about it and they really send out people on the ground to physically come to the schools to see that posters are covered and that things are according to it (sic) and they also send people to come and actually sometimes even check that you're in the class do not help the learner too much and guide them too much and things like that. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>If I have to compare it to the memo discussions and those things were better organised in the Western Cape. There were not so many hassles and mix up with meeting dates and what we did there was, (...) two schools were paired up and the teacher met up one day and then they mark one paper together and I found that more useful (...) (T3, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p>
<p>Teachers draw on their prior experience to assure learners and reduce stress.</p>	<p><i>I made, I made quite a point of telling them they have absolutely nothing to worry about, there is nothing to stress about, and nobody is going to decide if they pass or fail. I just said the government just wants to see how children all over the country are doing. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 13)</i></p> <p><i>It worked really well. We got the papers on time, the memos – there were not really any mistakes on the memos or in the papers and the kids didn't, like, wasn't scared of the paper or anything. They actually just enjoyed it. It wasn't like intimidating to them. (T3, Post-ANA interview p. 2)</i></p>

	<p><i>... in class just trying to keep them as calm as possible, make them understand, you know, you don't just get up and walk around, actually just to minimise and create a sense of control and calmness. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p>
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5.2.1 Discussion of what emerged in the data

5.2.1.1 The teachers have different experiences of the ANA and this influences how they respond to the 2014 ANA

The teachers have different prior experiences of the ANA and this may influence how they perceive and respond to the ANA. Two teachers (T2, T5), implementing the ANA for the first time at a Grade 3 level, reported that they are using exemplars as a summative assessment to ensure their learners are prepared for the ANA. T2 indicated that Grade 3 teachers may experience more pressure to achieve results because Grade 3 is the final year of the foundation phase. T4 has prior Grade 3 level experience and shared concerns regarding the alignment of the ANA and the CAPS requirements and the impact of Learners with Special Education Needs [LSEN] on learner performance levels.

5.2.1.2 EC DoE training and support for the ANA is limited and narrow

The teachers' responses suggest that they received little training for the 2014 ANA tests and that which they did receive appears to have been narrow and limited to working through exemplars and old ANA test papers. There is little evidence of them being helped to understand the purpose and value of the ANA. One may infer that the support and training for the ANA appears to be predominantly technical and focused on logistical aspects of the implementation of the ANA (Refer to Chapter 6: 6.4.1 for further discussion). Contrary to this, one teacher [T3] commented on the support and monitoring that she experienced when working in the Western Cape. She described the preparation of teachers and how ANA requirements are communicated, the ANA implementation is monitored and schools are paired for marking. This raises questions about whether the type and level of support for teachers in the Eastern Cape is adequate. There is also evidence that suggests that in using old ANA tests, teachers may be 'teaching to the test'. The teachers' responses suggest a high level of autonomy when preparing for the ANA. One teacher (T1) said she incorporated drill work through the use of exemplars into instruction activities. Another teacher (T2) acknowledged the HOD's concern that teachers not drill the

learners for the ANA (Pre-ANA interview, p. 4) but noted that the Grade 3 class with the best results had been prepared through a process of working through exemplars (Post-ANA interview, p. 13).

5.2.1.3 The Grade 3 teachers relied on prior experience to implement the ANA

Kellaghan and Greaney (2001) describe how teacher practices may be influenced by their understanding of policy and the standards represented, prior knowledge and experience, contextual factors and learner abilities (p. 26). When analysing the Grade 3 teachers’ practices, there is evidence that teachers are reliant on prior experiences of the ANA, they have limited understanding of the purposes of the ANA tests, and that contextual factors and student abilities are considered when selecting how to prepare and implement the 2014 ANA.

5.3 TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE PURPOSE OF THE ANA

The ANA was developed by the DBE to address systemic issues, namely the poor achievement levels of South African learners and the performance of the education system. It was also developed to serve a diagnostic and formative assessment purpose, supporting and enhancing learning at the level of the school and classroom (South Africa. DBE, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2013d, 2014a). Reports on the ANA suggest that the different purposes of the ANA are not clearly understood (NEEDU, 2013; Taylor, 2015). The extent to which the teachers participating in this study are aware of the systemic and formative purpose of the ANA is discussed below.

5.3.1 Teachers’ perceptions of the ANA as a tool for ensuring accountability

Table 5.2 summarises the HOD and five Grade 3 teachers’ responses to the interview question:

“What do you understand by Annual National Assessments?” (see Appendix A, Question 1).

Table 5.2: Teachers’ perceptions of the systemic purpose of the ANA

Finding	Evidence
The Grade 3 teachers were aware of the systemic assessment	<i>To see if all the schools are on the same level. To see if teachers are covering everything that is expected of them and to see if teachers are implementing the curriculum in their classrooms. (Translated from T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i> <i>It’s a departmental thing to try and just, to determine where the kids in South Africa are</i>

<p>purpose of the ANA.</p>	<p><i>at. Are we functioning on par or are we below the level or how are the children in South Africa doing academically? (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>The purpose is, I think is to determine the progress of the learners and to, and also for the teachers to just see if you are on par with what you are supposed to be doing and so if you have touched on all the areas you were supposed to be handling, and that's two purposes that I can think of at the moment, ja. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>...because it just comes from above and we just have to do it... (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p> <p><i>(...) it's something the department requires so that the department can see... what is lacking? Where the problem areas and they then need to sort of implement certain procedures, you know? (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>To see what they should change in the curriculum, or what they can add. Are the teachers up to date with where they should be? Are the children where they should be at this stage? (Translated from T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>Well it's to see what the level of instruction is on a national level, the language and maths and to see if teachers consistently deliver the same standard and are the teachers teaching what they should be teaching to the learners. (Translated from HOD interview, p. 1)</i></p>
<p>The five Grade 3 teachers recognise the need for high levels of professionalism and accountability.</p>	<p><i>(pause) Look, ah, um. I think as far as myself as a teacher, I (pause) think (pause) I don't know... I suppose I need to be accountable to my own conscience first of all. (Laughs) Um, and to the children and the parents that are represented in the classroom. They, they are in a sense a client, (...), they have been allowed to expect certain things from the school, that when their child walks away here, they will have received a decent education and so, I need to be accountable for ensuring that they get the decent education that they are paying for. (T2, Post- ANA interview, p. 14)</i></p> <p><i>For a teacher to be accountable you are being given a job to do and there's children in the class that you have to work with and for me it's about... I always look at the kids and I think to myself there's parents that got up and got them ready for school, packed their lunches and brushed their hair and get them breakfast so when they are here you must actually make the most of your time, so you can't waste their time. That's what we are here for, to not waste their time. (T3, Post-ANA, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>(Pause) Obviously we as teachers have a responsibility to make sure that these children that are given to us every year become, and obviously give the best that they can give</i></p>

	<p><i>but at the end of the day (pause) in a way I agree with that statement and in a way I don't agree with that statement because a lot of the time what happens is, parents drop their kids off here and it's expected of us to teach them, not only knowledge and subjects and those types of things but manners and respect and a lot of them come back, the parents and said, " but it's your responsibility", you know and they want to turn it around and hold us accountable for their children's actions but at home they don't get hidings, they don't get reprimanded, um, no one sits with them and does homework, some of them are not even in aftercare. They stay straight from school until 6 o'clock at night at home with no one supervising them, they can just run around and do whatever they want and I've even noticed with some of my children in class that their diaries do get signed but the homework is not done, so, so, where? It's all fine to say teachers need to be accountable but where are the parents' being held accountable for things you know? And they are so quick to turn around and say, "Ja, my child is getting a poor mark for Maths" but then that parent has never once sat that year with their child and even done counting with them. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p>
<p>The Grade 3 teachers recognise the accountability measures introduced by the ANA and CAPS curriculum.</p>	<p><i>Mmm, well, we are already being held accountable by the department assessing Grade 3, um, formal assessments so they are already watching us and keeping an eye on our performance levels and things like that so I feel already they are monitoring us, which is good, um, for me the ANA is generally just their way of monitoring whether everybody is sort of at the same level academically, nationally, um, I don't think it's necessarily just a reflection on the teacher. (...) Ja, but personally I can understand Grade 3 because it's Foundation Phase, the last year of the Foundation Phase and, but the feeling I get is they are trying to find fault somewhere. It's almost like the department is trying to find out who is at fault for the poor academic progress in the senior phases, you know what I am saying? (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 13)</i></p> <p><i>You know, the people are going to look at the marks and what are they going to think? Are we doing our job? And their viewpoint is that the management of the school is very concerned with how well the Grade 3's do. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p>
<p>The Grade 3 teachers perceive the ANA as useful for monitoring curriculum coverage.</p>	<p><i>So I feel, I sometimes (pause) perhaps a flaw, I don't know my mistake, I sometimes spend more time on certain areas than others, like number concept, like 'before' and vocab, and then I think, maybe I go into some depth and often I neglect certain areas and see if I get time to go to them towards the end of the year because I think this is more a priority. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p> <p><i>Ja, even with Maths, I noticed in one of the old papers there is division sums that I haven't covered this year so now this week we are just doing a lot of division sums. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>You've got more of the curriculum covered and also what they are covering in the ANAs</i></p>

are not always necessarily what they are covered in the FATS, so, um, we haven't covered necessarily everything. (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)

Money [the topic of], a lot more than the curriculum actually wants us to focus it on. (T5, Post- ANA interview, p. 8)

5.3.2 Discussion of what emerged in the data

5.3.2.1 The teachers recognise the need for tools of accountability

Table 5.2 shows that the Grade 3 teachers are aware of the systemic purpose of the ANA and its use as a tool for monitoring the efficiency of the education system. They also recognised the importance of and need for teacher professionalism and accountability and how the DBE could use the ANA results to hold schools and teachers accountable. T2 and T4 recognised that the EC DoE has implemented a variety of accountability measures and acknowledge the pressure they experience as a result. The HOD, T1, T3, T4 and T5 recognise the ANA as a tool to introduce accountability. This is an intention of the DBE who anticipate that an increase in accountability measures will result in improvements in learners' achievement levels (Hopfenbeck et al., 2015).

The DBE's Strategic Plan (2011) argues for:

... regular assessments of educational quality, a sense of accountability is strengthened. Thereby, everyone from learners to educational administrators needs to feel that his or her good efforts will be reflected in reports that reliably measure progress (p. 18).

All of the Grade 3 teachers were able to share perceptions and experiences relating to accountability measures implemented by the ANA. The HOD described the process and response of teachers as follows:

I said, look you know we are going to write the ANA. You must do everything presented in the CAPS documents, work through all the areas, don't leave anything to the end because you think it will take a little time to teach and so on, but we handled the Grade 3s like the other grades, they also got the booklet. They had to sit as a grade and discuss with each other and so on. We did not go back and check, did they do it, because there comes your accountability. (HOD interview, p. 7)

The HOD's ability to afford a high level of autonomy to teachers is evident from her comment. She felt that accountability to key stakeholders, through the use of formal assessment, was the

reason for teachers' emphasis on recording marks and obtaining written evidence at the expense of including a range of assessment techniques (p. 4). Black et al. (2005) caution that this may have negative consequences for teaching and learning practices. Teaching becomes focused on summative purposes of assessment and neglects the formative purpose. The emphasis on accountability may be due to the DBE's recognition that

...without substantial improvements in learning outcomes, the future development of the country will be seriously compromised. As a result, there is increasing public pressure and strong emphasis by the government on improving learning outcomes (South Africa. DBE, 2011b, p. 11).

5.3.2.2 The emphasis placed on the ANA to monitor accountability impacts on teachers' perceptions of their usefulness

The Grade 3 teachers' preoccupation with fulfilling the DBE's prescribed summative assessment requirements may be limiting the time that is allocated to planning instructional activities. This approach may result in attitudes of compliance and non-assessed learning areas and concepts being overlooked. Staff meetings and informal conversations during the three ANA phases (Refer to Chapter 6: 6.1 Tables 6.1 – 6.3) demonstrated how teachers who are subject to internal accountability measures, such as CAPS moderation and Integrated Quality Monitoring System [IQMS], are resistant to external initiatives such as the ANA (Mausethagen, 2013). This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

According to the EC DoE official, the high stakes associated with the public reporting of ANA results was resulting in teachers being dishonest in their marking and reporting of results (Interview with EC DoE Official, p. 5). This concern was expressed in the NEEDU report (2013). Taylor (2015) cautions that by including different purposes for the ANA there is a danger that none of them will be achieved.

The DBE's Strategic Plan acknowledges that policies are not being adequately communicated to key role players (2011b). This is significant for the ANA. According to Vandeyar & Killen (2007), South African educators hold strong conceptions of assessment that may influence their uptake of new policies intended to change their assessment practices. It is likely that the emphasis on ANA results may be promoting a culture of compliance, which is militating against teachers recognising the value of ANA as tools to support and enhance learning. It may also account for why the teachers perceived the ANA to be of little use in their classrooms.

The teachers' responses indicate a number of challenges associated with the accountability purpose of the ANA. T2 and T3 comments demonstrate strong internal accountability. T5 expressed frustration with the tensions between internal accountability and teachers' rights as discussed by Spaul (2015). There is also evidence which suggests that the teachers may be experiencing tensions arising from assessments being implemented for mixed purposes as has been noted in other national contexts (Black, 2001; Broadfoot, 2007).

5.3.3 Teachers' perceptions of the ANA as a tool for supporting and enhancing learning

The formative assessment purpose of the ANA and its use as a diagnostic tool to inform, plan and improve classroom practice is widely recognised (South Africa. DBE, 2010; 2014a; Graven & Venkatakrisnan, 2013, NEEDU, 2013). The NEEDU (2013) report explains how the formative purpose of the ANA is intended to support teachers:

Because teachers administer the ANA tests and mark learner responses themselves, they are exposed to good testing practice and appropriate standards. They can also see, at first hand, the strengths and weaknesses of their learners, and hence come to understand the efficiency of their own teaching (p. 52).

The teachers' responses to the ANA interview question:

“What do you think is meant by formative assessment?” (Appendix A, Question H) are summarised in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Teachers' perceptions of the formative assessment purpose of the ANA

Finding	Evidence
<p>Teachers struggled to talk about formative assessment.</p>	<p><i>(pause) I have heard of it, but now I have to think. (laughs). Mmm, no, I don't know.</i> (Translation of T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</p> <p><i>To be very honest, my, um, off the cuff, I would say it's to do with um, cause see then there is also diagnostic, um formative would be more um, I'm trying to choose my words. Would be more um, (pause) I suppose would be more in terms of understanding, understanding where the child is at, to plan future teaching. (...) You are using it as a tool for learning and for planning...</i> (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 8)</p> <p><i>It's our assessment that we do, and I also feel that it's really silly, cause all the teachers' work really hard on setting tests and why can't we also just get that standardised?</i> (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)</p>

	<p><i>...formative is an on-going assessment. Basically an on-going assessment. It's like your FATS and CAPS that's all, your plan towards formative assessment. So they do a number of written tasks and then you assess their reading skills and all that. So in that sense, with the ANA, I don't know, the ANA are just summative assessments? (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 10)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, formative and summative. I can't remember now (pause). Formative and summative is... (Prompted) Oh yes, I remember now. (pause) Okay I remember now. Um. (Prompted) Ja. I just think testing should go on through the whole process. It mustn't just be give them the stuff and then set the test and then write the test and then that's it. I think you need to keep on assessing them because you can't just have one test about one thing. You need to continuously test that thing because now they forget it or they, so you need to continuously assess. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p>
<p>Teachers do not understand the formative purpose of the ANA in supporting and enhancing teaching and learning.</p>	<p><i>It is very time consuming to write down each pupil's marks and then to total it again. So it's really a schlep [sic] for me. Why not just give the marks? I understand they must differentiate between the problem areas. But as I say, if time is allocated a mark and half of your class get the answer incorrect then it looks as if there is a big problem with the concept of time, when you have actually just not taught it yet. So for me, it's a bit unfair in a way. (Translated from T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>(pause) Very honestly, I haven't done a thing. It hasn't changed what I do at all, um, by the time I am finished filling in those half a hundred forms I didn't want to see another ANA paper or mark again, quite honestly, um. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p> <p><i>I don't know. I don't know what happens. I know we mark them and after that I don't know where it goes or what happens to it. I think maybe the department looks through all these results. I know we had a little sheet thingy that we had to fill in with the levels and maybe, I think they go through that to see what they need to work on or do adjustments. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>um, we have to put all those codes, you know, how many have failed this and how many failed which questions, and then, um, ..., we pack it away! (laughter) Because in the end it's not a mark that is used for the reports so I think our perception, or my perception is, it's something the department requires so that the department can see... what is lacking? Where the problem areas and they then need to sort of implement certain procedures, you know? (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>I've got no idea. I think they might look at what are the problem areas, the weak results. Why is it like that? I think we had to give feedback as to why certain areas mm, certain questions, you know didn't have good results. Um, maybe they incorporate it</i></p>

	<p><i>into next year's questions? Or I don't know? I've got no idea. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 10)</i></p> <p><i>Number one it's an exam from the department but we need to mark it, we need to record the marks, we need to do all those analysis sheets and all that type of things and ... basically I feel that the department needs to be maybe more in the schools while it is happening. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p>
<p>Teachers are not using the ANA results to inform their teaching.</p>	<p><i>...we are not using, relying on those results to much because we have already completed a huge amount of assessment for the term (...) We are writing ANA next week but three quarters of our assessment is already finished. (T2 Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p> <p><i>Very honestly, I haven't done a thing. It hasn't changed what I do at all, um, by the time I had finished filling in those half a hundred forms I didn't want to see another ANA paper or mark again, quite honestly, um... (T2, Post ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p> <p><i>In terms of it happening at the end of the third term I feel it has some merit but the teacher that really needs those results, for example I've got Grade 3 children, is actually the Grade 4 teacher of next year ... (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 9)</i></p> <p><i>No, not at all. No, nothing. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p>
<p>Teachers give limited feedback in the form of marks to learners and parents.</p>	<p><i>Yes, I gave my children their marks and at the end of the term we handed out a report to inform the parents. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>We gave them a breakdown, err, a paper that says, they got two papers actually. One we had to write and then a printed one that says this is your child's mark and that is the class average. (T3, Post-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>We normally, they give them a typed letter with the results (p.4) ... so the parents in the end don't get really get the specifics as to what area the child is struggling in, they just get an average of what the child, how the child performed, and even if the child is weak, though we have never had feedback or questions, or anything even at parent meetings." (T4 Pre- ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p> <p><i>No, I didn't give it back to them. What I did obviously, I wrote the marks down on a piece of paper and I said to them, right the three top in Maths and the three top in languages, and I gave them little prizes, you know, just to motivate them further on and um, also obviously they get the reports for the ANA and I let them see them, that before the time. (T5, Post- ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p>

5.3.4 Discussion of what emerged in the data

5.3.4.1 Teachers struggled to talk about formative assessment

The teachers' responses (in Table 5.3) show that they struggled to talk about the formative assessment, which suggests that they do not appreciate or understand what formative assessment is or how the ANA is intended to serve as such. Three teachers struggled to explain formative assessment (T1, T3 & T5), while T4 was able to explain her view but only appeared to recognise the formative purpose of the ANA during our interview (Pre-ANA interview, p. 11).

None of the teachers mentioned the formative purpose of the ANA during the interviews in spite of attending the EC DoE implementing workshops on 18 June 2014 and 25 June 2014 (Research journal entry, 18 June & 25 June 2014; refer to Chapter 6: 6.5.1 for further discussion of the meetings). The formative purpose of the ANA is also described in the Annual National Assessment administration manual distributed to grade heads, and made available to the Grade 3 teachers (South Africa. DBE, 2014b, pp. 3, 4 *pages are not sequential*). It points to the type of training and support (mostly technical) provided by the EC DOE to teachers and provides evidence that the policy's intentions are not reaching teachers at the level of the classroom.

The EC DoE provides teachers with a mark analysis sheet to support the formative purpose of the ANA. The sheet is intended for reflection and use when marking scripts and planning future instructional activities. Table 5.3 shows that none of the five Grade 3 teachers appeared to associate the mark analysis sheet with the formative purpose of the ANA, nor did they recognise it as a tool to assist teaching and learning. Three of the Grade 3 teachers' comments associated the mark sheet with the systemic accountability purpose of the ANA (T3; T4 & T5), which reflects the dominance of this purpose of the ANA.

5.3.4.2 The teachers make little, if any, use of the ANA for formative assessment purposes as intended by policy

In spite of the literature arguing for the assessment as an integral part of the learning process and it being used to identify "what pupils have learned, what they have not learned, and where they are having difficulty" (Shepard et al., 2005, p. 280) and to support the teaching and learning process, the teachers are not perceiving the ANA in this way or using it as such.

Formative assessment is implemented to determine “student understanding after an instructional segment” (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005, p. 11) and to determine learner achievement (Broadfoot, 2007). Leahy et al., (2005) explain, “the teacher who consciously uses assessment to support learning takes in this information, analyses it and makes instructional decisions that address the understanding and misunderstandings that these assessments reveal” (p. 19). The findings (see Table 5.3) suggest that the Grade 3 teachers’ knowledge of formative assessment is limited. There is little, if any evidence of the Grade 3 teachers recognising and using the mark analysis sheet to inform teaching and learning in their classrooms.

5.3.4.3 Teachers are not using the ANA results to inform their teaching

During the interviews the teachers were asked two questions on how they used the ANA results to support teaching and learning (see Appendix A, Question E and Appendix C, Question E). Table 5.3 shows that none of the five teachers use their learners’ ANA test results to inform their classroom practice. This is counter to the DBE’s intention for the ANA results to be integrated into all programmes in the schooling system (South Africa. DBE, 2013a) and effectively utilised by teachers (South Africa. DBE, 2014a.). Importantly, this finding highlights how policy as intended is not being achieved at the level of the classroom where it may enhance teaching and learning.

There is evidence to suggest that the systemic assessment purpose of the ANA overshadows its formative assessment role. Black et al.’s (2005) caution against the mixed purpose assessments is relevant to this study. They contend that summative purposes ultimately dominate over formative purposes with negative consequences to both teaching and learning practices. According to the NEEDU (2013) report, South African teachers struggle to identify the formative purpose of the ANA initiative. The findings of this study provide evidence of this. The teachers’ perception of the ANA as being a summative assessment that serves systemic and accountability purposes may be the reason for the formative purpose being overshadowed and what Bennet (2011) refers to as “limited by the nature of the larger system in which it is embedded” (p. 19). This may have been why the teachers did not appear to be using the formative assessment opportunities provided by the ANA’s mark sheet analysis.

Vandeyar and Killen (2007) maintain the ability to shift pedagogy is most effective when intentions are communicated to educators and that teachers struggle to implement “strategies that they do not understand or for which they lack skills, and the effectiveness of any strategy

will be limited by the educators' ability to think about and control what they are doing" (p. 112). This was confirmed by T2 who, for research purposes, has read the ANA reports produced by the DBE. She explained that "*your average teacher is not, half of them aren't aware of it and half of them couldn't be bothered*" (p. 5). She went on to explain her perception that many teachers think, "*Look if you ask me about my children I already know what is wrong, I don't need an external test to tell me what's wrong*" (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p.5).

In the interviews, all of the teachers gave reasons for poor learner performance. These included, for example, the exam format, questioning style, language barriers, learning barriers, insufficient curriculum coverage, careless errors, concepts above cognitive level, and other factors, such as lack of sleep or illness. One teacher (T2) described what might best be described as an informal process ("*made some mental notes*") of applying the ANA results to her teaching:

(pause)...ja, so mm... I am trying to think of an example. I think, I note... when I marked the papers, I sort of made mental notes of things. Ooh, I think I need to spend more time on this area, or I need to spend more time on that area. I find, um, and again partly because of the language barrier, um, I think there are some very foundational concepts that, particularly in Maths, that our children struggle with, because they don't have the language to support them in those, in the development of those mathematical concepts" (T3 Post ANA interview, p. 11).

5.3.4.4 Teachers give limited feedback in the form of marks to learners and parents

An important component of the formative purpose of assessment includes specific feedback (Broadfoot, 2007; NEEDU, 2013; Hopfenbeck et al., 2015). As illustrated in Table 5.3, one teacher said she gave the children their marks and usually went over the question paper with her class, however time constraints had prevented her from doing this (T1 Post ANA interview, p. 4). This and the other responses shown in Table 5.3 provide evidence which suggests that feedback is limited to marks, with minimal constructive feedback in the form of comments being given to parents and learners about how to improve on specific areas of poor performance.

The teachers' comments suggest that in spite of them struggling to respond to questions about the formative purpose of the ANA, they are using the ANA results to judge learner progress, curriculum coverage, and identify areas of improvement. The positive impact of the ANA is described by T2 who reports that it helped her to reflect on her coverage and implementation of

the curriculum. T3 and T4 are critical of the alignment (or lack thereof) between the ANA and the CAPS curriculum. On a less positive note, T5 perceives the ANA as narrowing the curriculum and encouraging teaching toward the test.

2014 was the fourth year that the ANA was implemented. The DBE reports that this has allowed time for feedback from main stakeholders to filter into the system and allowed for improvements to be incorporated. Three formal ANA reports have been released. The DBE’s diagnostic reports have analysed learner responses to identify areas of weakness. This feedback is intended to inform and enhance teaching and learning (South Africa. DBE 2013d; South Africa. DBE, 2014a). There is little evidence in this study that suggests that the feedback provided in the DBE’s reports is reaching teachers in the classroom. There is evidence that the ANA is assisting teachers with monitoring curriculum coverage and articulation as described in the international and national literature (see, for example, Gipps, 1996; Broadfoot, 2007 and Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013).

The importance of feedback in supporting and enhancing learning by helping learners to see themselves as beneficiaries of testing rather than victims is emphasised (Black et al., 2005). There is little evidence that suggests the teachers in this study understand the role of feedback. The feedback that was given was limited to marks. Time constraints and a preoccupation with meeting the school and EC DoE’s strict ANA marking and submission deadlines may be the reason why so little feedback was given. The situation was exacerbated by repeated errors on EC DoE mark analysis sheets (refer to Chapter 6:6.5.3). Limited feedback and time constraints mean that the ANA results are not being used fully utilised by the teachers to review their teaching and learning activities.

During the interviews, the Grade 3 teachers were asked about assessment in the national curriculum [CAPS]. Their responses are summarised in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Teachers’ views on assessment in the national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

Finding	Evidence
The teachers’ views on assessment differ.	<i>(Paused and continued after prompting) You get formal and you get informal and you get the written and you get practical. So assessment is about, basically just seeing what you have taught, it’s just about gathering information about skills, new skills and concepts that they have learnt and see if they are coping with it? (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i>

	<p><i>I mean, assessment in general, that is what they have taught us is an on-going and this is probably one of the on-going processes that they mean... um, I am not sure with the ANA.. It's not really an on-going assessment. ANA is a once off assessment I suppose, um, a yearly assessment, um. (pause) Ja, so it varies where we are doing the on-going all the time, we can assess various, err, with using different tools and different, err, you know, different areas, different learning areas but with them it seems more like a final, one big assessment and then that's it. Which I don't think reflects fairly on the child's abilities, um, and I don't always think it reflects fairly on the term and it doesn't always reflect fairly on the work that has been covered or not covered or has according to the FATS. Sometimes we haven't covered that work in a specific time. (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>To see what the learners have learnt, not only book based, but what they have taken in and how they understand what certain things are. How they think for themselves. What they get from their thoughts and how they can adjust to certain situations. Obviously a lot of the stuff is formal and some of the stuff is informal, as well, but I don't think assessment must be formal all the time. It must be informal as well. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p> <p><i>As far as CAPS goes there are a lot of requirements that we need to fulfil. Um, we're told what to assess and when to assess it very specifically so for the third term for example everything is laid out. You must assess A; B and C, um, and so we don't have much choice in the matter... (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5, 6)</i></p> <p><i>It's too much. Too many concepts with too little time, there are too many distractions and too many interruptions ... It all adds up. The amount of time that you have available and it's so little. (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p>
<p>The teachers use different assessment techniques to gather rich evidence of learning.</p>	<p><i>... We use a combination of things. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, it depends. Sometimes its group work. Sometimes whole class. It depends. Sometimes in pairs, two groups, small groups, larger groups. It depends. It's a variety. (Translated from T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p> <p><i>I use a mixture of written tasks I have to do some, it's a departmental requirement and you know it's not, that doesn't mean it's bad. I don't rely on it purely. I rely a lot on my observations during classroom work. Um, for example if I'm working with a small group of children I make notes, or I'll go afterwards and make notes or that sort of thing. So I use a mixture. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 7)</i></p>

	<p><i>But when you are working with a child, assessment happens almost instinctively and I am not saying that is sufficient. I know that is not sufficient, but because of our unique situation we are required to keep this enormous paper trail and that make the task very difficult. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>...I know a lot of teachers, myself included, who believe especially in the Foundation Phase assessment cannot be purely written. It can't be a test and examination based entirely. The children are not at that level and that is not a true reflection of a child's ability. Often you can only get a true sense of a child's ability by working with them one on one or in a small group situation. A child is able to perform, to complete tasks, when they are working with a teacher or working with a peer that they cannot do on a piece of paper, with a pencil and paper always, and so, so that is not always a true reflection... (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>A lot of children put up a show, you know and when you just look at them and watch what they are doing, you can test them informally as well and you see how they are without their even knowing that you are assessing them. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p>
<p>CAPS assessment requirements dominate teaching and learning activities.</p>	<p><i>Um, I personally think that the idea behind what needs to be covered, either it's not very well understood by teachers or it's not being implemented properly. (...) The system as it is functioning now is not benefiting teachers and it's not benefitting learners. Where the fault is with the teachers or the actual curriculum I'm not 100% sure. But from a teachers' perspective just trying to get through everything, every day, it is an enormous amount that has to be covered. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5, 6)</i></p> <p><i>(Paused) I think it's just too much. We are assessing ourselves to death. (...) I do have a problem with everything that we must assess. At the end of the day, um, you must have a reading mark and now it's all that other stuff. Can they read? Can they read posters? Can they? At the end of the day it's just, you listen to the child on the mat, and can they read? Do they read with expression, It's just for me, all those endless columns, I am sorry! I don't agree. It doesn't work for me. (T1, Translated from Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>In Grade 3 there is quite a lot of assessments. (...) It's like pages full so it's sometimes it does affect us that we are basically spend days on end just doing the required assessments, so that is, it takes up a lot of our time, um, but the only way around it is to take some of the assessment and just do it practical, that you at least spend some time on the mat with the learners, not always just let them sit down and write. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p>

<p>CAPS assessment requirements are increasing learner stress.</p>	<p><i>It's very disruptive for me now. This specific week, um, I find it difficult because especially for Grade 3 we have got so much to get through so many other tasks and so much assessment that still must be done, um, so you are actually pushing the children, you are over pushing and overworking the children. The children are burning out. That's the thing I have noticed, is that they cannot actually take, it's actually like system overload. (T4, Pre- ANA interview, p. 7)</i></p> <p><i>Um, I don't know if it's because the department feels the teachers are not doing their job but it's very prescriptive. It allows no room for the unique context of each classroom, um, and with the amount of children in the class that much formal assessment doesn't allow for the natural assessing process, I'm concerned of working with children. (...) but many teachers feel to cover and protect themselves, especially in Grade 3 that everything must be written. That everything that a child is required to be able to display every skill, every piece of knowledge must be on paper to protect themselves and to prove to somebody, I don't know who, that the child can do it. And that, that as far as I am concerned is impossible and teachers, I think teaching suffers as a result. So somewhere, I don't know, something is not working like it should, um, I don't think teachers... I sometimes feel teachers are not confident enough to say, "Hang on, I know this is not what is best for the child. (T2, Pre- ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>...and you are pushing the child and pushing the child and the child that is fast can stand but if you have children that are slower and need that individual attention. (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p> <p><i>... they, (...) they are actually not really, if I can say, enjoying it because there is so much demands made on them. Perform, perform, perform, perform, perform, test, test, test, perform, perform, test, test, perform, so it never feels like you are just having fun and teaching, um, there is this continuous pressure, the child must just (...) perform, and strive, and fulfil tasks and for Grade 3 it's like, it's sad. (T4 Pre-ANA interview, p. 7)</i></p>
<p>Subjects that are not assessed may be neglected.</p>	<p><i>It's too much! (laughs) Especially the Maths and the Language. Oh my goodness! Um, (pause) the Afrikaans is okay, 'cause obviously they are not Afrikaans so it's not a lot of assessment and the Life Skills is okay, but the Language (Home Language) is too much work and the Maths! (T5 Pre-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p> <p><i>... I think teaching suffers as a result. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p>

5.4 THE GRADE 3 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM (CAPS)

5.4.1 The teachers' views on assessment differ

In her response, T3 refers to a variety of methods of assessment. T4 explains her view of the ANA as a summative assessment that does not provide a true reflection of the learners' ability or align with her curriculum coverage. She describes the challenges of implementing the CAPS assessment requirements within the allocated time period. T5 refers to formative and summative assessment strategies and highlights the need for formal and informal assessment methods to be included. T2 expressed concern about the number of prescribed assessments. She felt that current assessment policy is not understood or implemented by teachers correctly. The CAPS curriculum is underpinned by a technical paradigm (Frame, 2003), which appears to have an influence on teaching and learning at this school.

The Grade 3 teachers' comments suggest that while they may have different understandings of assessment, they are all aware that assessment is "a continuous planned process of gathering information, formally or informally, on child performance" (South Africa. DBE, 2011c, p. 131). The HOD response demonstrated a more in-depth understanding of assessment as:

Assessment is to see where the standard is and where the learner's level of understanding is, did learning take place and did the children understand the concept you were teaching? A person doesn't need to decide in two weeks I am going to assess again. Assessment should occur during every day; it doesn't matter what grade you are teaching. Once you have presented a lesson, you should stand back and reflect, "Was that successful? Did I transfer what I wanted to transfer? Is does not always need to be a formal test but you must continuously analyse are you on the right track? Am I meeting the learners where they are? Are they learning? Is there value in what I am doing?" (Translated from HOD interview, p.4)

Current reports suggest that teachers' assessment practices are weak (Broadfoot, 2007; NEEDU, 2013), hence "the need to provide teachers with good assessment tools to use in the process of teaching and learning" (Taylor, 2015, p. 2). It appears that the Grade 3 teachers have diverse understandings of contemporary assessment and would benefit from further opportunities to improve their knowledge. The HOD and newly qualified teacher appear to have the most comprehensive understandings. The Grade 3 teachers appear to regard assessment as a peripheral component of their pedagogy (Black, 2015). In order to implement assessment into their instruction, teachers must be knowledgeable about learning progression, determine

students' prior knowledge and set clear objectives (Shepard et al., 2005).

Van Laren & James' findings show that "teachers' belief in how and what to assess is intrinsically interwoven with their understanding of assessment" (2008, p. 301). At present the Grade 3 teachers' assessment practices are influenced by their understandings of CAPS, what the standards represent, their prior knowledge and experience, contextual factors and student abilities (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001).

5.4.2 The teachers use different assessment techniques to gather a rich evidence of learning

The teachers acknowledged the importance of incorporating a variety of assessment methods and confirmed their use of informal methods of assessment, such as teacher observation. T5 explained this lessened learners' ability to manipulate the assessment process and provided a truer reflection of learner abilities. Within the Foundation Phase, T2 felt assessment should not only be a formal process. Mediation within the assessment process was important for learners' improvement. T2 described the assessment process as 'instinctive' to teachers and confirmed that methods of assessment were stipulated within the CAPS curriculum.

The EC DoE official explained the intention of CAPS and ANA assessments as follows:

In our experience this is what we are striving for, this is what we drive towards every year, you know, almost from a departmental perspective and in our district we are quite strict on that, that you have to analyse your results. All your assessments, not only your ANA. Every term the teachers have to submit what we call quarterly analysis. We want them to look at how the learners learnt. The process of learning and to see where did we go wrong? Why are the children not achieving in the particular component? Is it because of my strategy? Is it because of something at school? Is it large classes? Is it the qualification of the teacher? An Intermediate Phase teacher teaching in the Foundation Phase? Or is it just a group of learners that are not as bright? You know, so we want them to be almost like your high school teachers that look at how the learners achieve more critically. So that they can adjust and adapt their strategies. You know, it's not about getting A's or B's or C's, it's about helping the learners to learn successfully. (EC DoE interview, p. 4)

5.4.3 CAPS assessment requirements dominate teaching and learning activities

Teachers' comments (Table 5.5) show their frustration with the CAPS assessment requirements for Grade 3. The view that Grade 3 CAPS assessment requirements were too numerous was

reiterated by the HOD (HOD Interview, p. 4) and the EC Departmental official (EC DoE interview, p. 24). The teachers' responses suggest that that CAPS assessment requirements are impacting on teaching time and non-assessed learning areas (Life Skills) may be neglected.

T4 indicated that teachers appear to be struggling to mediate between the curriculum requirements and needs of the learners within their classrooms. This may result in attitudes of compliance and increased learner stress as teachers cede responsibility to learners. T3 described how there appears to be an emphasis on written assessment tasks as these can be implemented using a whole class approach. Oral and practical small group tasks are considered too time consuming. The teacher's comments suggest that the prescribed assessment is influencing classroom practice.

T2 expressed concerns about the dominance of the accountability purpose of assessment. She felt this was having an effect on teaching and learning. Her possible explanation was that teachers might lack confidence.

The introduction of a prescribed curriculum, such as CAPS reveals policy makers' belief that "provided every school teaches the same subject matter the same way using the same teaching and learning resources, the results of education will be the same" (Frame, 2003, p. 20). There is little acknowledgement of the vast social differences within different schooling contexts (Soudien, 2010). At present it appears that teachers have limited understanding of the curriculum and view themselves as receivers of the system (Carl, 2005). Teaching and learning become focused on bureaucratic interventions (NEEDU, 2013) that are measurable and observable (Frame, 2003).

The Grade 3 teachers' descriptions and comments indicate that the CAPS curriculum is being reified, which Frame (2003) explains results in the emphasis being placed on the measurable aspects of teaching and learning. The teachers appear to be struggling to mediate between CAPS assessment requirements, classroom practice and learner needs.

5.4.4 The Grade 3 teachers rely on classroom-based assessment

If the CAPS requirements are not clearly communicated to teachers it may result in failure to implement the curriculum as intended (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). It appears that there may be a "slippage between the intended use of procedures as a means to improving student learning, to the situation where the procedures ... become ends in themselves" (NEEDU, 2012, p. 14).

It appears that the Grade 3 teachers rely on classroom-based assessments which are prescribed by the CAPS curriculum and implemented with a summative purpose. The Grade 3 teachers all recognise the value of classroom-based assessment but evidence suggests that the teachers struggled to associate the 2014 ANA with the CAPS curriculum. The teachers appear to be struggling to mediate between the curriculum requirements and their own unique contextual factors.

The Grade 3 teachers would benefit from further training, as Barnes et al. (2000) maintain assessment can be the engine of systemic reform when accompanied by initiatives to improve instruction.

5.4.5 CAPS assessment requirements are increasing learner stress

Table 5.4 illustrates that the CAPS assessment requirements are increasing learner stress as teachers struggle to mediate between the numerous requirements and learner needs. Sosibo and Nomlomo (2014) describe how teachers' understanding of educational standards may influence their interaction with learners. Postlethwaite (2004) cautions the need for testing to be implemented in lower grades as learners are too young to deal with individual tests.

The challenges of adopting a formal assessment format has been noted by Graven & Venkatakrishnan (2013) and by Gipps (1996), who caution that stress for learners may result in "lower self-esteem, lowering of standards and a switch off from learning" (Gipps, 1996, p. 13). Anxiety may be augmented by language barriers or poor reading skills. Broadfoot (2007) encourages teachers to question the dominance of educational strategies that are so entrenched they are accepted without reflection as to the suitability of their purposes.

5.4.6 Subjects that are not assessed may be neglected

The EC DoE official acknowledged that teachers are beginning to teach towards the ANA and are not focusing on the process of learning. Subjects and content, such as Life Skills, are being neglected. There are concerns that as teachers adapt their instruction to include ANA content and format, they will adopt pedagogies that become more patterned and predictable (Hoffman et al., 2001). This results in an emphasis on the measurable and observable aspects of teaching and learning (Frame, 2003). Learners are encouraged to memorise and adopt surface learning strategies (Gipps, 1996; Kohn, 2000; Broadfoot, 2007), which influence learners' ability to shift knowledge between different contexts (Masters, 2013).

Harlen and James (1997) caution that “the straightforward reproduction of knowledge rather than its application favours rote learning, and assessment which demands no more than this will inevitably shift teaching and learning away from understanding towards the memorisation of the information necessary to succeed in the assessment” (p. 370). The EC DoE official felt this was a result of the annual implementation of the ANA and could be resolved by implementing the ANA every third year.

5.5 TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES OF THE 2014 ANA

Teachers’ responses to questions about the 2014 ANA implementation process are summarised in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Teachers’ experiences of the 2014 ANA

Finding	Evidence
<p>The ANA is not a reliable assessment.</p>	<p><i>I don’t think a standardised assessment is the best way to determine how a child is actually doing and what level we are functioning at. (T2 Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>It’s really to give the department an idea of what’s going on in schools and, and if they want a standardised result, then the process needs to be standardised and although the test paper is standardised, there is a lot, the implementation is not standardised, um, different things are happening so how much can you actually tell, who knows? (T2 Post-ANA interview, p. 4)</i></p> <p><i>I just think it’s a very complex, progress is a very complex thing to measure, using and that’s for me why a standardised test is so insufficient in measuring the progress of children. You’ve got this test that ignores all those variables (interviewer repeats her words) and it assumes um, that everybody is on the same level but they are there because the policy, the government policy says that if they have repeated once, they cannot repeat again and so they are sitting in Grade 3 but because they have to be in Grade 3 because of their age but they are not functioning on a Grade 3 level. (T2 Post-ANA interview, p. 15, 16)</i></p> <p><i>It might highlight a problem, but it’s not going to fix the problem. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 8)</i></p>
<p>The ANA impacts on teaching time.</p>	<p><i>It takes away from teaching time, from marking time, from assessment, um, and all that sort of thing, I just, ja, I don’t... so those are the negatives. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 5)</i></p>

	<p><i>Um, a lot of them don't like it because they say it's additional marking to do and um, and what else did they say? Ja, most of them just complained about it. (laughs) But for me it wasn't so bad. (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p> <p><i>It's got no, for me it's got no value to my formal assessment, because our formal assessment is already set up, it's established. It doesn't influence that mark in any way. It's sort of completely neutral to that. So to me it's an external thing. (T4, Post ANA interview, p. 11)</i></p> <p><i>A lot of them think it's a waste of time, um because you go to these meetings, you hand in your files, they check anyway to see whether you are up to date or not and they assess you on that. I mean having these tests is stressing out the children and you've already done the work, so ja. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>...I don't think the ANA are a big deal for schools that are functioning. Honestly. We take it as a matter of course. We do it. We get it over with. We carry on with our job the next day. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 7)</i></p>
<p>The ANA promotes the use of different teaching and learning methods.</p>	<p><i>(Pause) I, no, I don't think it is, I feel each teacher, yes, it may be in a way, you know, are you just, some questions are stupid, and some are good, and some of the stuff is not a good reflection of what the year, I don't know, it's just for me, I don't know. It's okay but for me it's not always up to standard and the way they say, "You must use this method" but he didn't use that method so he must be penalised but the child can do an addition sum, he can do a subtraction sum, so it doesn't feel right to me. It's a nice way to see is everyone there, but they you must give more freedom with the methods and that type of thing. (T1, Post-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>I think in some sense we do need to prepare learners. And I am not talking about drilling two weeks before the ANA. They need to be exposed to questions in different formats. The need to be exposed to different ways of asking questions, of different people's approaches to work. I mean, that's what education is. We can't drill them to a specific format, cause then we are, they are not really learning, I think. Or in my view. And so I have tried to do that this year. Not as a form of drilling for ANA but just general good practice I think. I've tried to, so if we are doing a specific topic I've tried to, to the best of my ability, when they are working, um to expose them to say one specific question that it's not always phrased the same way. And not always, I don't know what the practice is in the other classrooms but not always reading it for them, so they, they are getting used to reading for themselves and I often think they don't trust their own ability. (T2 Pre-ANA interview, p. 3,4)</i></p> <p><i>... the only other hiccup I had was with the methods they forced the children to use, with addition in Maths. They forced them to use a certain method that we didn't teach, we</i></p>

	<p><i>used a different one and we had to mark it wrong, but it was only one mark anyway. (T3, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>...the only thing that sort of, err, I think it was with Maths, where they had to do the adding and they had to do a specific method only, which was I think the adding on method. Now we only sort of taught that – another methods where you add hundreds, tens and units, now, the adding on, we sort of did that with the minus, subtraction so that was they were familiar with that specific adding on and that only gave you, you were only allowed to mark according to that specific method which is a bit contradictory cause they tell you teach the child any method, with which the child feels comfortable (...) I don't know what the value, what the reason, what they were trying to actually test by doing that. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p>
<p>The timing of the ANA is problematic in terms of CAPS coverage.</p>	<p><i>Well, as I see it, maybe make it simpler for the Foundation Phase, (...) They ask things sometimes that, for me, are not relevant to our learners. For example, they will ask division sums that we have not covered yet. (...) and they ask it in the middle (of the year) and they it looks like our learners are stupid. So maybe at the end of the year, I'd say. (T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p> <p><i>So often what is required from the FATS and required from the ANA according to the term doesn't always seem (...) correlate, ja but in the end of the day because we know it's not a pass or failure type of (...) and you can't retain a child because of it, so you just sort of get a general idea of the child abilities from a third party perspective. (T4, Pre-ANA interview, pp. 6-7)</i></p> <p><i>It's almost like you need to be prepared a little bit ahead of time so that you can see, okay, CAPS hasn't covered that, ANA requires that so ahead of time I am going to cover it. (T4, Pre- ANA interview, p. 8)</i></p>
<p>The timing of the ANA puts pressure on teachers and learners.</p>	<p><i>But from a teachers' perspective just trying to get through everything, every day, it is an enormous amount that has to be covered. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>...and it's a big jump for the children, they are expected to do a lot more than they are in Grade 2 and so I think there was a pit of pressure as far as that goes. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>...you know the timing, for me it's not always the best because it's at the stage where you are busy with your last formal assessment tasks and it's often at a stage where your learners that have fallen behind are trying to catch up on their work and now you are trying to push this in as well... (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p> <p><i>Ja and it's like in the middle of, absolutely in the middle of your assessments and you</i></p>

	<p><i>are so pressured and it actually puts too much pressure on the teacher and you know, you become, more um, demanding on the children. (...) I believe, it's just totally unnecessary because you can't have formal assessment and government assessment at the same time running together. At the same time, putting double pressure on children. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 8)</i></p> <p><i>Um, we did think about putting up a mock test for them but with all the FATS and stuff I think we are doing now it's a bit difficult so what I do is each day for about 15 minutes I get them on the red carpet and I basically I have a layout of an old ANA exam paper and I ask them those questions and they get rewards for it so... (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p>
<p>Grade 3 learners' responses to the ANA.</p>	<p><i>Okay, lots said, "It's easy." Here and there some said they didn't understand and then I explained, but on the whole it was good. (Translated from T1, Post-ANA interview, p. 3)</i></p> <p><i>The only thing that was quite challenging is the children didn't really understand some of the questions and maybe how it was phrased, so I had to restructure the whole question for them to be able to understand, to answer the question. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)</i></p> <p><i>Well, the children really enjoyed doing the exam. They thought they were writing a nice little exam. The Grade 3's they don't normally write exams so for them it was something new and they enjoyed themselves and um, I could see on their faces sometimes they were a bit confused but other times they actually were happy with themselves that they were able to do it. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 2)</i></p>

Table 5.5 illustrates that the five teachers perceive the ANA to be a challenging policy to implement within their classrooms for reasons that may be linked to reliability of results, the timing of the ANA or a mismatch with CAPS curriculum requirements.

5.5.1 The ANA is not a reliable assessment

The teachers' responses (Table 5.3) demonstrate the dominance of the systemic purpose of the ANA. T2 felt the ANA was not a reliable indication of learner achievement levels or the efficacy of the system. Teachers felt the ANA had little impact on high functioning schools aside from teacher time (T2, T3, & T5), workload (T3) and increase in learner stress (T4; T5). As Sosibo and Nomlomo (2014) explain, "the implications of disregarding contextual diversity in the discourse on standards is huge, as these differences may drastically affect the

educational standards, depending on the context in which they are implemented” (p. 85).

The DBE issues strict guidelines to ensure the ANA are standardised (South Africa. DBE, 2012b; South Africa. DBE, 2013a; South Africa. DBE, 2014a). The guidelines focus on logistical aspects, which are interpreted differently between provinces, school management and teachers. The DBE does not appear to take differences in school and teacher capacities and competencies into account (Spaull, 2015). The NEEDU report (2012) calls for tighter standardisation controls to be implemented. (Refer to Chapter 6:6.5.2 for further discussion.)

5.5.2 The ANA impacts on teaching time

The teachers’ comments indicate that the ANA may impact negatively on teaching time. T4 and T5 indicate highlight the tensions they experience between the internal (CAPS) and external accountability (ANA) measures. The ANA are not valued by these teachers as they are not used for progression of learners. The Grade 3 teachers appear to view the ANA as a ‘distraction’ (Taylor, 2015) and as separate from their CAPS assessments despite the ANA being designed around the CAPS documents (South Africa. DBE, 2012b; 2013a).

5.5.3 The ANA promotes the use of different teaching and learning methods

Three of the teachers expressed concerns regarding the directive in the ANA tests that learners make use of selected methods when solving problems. By insisting that a selected method is used, teachers are encouraged to include all possible methods in their instructional activities. T1; T3 and T4’s comments highlight their failure to understand the purpose of the ANA as a tool to improve teaching and learning within the classroom (South Africa. DBE, 2014b).

T2’s comment indicates how the ANA has positively influenced teaching practices within the classroom and encourages the articulation of the curriculum (Broadfoot, 2007; Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013).

5.5.4 The timing of the ANA is problematic in terms of CAPS coverage

The three teachers’ experiences indicate a misalignment between ANA content and the CAPS curriculum coverage during the third academic term. The DBE maintain that content is “based on the content of the first three (3) terms of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)” (South Africa. DBE, 2012, p. 67; South Africa. DBE, 2012b, p. 2; South Africa. DBE, 2013a, p. 104; South Africa. DBE, 2014b, p. 26).

5.5.5 The timing of the ANA puts pressure on teachers and learners

As illustrated in Table 5.5, all of the teachers indicated that the placement of the ANA within the last three weeks of the third term was challenging. T5 explains how time constraints influenced her preparation for the 2014 ANA: “...(W)e did think about putting up a mock test for them but with all the FATS and stuff I think we are doing now, it’s a bit difficult” (T5 Pre-ANA interview, p. 3). Teachers indicated that implementing the ANA within the first term based on previous years’ academic work and using the results diagnostically as occurred in 2011 was preferential. T5 went on to clarify her understanding of the timing of the 2014 ANA implementation:

I understand that from the department’s side they need this stuff by a certain time but they are putting it in the week where our schedules and our marks and all those comments and stuff needs to be in basically, so you are trying to finish off the last little bit of marks maybe for children that were absent and getting it together and now the ANA are there, so, but I know the department’s timing is different from the school system. (T5 Pre-ANA interview, p. 6)

T4 (Post-ANA interview, p. 8) described how the pressure to complete the CAPS curriculum coupled with the ANA implementation leads to teacher stress. The EC DoE official confirmed the timing of the ANA was determined by the administrative processes that have to be completed (p. 31).

5.5.6 Grade 3 learners’ responses to the ANA

As illustrated in Table 5.5, learner responses to the 2014 ANA were mixed. T1 and T5 admitted to providing support by mediating during the ANA implementation. The Principal, HOD and Grade 3 teachers expressed concern that the formal exam format was foreign to FP learners. This was confirmed by DoE participant: “One other negative is the formalised atmosphere. That is a big problem and the Grade 3’s (teachers) have complained that their learners are not allowed to be read to; they have to work entirely independently” (DoE interview, p. 7). This impacts on the reliability and standardisation of results and has led to Spaul’s (2013) view that “the implementation and lack of external verification reduces the value” of the ANA initiative (p. 3).

5.6 SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the findings of the interviews conducted with the five Grade 3

teachers, which took place before and after the 2014 ANA implementation in their classrooms. It has analysed and discussed the teachers' perceptions of the purpose of assessment broadly and in relation to the national curriculum (CAPS) and the ANA.

Key findings were that the teachers' understanding of systemic and summative purpose of assessment predominates. Their responses suggest a superficial understanding of formative assessment and the value of rich feedback. They exhibit a high level of policy compliance and show no resistance to the ANA. They perceive the ANA as something outside of their normal teaching and learning activities – as a peripheral component of pedagogy, as suggested by Black (2015). The teachers draw on their prior experience of the ANA to assure and calm their learners. The training and support provided by the EC DoE is of a technical nature and does not promote teachers' understanding of the different purposes of assessment the ANA should serve. There is little evidence of the ANA results being used by the teachers to inform teaching and learning in their classrooms. The teachers' responses shed light on how the 2014 ANA is impacting on classroom practice in different ways. These include teacher time, narrowing of the curriculum, teaching to the test, and emphasis on rote learning.

This is consistent with the findings of research done by Graven and Venkatakrishnan (2013) and Graven and Venkat (2014). There is also evidence that the 2014 ANA is encouraging the teachers to reflect on their curriculum coverage (Weitz & Venkat, 2013).

The next chapter describes and analyses the 2014 ANA preparation and implementation processes at the selected school.

CHAPTER 6

THE 2014 ANA IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and analyses the 2014 ANA process at a selected school from the perspective of Grade 3 teachers. It presents and discusses the findings of the analysis of data gathered through interviews with the five Grade 3 teachers, the HOD, the school Principal, a DBE official, on site observations, document analysis and reflections in my research journal.

The chapter consists of four sections. The first describes and analyses the events and processes associated with the 2014 ANA. The second part discusses the role and responsibilities of the EC DoE and the school leadership team during the 2014 ANA process. This is followed by a discussion on the Grade 3 teachers' roles and the issues and challenges that emerged. The last section synthesises and concludes the discussion.

6.2 THE 2014 ANA PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 summarise the events before, during and after the 2014 ANA implementation. These are divided into three phases: preparation, implementation and post-implementation phases. As explained in Chapter 4 (Section 4.6.1 and 4.7), my role during the three phases was that of participant observer. These tables summarise what the Grade 3 teachers, the school management (that is the HOD and Principal) and the EC DoE official were doing during the period 8 April to 17 November 2014.

The role and responsibilities of the EC DoE and the school management during each of the three phases summarised in these tables is analysed and discussed in the next section.

Table 6.1 Summary of the 2014 ANA events and processes – Phase 1

PHASE 1: ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PREPARATION BEGINS			
TIMELINE	Grade 3 Teachers' Activities	School Management Activities	Departmental Officials' Activities
8 April 2014	Grade 3 Head requests confirmation of learner totals from teachers (LSEN class is included)		

18 June 2014	Maths Subject Head attends EC DoE meeting		EC DoE presents Mathematics Subject Heads' meeting
25 June 2014	HL Subject Head attends EC DoE meeting		EC DoE presents HL Subject Heads' meeting
21 July 2014		<p>Staff meeting: ANA was not formally included in the agenda</p> <p>Teachers were provided with a list of important dates for the term, including ANA dates and attention was drawn to these</p> <p>Staff receive the official ANA timetable provided by the DBE</p> <p>All staff receive the term planner (ANA dates are included)</p>	
25 July 2014	<p>Foundation phase meeting: ANA is included as Item 11 on the agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject advisors report back on the DBE ANA-readiness meetings • ANA is discussed; Foundation Phase HOD feels that the ANA should be as unobtrusive as possible • Teachers are to think of targets they would like to achieve • Don't put too much pressure on learners • Read questions through with learners and give direction where required 		
August 2014		Communication to parents of important dates for the term: ANA dates are included	
22 Aug 2014	Grade 3 Head calls a meeting to discuss ANA preparation	<p>Morning meeting for teaching staff</p> <p>ANA administrative forms are handed out</p> <p>Teachers to check learner details and return to administration by 26 August 2014</p> <p>Advised 4 members of staff would attend ANA preparation meeting by DBE</p>	
25 Aug 2014	<p>Grade 3 Head requests teachers to check their ANA lists</p> <p>Teachers are to add new learners onto a blank list; delete learners with red pen if not on learner role and to add corrections with</p>		

	red pen		
28 Aug 2014			<p>ANA preparation meeting</p> <p>Schools receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANA administration manual • Official notice of Grade 3 ANA memoranda discussion sessions • ANA memoranda discussion sessions Grades 6 & 9 • Level distribution template for Intermediate and Senior phase ANA 2014
29 Aug 2014	<p>Morning meeting feedback to staff</p> <p>Little feedback given apart from announcing Grade 3 learners should write in pen</p> <p>Staff assured they will receive further instructions related to the ANA closer to the time</p>		
2 Sept 2014	Staff morning meeting: Grade Heads must collect ANA administration manual and sign for it		
5 Sept 2014	<p>ANA mark sheets are received by staff</p> <p>Many learner details are incorrect or excluded</p>	Acting deputy informs staff to take red pen and make corrections directly on the mark sheets. If learners are duplicated staff are to use red pen and cross them out	
(no date)	Grade 3 meeting to discuss ANA		
9 Sept 2014	Grade 3 meeting to discuss ANA		
10 Sept 2014	<p>Staff morning meeting:</p> <p>Staff informed that two members of staff will be going to the DoE (09h00 – 10h00) and the teacher substitute roster will be implemented (Staff who have admin periods will be required to supervise their classes</p>	<p>ANA question papers are collected from the DoE</p> <p>ANA question papers are transported to the school and sorted into grades and class groups during the afternoon</p>	ANA test papers are available for collection
11 Sept 2014		ANA dates are discussed and finalised	
12 Sept 2014	Grade 3 teachers sign for the ANA administration manual and are requested to read it over the weekend		

Table 6.2 Summary of the 2014 ANA events and processes – Phase 2

PHASE 2: ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSESSMENT WEEK			
TIMELINE	Grade 3 Teachers' Activities	School Management Activities	Departmental Officials' Activities
15 Sept 2014	Select teachers are informally told by the HOD that they will be moderating ANA scripts		
16 Sept 2014	Grade 3 HL ANA is implemented	Morning meeting: Assembly is postponed Grade 3 learners to write in pencil	
17 Sept 2014	Grade 1 & 2 HL ANA is implemented Grade 3 teachers meet during break to begin marking process One Grade 3 representative attends memorandum discussion (14h00 – 16h00)	Deputy Principal to contact DBE for clarity on paperwork	Languages ANA memoranda discussion sessions (all circuits)
18 Sept 2014	Grade 3 Mathematics ANA is implemented Grade 3 teachers meet during break for a feedback session from the HL memo meeting Teachers being marking ANA scripts One Grade 3 representative attends memorandum discussion (14h00 – 16h00)		Correspondence informing school of procedures for Foundation Phase data capturing (dates differ to Deputy Chief Education Specialist [DCES] Curriculum correspondence) Mathematics ANA memoranda discussion sessions (all circuits)
19 Sept 2014	Grade 1 & 2 Mathematics ANA is implemented		

Table 6.3 Summary of the 2014 ANA events and processes – Phase 3

PHASE 3: POST-ANA IMPLEMENTATION			
TIMELINE	Grade 3 Teachers' Activities	School Management Activities	Departmental Officials' Activities
26 Sept 2014	All mark sheets to be completed in order to compile ANA reports		
29 Sept 2014	FP meeting to resolve confusion around ANA paperwork Senior teachers to complete Level Distribution Tool Staff object to Principal's insistence that data is finalised now when DBE submission date is 21 Oct 2014 All marked scripts are to be stored today	Deputy Principal to contact DBE regarding confusion over paperwork Deputy Principal and student spend a full day checking scripts	
30 Sept 2014	Staff given different instructions on paperwork and appear to be confused Grade 3 teacher makes DBE templates available to FP staff Moderation of scripts begins	ANA results to be included in report envelope ANA information deadline is 20 Oct 2014	
2 Oct 2014		ANA reports to Principal's office to be signed	
3 Oct 2014	Printed EC DoE and school ANA reports to be distributed to parents		
16 Oct 2014	Grade 3 DBE templates are incorrect: return them to the EC DoE Replacement templates are still incorrect	FP HOD pressurises Grade Heads to complete ANA mark schedules	
17 Oct 2014	Conflict between HOD and Grade 3 Head over submission dates	Fourth term FP meeting: HOD informs staff to complete paperwork and analyse marks to determine areas that require more work	
23 Oct 2014			Grade 3 and 6 verified/moderated ANA returned to school

6 Nov 2014			Letter from DCES Curriculum Department requesting schools submit ANA Level Distribution Tool by 14 November 2014
17 Nov 2014			DCES: Curriculum email to research site indicating the submission of the ANA Level Distribution Tool is one of eleven schools that have complied
Researcher withdraws from site to begin final analysis and synthesis of case study			

6.3 THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE EC DOE IN THE 2014 ANA PROCESS

Tables 6.1 to 6.3 show the different activities of the EC DoE during each phases of the 2014 ANA process.

During Phase 1, it involved:

- convening ‘ANA readiness’ meetings with Foundation Phase Subject Heads;
- convening an ‘ANA preparation’ meeting with principals, and
- distributing the ANA test papers.

During Phase 2 it involved:

- convening memorandum meetings for the Maths and Language ANA, and
- corresponding with schools on the data capturing procedures for the FP ANA.

During Phase 3 it involved:

- moderating and verifying ANA test scripts, and
- collecting ANA data.

The analysis of the data revealed a number of difficulties and challenges. These are described.

6.3.1 The role of the EC DoE during Phase 1

As shown in Table 6.1, the first activity was the registration of all learners. The initial learner registration forms sent to the school by the EC DoE contained a number of errors. Learners’ names were omitted or repeated, the forms contained spelling errors or were incorrect.

The forms were corrected by the teachers and returned to the EC DoE. This caused a lot of teacher frustration with the teachers questioning how reliable a source of data the ANA were (see Chapter 5: 5.5)

The EC DoE ran Maths and Home Language workshops for Foundation Phase teachers who had been selected as subject heads in June 2014. The subject head teachers were referred to the DBE's 2013 Diagnostic Report and 2014 Improvement Plan. Many teachers indicated they were not aware of the document. EC DoE staff instructed subject heads to request a copy from the school Principal, who should have received the document. The workshops focused on aspects of poor learner performance identified in the Diagnostic Report.

The EC DoE held a principals' meeting on 28 August 2014 at which schools were provided with ANA information and documentation. The focus of the meeting was on procedural and technical aspects of the 2014 ANA implementation and administration process. Attendees received the Annual National Assessment Administration Manual, an A5 photocopied document with non-sequential pages which was difficult to follow. The agenda was not adhered to. This and a poor sound system made it difficult to follow proceedings. Other challenges were faced, including the distribution of an incorrect Level Distribution template. The one given out at the meeting was relevant to the Intermediate and Senior Phases, not the Foundation Phase. The EC DoE assured the attendees that schools would receive appropriate Foundation Phase documentation during the memorandum marking sessions. Thirteen primary schools were selected for independent monitoring and verification.

The HOD felt the meeting was drawn out but information regarding dates and processes were useful (HOD interview, p. 2). My observations record that *“speakers went through technical aspects of the ANA: verification procedures; script marking; dates to collect paper; and submission of results”* (Research journal, 28 August 2014). The omission of relevant Foundation Phase documentation raised questions about the efficacy of the EC DoE district office.

During the interviews, Grade 3 teachers reported that the EC DoE officials were unable to provide 2014 Language exemplars papers. This was confirmed by the facilitator at the ANA readiness meeting (Research journal; Field notes; T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 8). Previous ANA papers are available for download from the DBE website (www.education.gov.za). From my observations it appears that EC DoE staff and teachers are not aware of this.

The EC DoE officials provided one ANA Administration Training Manual and one Level Distribution Table to each school. The school was tasked with distributing these to teachers. This places pressure on a school's resources and it may affect how effectively the 2014 ANA requirements were communicated to the Grade 3 teachers. According to one teacher, the school had not received adequate supplies of Departmental workbooks since 2010 (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 4).

According to Chinsamy (2013), the district office has an important role to play in driving change in the schooling system. He notes that "what complicates the problem here is the lack of knowledge and relevant skills by the 'specialists' in the district offices" (Chinsamy, 2013, p. 191). It is difficult to judge whether the same may be said in this case. However, what is apparent, is that poor organisation and an emphasis on technical and procedural requirements of the ANA means that opportunities for the EC DoE, through the district office, to develop teachers' foundational knowledge of the ANA are lost.

6.3.2 The role of the EC DoE during Phase 2

As shown in Table 6.2, the EC DoE observed and verified the ANA implementation. The Deputy Chief Education Specialist [DCES] for the Early Childhood Development [ECD]/Foundation Phase, confirmed that her role during this process is to provide curriculum delivery needs from Grade R to Grade 3. She is supported by two curriculum advisors. She explained that they service 220 primary schools, which amounts to approximately 2 000 teachers (DoE interview, p. 1). The EC ECD (FP) department moderates 20 samples, which translates into a total of 400 ANA papers within a week (DoE interview, p. 6). Overall 25 schools within the region are visited and verified by DBE officials. She maintained that a lack of staffing resources limits the effectiveness of the department, as they are only able to monitor the ANA implementation within six/eight schools out of 220 (DoE interview, p. 15). The NEEDU report notes that problems arise because the provincial departments are under-resourced (2013, p.60). There is evidence to suggest that this may be the case in the context of the 2014 Foundation Phase ANA process.

During the process of document analysis of the 2014 ANA HL scripts, I found the Afrikaans HL question paper differed from the isiXhosa and English HL papers. The DBE explains the process of test development as producing an English prototype, which is then versioned into the 10 other languages (South Africa. DBE 2014a). This inconsistency indicates a lack of standardisation between different ANA tests and affects the comparability of results.

For the first time EC DoE officials held a Grade 3 memo-marking meeting. One representative from each school was required to attend. The format of the Grade 3 memo meeting (see Table 6.2) involved three LoLT having to be accommodated in one meeting in order to ensure the Grade 3 teachers could begin the marking process to meet administration deadlines (EC DoE interview, p. 13). The EC DoE official stated here that the effectiveness of the memo meetings was affected by a lack of sufficient staff.

The HL and Mathematics memo meetings differed in their format. This caused confusion. The HL meeting (17th September 2014) allowed teachers to clarify and negotiate learner responses. This resulted in the meeting being difficult to manage. Officials were unable to respond to certain queries and had to refer them to the assessment section of the EC DoE for further comment (EC DoE interview, p. 14). Teachers were told what constituted an acceptable memo response at the Maths memo meeting held the following day.

The Mathematics memo meeting was “*very much a case of transmission. This is the answer →this is the mark→ end of story!*” (Research Journal, 18 September 2014). Teachers were instructed to mark according to the directives they had been given. T2 shared her experience of the ANA HL Memo meeting:

I found one problem, which I was not allowed to raise. We were called to a meeting and I wasn't allowed to, apparently there had been a previous meeting, which I didn't attend and there had been a lot of argument and debate about questions and answers (...) as a result at the meeting I, (...) attended to, the Language one. We were not allowed to ask questions and when I wanted to raise that question I was told no questions were allowed but there was an error as far as I was concerned. It wasn't the end of the world but it was a labelling error, was it a diphthong or something that was referred to, but it was incorrectly labelled in the paper. (Post-ANA interview, p. 2)

I felt the memo meetings adopted an autocratic format, with teachers being unable to provide input. From the comments made by the EC DoE official about not being able to programme teachers so that they produce “all the right little things”, one may infer a narrow view of teacher professionalism (EC DoE interview, p. 22).

It appears that the complexity and logistical arrangements of conducting a memo meeting were not properly anticipated. The inability to clarify marking requirements demonstrates a lack of expertise by departmental officials and did not foster teacher development opportunities.

Experiences such as this may result in an increase in negative opinions towards the ANA.

6.3.3 The role of the EC DoE during Phase 3

As illustrated in Table 6.3, the EC DoE responsibilities lessened during this phase. Post-ANA interview responses from one teacher [T2] indicate that she found the support and communication during the 2014 ANA were disordered. In response to the question:

“What support did you have with the ANA?” (Appendix C, Question C), she stated:

Look, I felt that it was quite chaotic, um, a teacher was assigned, one teacher was assigned from the Foundation Phase and one from the Intermediate Phase to oversee the process within each phase, I, I (pause) I don't think all the memos that those representatives received from the department were clearly communicated to us, um, I don't think that it's purely their fault. I think the department would change its mind or change something and then, that information wasn't distributed ...as carefully as it was the first time, and they didn't follow the proper channels and as a result, then for example they would use, let's say in the beginning information was given to that representative from our school, right so it all went to that one teacher. Then all of a sudden they would change things and at just a normal average teachers' meeting they would announce (...) all those changes but it was never communicated to the school's representative, who was unaware of it and then you would approach the representative and they would say but that is not what we were told and so there was miscommunication and again, also the procedures that had to be followed were different between the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase. We weren't expected to do all the same things and that wasn't communicated clearly (...). (T2, Post-ANA interview, pp. 4-5)

Submission requirements varied for each phase and EC DoE documents contained errors, which resulted in confusion for teachers. A teacher explained that when the submission date approached, they took a decision to correct the documentation themselves (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 7). This wasted teacher time and encouraged negative perceptions of the ANA among the Grade 3 teachers. Correspondence received from the EC DoE on the 17 November 2014 indicated that only 11 schools in the school circuit number 9 had submitted results (EC DoE Circuit 9, 2014). When asked why this was the case, the EC DoE official stated that it may have been due to an unwillingness to comply, difficulty in accessing documentation or other factors such as teacher strikes (EC DoE interview, p. 32). This raises questions about the efficacy of the ANA as a tool for monitoring learner performance, and it raises questions about public schools' accountability to the state, and what, if any, incentive there is for schools that comply to continue doing so.

6.3.4 Discussion of findings

Key findings are summarised below in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Summary of findings: The role of the EC DoE

1	EC DoE administration processes are not efficient: there are errors on forms, incorrect forms/templates are distributed
2	There are inconsistencies and difference in the three Home Language ANA tests, which affects comparability and confuses teachers
3	The coordination and cohesion between different sections of the EC DoE is weak
4	EC DoE appears to be under-staffed, and lacking capacity (evident in officials not being able to answer questions in meetings)
5	Meetings are of a technical and procedural nature and opportunities for teacher professional development through the acquisition of foundational knowledge about assessment and the ANA are lost
6	Assumptions are made about the availability of school resources (to photocopy official documents etc.) which puts pressure on school budgets
7	There is a lack of policy compliance with many schools not submitting ANA results timeously
8	There is no incentive for schools to be compliant

Meyer and Benavot (2013) describe how developing countries often experience a lack of technical expertise when implementing a national assessment. Evidence suggests that communication between the EC DoE and schools is adequate but the quality and level of support is not very efficient. These need to be addressed so that schools and teachers do not feel frustrated by errors and incorrect information being given to them. Departmental meetings need to be better organised. The limited support and errors may be a result of lack of technical expertise (Meyer & Benavot, 2013) or segmented departments within the EC DoE (Chinsamy, 2013). When queried during the interview on the communication levels between departments, the EC DoE official stated:

There is not enough, not enough. I personally feel that generally with the national and provincial department, they hand out work, they dish out work. You do this, do that, don't do this do this but they don't come like you are in my office, arrange to spend for instance a week with us, to say, "listen let's look at different issues, what are you experience working with the teacher's on the ground?" Where? You don't

get the feeling they are interested to really listen to those who do the hands on work on the ground. I think that would be one of my biggest grievances. You know? (EC DoE interview, p. 12)

The different units in the EC DoE need to work more closely with one another so that the correct information is given to teachers. The department also needs to address the quality of the handouts it provides and not place the burden of making additional copies on schools. The department needs to play a stronger ANA advocacy and teacher professional development role. The technical way in which the department prepares teachers and schools for the ANA needs to be addressed if the formative assessment purpose the ANA is intended to be understood by teachers on the ground.

The model of teacher training used by the EC DoE for the 2014 ANA is problematic. The workshop and meetings appear to be underpinned by a cascade model in which information is transmitted from the EC DoE to principals and HODs who then re-transmit it to teachers in schools. There is evidence which suggests it is similar to that described in the literature as “... short, information-driven, removed from classroom contexts and realities, and thin on substantive content” (Jansen & Taylor, 2003, p. 41). As explained in Chapter 2, the NEEDU report (2013) indicates that this method is not effective. The adoption of a better training model may assist in stronger communication between levels and assist in resolving some issues, ensuring that the ANA meets the NEEDU recommendation that the assessment “enjoys the highest levels of confidence among teachers” (2013, p. 78).

Evidence suggests that the EC DoE meetings do not effectively communicate the purpose of the ANA. There is no evidence of a developmental approach to teacher training or professional development in the preparations for the 2014 ANA. Herholdt and Henning argue for a move “... away from a compliance based approach towards a developmental approach” (2014, p. 9). According to Vandeyar and Killen, the ability of an assessment to impact on curriculum and practice is most effective when the intentions are explicitly communicated to educators and they are participants in the process (2007).

6.4 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Tables 6.1 to 6.3 show the activities of the school management and leadership during each phases of the 2014 ANA process.

During Phase 1 it involved:

- adjusting the normal school timetable
- convening FP staff meetings
- holding daily meetings
- communicating with parents and
- attending meetings and a workshop with the EC DoE
- overseeing the completion of learner registration
- collecting and distributing ANA question papers, and
- confirming the ANA timetable

During Phase 2 it involved:

- holding daily morning meetings
- confirming ANA implementation requirements with staff, and
- selecting teachers to moderate ANA scripts

During Phase 3 it involved:

- clarifying EC DoE administration procedures
- distributing ANA mark sheets
- ensuring moderation is completed and results are captured
- the Principal signing off the ANA reports
- distributing ANA printed reports to teachers
- submitting results to the EC DoE

The analysis of the data revealed a number of difficulties and challenges. These are identified and discussed below.

6.4.1 The role of the school management and leadership during Phase 1

Table 6.1 illustrates that Phase 1 preparation for the ANA at this level was extensive, taking place over a six-month period. Members of the school management and leadership attended meetings and ensured adherence to the DBE timetables. From the number of meetings held, one may infer that the school management was receptive to the ANA with discussion ensuing at whole staff meetings, different phase and grade meetings and informally in conversations between Foundation Phase teachers.

The role of the Principal is described as ‘Chief Invigilator’ in the ANA Administration Manual

provided by the EC DoE. In this study, the Principal devolved this responsibility to the Deputy Principal and the Intermediate Phase HOD, who cascaded information down to the FP HOD. The FP HOD described the school's preparation as follows:

Well, we get notification of when the ANA will be written and then we know to keep that week clear on the timetable. Then we got notice of a meeting for them to provide more information, so we went to the meeting. We listened and came back and gave feedback to the teachers. You may only write with this type of pen, the learners may only write with this, and so on and so on and we implemented it. Our school was not visited by anyone from the department this year (HOD interview, p. 2)

The above comment and my reflection in my research journal entry: “*The Deputy and IP HOD went to the department to collect and count out ANA papers. The substitute timetable was followed. (...) and invited me to go and observe them sorting and packing out for the school*” (Research Journal, 9 September 2014) suggest that the Deputy and IP HOD focused on the technical/logistical requirements of the ANA. They were responsible for learner registration details, attended information meetings and collected the ANA scripts. Their invitation to observe them sorting and preparing ANA question papers provides evidence which suggest they were focused on the technical, administrative aspects of the ANA. They assumed that my documenting the physical process of ANA preparation and implementation was an important part of my study.

The Foundation Phase HOD was responsible for informing the FP teachers of the EC DoE logistical requirements. She felt it was important for her to project a positive attitude to ensure a successful ANA implementation (FP HOD interview, p. 4). I recorded the informal way in which the FP teachers were informed of their moderation duties by the FP HOD as follows: “*Before the morning meeting (HOD) handed pages to some of the FP teachers and informs them that they have to moderate the ANA scripts*” (Research Journal, 15th September 2014).

The school had to use its own resources to make copies and distribute the ANA Administration Manual and the Level distribution template. Only Grade Heads (seven in total) received hard copies of the Administration Manual. This had consequences for the Grade 3 teachers' access to the 2014 ANA requirements as indicated by the following comments:

I think they are pretty much on top of it. They are doing what they can without being excessive. They are not forcing teachers to do drill work. I think they are complying with the department's requirements to the best of their ability. I, ja, I

haven't read through the guidelines for this year. I am not sure; I must be honest whether at this point in time that they have changed. Are we still expected to swap classes? I don't know what the department's requirement is. I know in the past we had to swap classes. Different teachers? I don't know if the department still requires that? I haven't checked on that and I don't know what the school is going to enforce. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)

Just feedback from the people who did go on training. They would give us feedback as to what is expected, um, our grade head, she photocopied um, a little administration manual, so we had to go through it, um, so in a sense, ja, you are prepared indirectly. (T4 Pre-ANA interview, p. 4)

T5 reported being informed of the guidelines the Friday and Monday before each ANA test. As this was her first time implementing the ANA, she appeared to experience added challenges as a result of this informal approach (T5 Post-ANA interview, p. 4) (refer to section 6.5.3 for further discussion).

6.4.2 The role of the school management and leadership during Phase 2

As shown in Table 6.2, the ANA implementation began with the Grade 3 Home Language ANA on 16 September 2014 and the Grade 3 Mathematics ANA on 18 September 2014. The normal school timetable was disrupted and the weekly assembly was cancelled. In my Research Journal I noted:

The Grade 3 write the HL ANA today. Assembly is cancelled. Mrs X confirms in the morning meeting that the Grade 3's may write the ANA in pencil. Two colleagues quickly tell T5 how to fill in the cover page of the answer booklet. T5 appears anxious and worried about the exam. (Research Journal, Monday 15 September 2014)

The ANA was implemented successfully at the school. There was minimal disruption to the normal school timetable. My observations and audio recordings reveal that the departmental guidelines were adjusted to suit the school context and lessen learner anxiety.

6.4.3 The role of the school management and leadership during Phase 3

As shown in Table 6.3, Phase 3 began on 26 September 2014. My research journal indicates this was a challenging period as “*different paperwork keeps arriving and the teachers are confused about all the different pages. Mrs V (Deputy Principal) was instructed to phone and confirm requirements*” (Research Journal, 17 September 2014). This impacted negatively on teacher time. The ANA Administration Manual, the photocopy of which, provided by the EC

DoE, was of poor quality with incorrectly sequenced page numbers and could not be used to clarify policy requirements (South Africa. DBE, 2014b).

During Phase 3, school management prioritised the finalisation and submission of marks and appeared to adopt a compliance-based approach. When teachers expressed frustration and confusion at the FP meeting (29 September 2014), the response from the HOD FP was “*we must do it in case the department arrives to see if we have done it*” (Research Journal, 29 September 2014).

Results of the ANA are presented to the SGB as a matter of record (Principal interview, p. 5; HOD interview, p. 3). The Principal and FP HOD shared their concerns that learner results are influenced by a range of factors (HOD interview, p. 2; Principal interview, p. 5). These include socio-economic circumstances, differences in HL and LoLT, the inclusion of LSEN learners in the ANA and other factors such as learner anxiety and illness. These concerns indicate the 2014 ANA results may not provide a true reflection of learner achievement levels at this school. When asked about how the results were used, the Principal explained that:

We keep the results. From time to time the EDO [Education District Official] visits the school, um; she makes a note of them. (...) I show her the results, we discuss the results, um, not really in depth but um, ja. I don't know what they do with it (Interview with Principal, p. 4)

This comment provides evidence that suggests a preoccupation with the systemic purpose of the ANA. It also shows how the ANA are viewed as something external to the normal teaching and learning activities of the school. There is no evidence to suggest that the formative assessment purpose of the ANA is appreciated or used to support and enhance learning in the school. According to the EC DBE official, a predominance of the systemic view of the ANA is fostering a culture of dishonesty (Interview with EC DoE official, p. 5) (see also Chapter 5: 5.3.3).

6.4.4 Discussion of findings

The key findings are summarised below in Table 6.5:

Table 6.5 Summary of findings: School management's role

1	School management is receptive to and compliant with ANA policy requirements
2	School management is efficient and well-organised

3	The ANA is implemented with minimum disruption to teaching time
4	School management provides ongoing communication and support for teachers
5	School management devolves ANA responsibility to the level of Phase HODs
6	There is evidence of teacher professionalism and a willingness to accept responsibility at the school
7	There is a high level of collaboration between HOD and teachers
8	Information provided by the EC DoE is of poor quality and places additional pressure on the school to reproduce it at its own expense
9	School management focuses on the technical, administrative requirements of the ANA. There is no evidence that suggests that the formative assessment purpose of the ANA is understood by the School Management
10	School Management does not utilise the ANA results
11	There is no evidence of critical engagement or resistance to the ANA

There is evidence from the activities associated with the 2014 ANA that the school is receptive to the ANA and it has efficient and well organised management structures and processes to ensure that the ANA implementation is a smooth process with minimal disruption to normal teaching and learning activities. The school has good leadership with a high degree of responsibility devolved to appropriate levels including the Deputy Principal, HOD and teachers (NEEDU, 2013).

The EC DoE meetings and its administration processes focused on the logistical, technical procedures of the 2014 ANA. This emphasis, and its lack of advocacy for the potential formative assessment role that ANA are intended to play, shaped the way the ANA was taken up and implemented at the school. The NEEDU report (2013) recognises a continuous challenge within a school context is the “slippage between the intended use of procedures as a *means* to improving student learning, to the situation where the procedures and their attendant paperwork become *ends* in themselves” (p. 14). It is argued that schools’ uptake of accountability systems varies according to school and teacher capabilities (Fuhrman, 1999; Spaul, 2015).

The DBE reports indicate that district officials and principals need to provide appropriate support to ensure that ANA results are used to formulate improvement programmes that target

poor areas of performance (South Africa. DBE, 2010; South Africa. DBE, 2013a). The dominance of the systemic purpose of the ANA continues to encourage the perception that results are not relevant for teaching and learning. Without a further improvement the ANA initiative faces the prospect of becoming a symbolic policy (refer to Chapter 2:2.2.4).

Meyer and Benavot (2013) explain how countries select to implement national assessments in order to control costs. The EC DoE's provision of one Administration Manual and Level Distribution template per school placed a burden on school resources. It raises the question of how this is impacting on the majority of schools in South Africa, which have fewer resources than the school selected for this study. By placing the burden of printing ANA exemplars, guidelines and administration forms on schools, the inequities between schools in different quintiles may result in less successful ANA implementation (Graven & Venkat, 2014).

The School Management adapted the departmental implementation guidelines to suit the school context. Each individual teacher then selected which guidelines and instructions to implement based on her specific learner and classroom context. This carries with it the risk of unreliability. According to Gipps (1996), variations in reliability may be the result of individual pedagogic choices and classroom practicalities. Spaul (2015) contends that ANA have not been implemented properly to date. This study provides evidence that there are very real reliability threats, including, for example, the non-submission of results by many schools in the circuit that this school was part of; the use of different submission formats in the different phase; and the inconsistencies noted on the different first language ANA papers. Comparisons of 2014 learner performance levels between schools, grades and different years are not reliable and are not indicators of learner progress.

6.5 GRADE 3 TEACHERS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE 2014 ANA PROCESS

Tables 6.1 to 6.3 show that the Grade 3 teachers were involved in ANA activities before, during and after the 2014 ANA taking place at the school. The following section describes the roles and responsibilities of the five Grade 3 teachers during the three phases of the 2014 ANA process.

The Grade 3 teacher activities during the three phases is summarised in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 Grade 3 teachers’ activities during the 2014 ANA process

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete learner registration procedures • Attend whole staff meetings • Attend FP meetings • Provide feedback from EC DoE Subject Head meetings • Attend Grade 3 meetings • Attend morning meetings • Sign for a copy of the ANA Administration Manual • Distribute information to colleagues • Prepare learners for ANA tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement HL and Maths ANAs • Mark scripts • Attend memo meetings • Attend break time meetings • Submit results for data capturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark scripts • Attend Grade 3 meetings • Selected teachers moderate scripts • Learner scripts are bound and stored • Results communicated to parents • Grade Heads complete analysis and capturing of results

6.5.1 Teachers’ roles and responsibilities in Phase 1

During Phase 1, the teachers attended whole staff meetings, EC DoE meetings, FP meetings, and grade group meetings. During meetings and informal conversations between the teachers, I observed the teachers making humorous comments and displaying a level of scepticism. This may have been prompted by the errors in departmental administration (i.e. the learner registration details) and their perception that the ANA serves little purpose within the classroom. I observed that at the whole staff meetings, teachers’ responses towards the ANA were more negative.

The cascade model adopted by the EC DoE to inform the school management resulted in some information being disseminated informally. The teachers were comfortable with this and

seemed confident in their colleagues' ability to communicate information to them. It was consistent with Carl's (2005) contention that teachers are content to be 'receivers' of the ANA.

The Principal maintained that the 2014 ANA preparation did not affect curriculum coverage. According to him, the teachers continued to follow the CAPS curriculum and learners were not prepared for the ANA through 'drill work' (Interview with Principal, p. 3). This was supported by T4's explanation:

I think we're all approaching it in a different way, um, some are blasé about it, some feel...um..., you know, it needs not that much attention. Some feel we need to give it a lot of attention, so we all have different opinions and outlooks and perceptions of why we have to do it, why it's important, why we have to spend so much time or not so much time. Um, so I think the approach of the teacher also has a great effect on the outcome. (T4 Pre-ANA interview, p. 1)

The Grade 3 teachers described how they prepared their classes as follows:

I think they encourage us to practice the exemplar if you can get it. Sort of, but I mean it depends at the end of the day how you would like to do it. Our Grade 3 teachers discussed it and some of them said they are not going to copy papers; they are going to go through a few select questions. So I think it depends on you, personally, they make the stuff available and so it's up to you if you want to use it or not, that is your own business. (Translated from T1, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)

Um, when we met all of the Grade 3's, when we met, some of the teachers decided they are going to print out past exam papers and copy it for the children, to practise and then the other Grade 3s felt it was unnecessary because even if they send it home as homework, it's not necessarily that it is going to be done, in the first place and half of them are going to lose it, you know how it goes and also at that time of the year we were so busy trying to finish our FATS and our assessment. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 10)

Well they photocopied exam papers and they gave it to me and said read through it and photocopy what your children struggle with. (T5, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2)

I've done no preparation. (Laughs) I um, what I am going to do because you know I am studying as well, I'm doing research. What I'm going to do on Friday, is I'm doing a mock ANA. Which is not in preparation. I'm doing it purely for research purposes, where I literally give them the piece of paper. I don't read the questions for them, they have to read, comprehend and follow the instructions to the best of their own ability without mediation at all, and I am going to use that as a form of analysis to see, to see how well they comprehend, just so I can make sense of the marks when I do the real ANA. (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3)

The teachers' responses (T1 and T5) show how the teachers made their own decisions about how to prepare for the 2014 ANA. This suggests a high level of autonomy. This was supported by the grade head (T3, Pre-ANA interview, p. 3). The only support they received was in the form of old ANA papers which they had been encouraged to use for preparing their Grade 3 learners by the EC DoE (see Table 6.1, 18 and 25 June 2014) and the HOD (25 July 2014). One teacher (T5) insisted that the preparation for the ANA was overshadowed by the number of formal CAPS assessment tasks implemented during the third term. I noted that "... *there has been little talk or discussion around the ANA. (...) The FP have all begun the CAPS assessment and that appears to be the priority*" (Research Journal, 5 September 2014).

The Grade 3 teachers used different methods to prepare their learners for the ANA. These included: giving their classes exemplars to do for homework; working through exemplars and old ANA test papers; consolidating selected concepts from old ANA tests; modelling the ANA question and answer format in classroom activities, and encouraging learners to develop their independent reading skills (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 12; T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 12; T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 7). Using the question and answer format of the ANA in classroom activities shows that the ANA impacted on practice albeit not in any significant way.

The teachers stated that, because of time constraints, they selected questions to work through verbally with their class or set homework tasks and shifted the responsibility to parents. T3 had not taught division sums and included these a week before the ANA to ensure her learners were prepared (Pre-ANA interview, p. 4). A mental maths quiz was introduced to assist learners to improve their comprehension of questions and to follow test instructions correctly, for example, 'circle the correct letter'. The teachers used the school's resources, namely suitably graded readers and texts to develop their Grade 3s' independent reading skills.

There is evidence to suggest that there is a good system of internal accountability amongst the Grade 3 teachers. There was no evidence that the teachers were threatened by or resistant to the ANA. They took it in their stride, viewing it as a necessary part of their work. T4 explained that "... *I just feel like I am doing my work, I don't really need them to check but if that is a requirement then that is a requirement*" (Post-ANA interview, p. 15).

6.5.2 Teachers' roles and responsibilities in Phase 2

My observations show that four of the Grade 3 teachers relied on previous experience when implementing the 2014 ANA (refer to Chapter 5:5.4). The four experienced teachers ensured

the learners had been to the bathroom and had sufficient stationery prior to the 2014 ANA. These teachers worked quickly through the cover page of the ANA, selecting sections that learners were able to complete and leaving out more challenging sections (i.e. date of birth) to be completed by the teacher (T3 HL Audio recording). Less experienced teachers attempted to let learners complete the entire cover page, resulting in confusion and frustration (T5 Audio recording). The less experienced teacher allowed learners to leave during the ANA for extended bathroom breaks. Experienced teachers settled learners into the task and there were fewer efforts to engage the teacher (T3 Audio recording; T5 Audio recording). The following interview question provided insight into teachers' 2014 ANA implementation.

“Can you share some positive and negative aspects of implementing the ANA within your class this year?” (Appendix C, Question B).

Teachers' responses included:

I think this year was better. I think each year that we write it improves and I feel, I liked that we stayed within our own classes and were able to 'guide' because last year we did not guide them at all, this year we guided them more. So it was better for me but I still feel that for a Grade 3 learner, it's still Foundation Phase, it's too formal for me, yes. Because if he feels sick that day, he gets a poor result and it's not a true reflection. (Translated from T1, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)

I think they would have marked very similarly, um, but I have realised now in hindsight we all did it, conducted the exam very differently, I, for example, I read through it, we were not supposed to read questions at all for Grade 3's um, which our school felt was unfair um, for children at that level not to provide any support when that is what they are used to in the classroom. So we were told we could read um, read questions for the learners. That was interpreted differently though by some. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 3)

We had a little booklet that I read through and then I just got all the Grade 3's (teachers) together and we just went through it and discussed it and then there were one or two things that was changed but that was just told by us in the staff room, like they said for Grade 3 they only had to write in pens but then it was said they can write with pencils and we decided as a group to still read the questions to them because they were a bit nervous, which was according to the book – rather not do it. (T3, Post-ANA interview, p. 2)

I just followed the basic procedure with what we always do in class, we read it through. We read the questions and then I leave them and they do the answers. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 4)

The only thing that was quite challenging is the children didn't really understand some of the questions and um, maybe how it was phrased so I had to restructure the whole question for them to be able to understand to answer the question. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)

T2 confirmed the variations in implementation and that the ANA requirements were interpreted differently by each Grade 3 teacher. T3 acknowledged the guidelines were not followed correctly as they were considered too challenging for learners. T1 made reference to the challenges of a formal exam format and the difficulty in obtaining a true reflection of each learner's ability from a standardised test.

Audio recordings indicate that the 2014 ANA implementation was not standardised across the five Grade 3 classrooms. Four of the Grade 3 teachers read each question and allowed time for learners to complete their response (T1; T3; T4; T5). One teacher made learners work through the paper independently (T2), which she explained during our interview:

I think they would have marked very similarly, um, but I have realised now in hindsight we all did it, conducted the exam very differently, I, for example, I read through it, we were not supposed to read questions at all for Grade 3's um, which our school felt was unfair um, for children at that level not to provide any support when that is what they are used to in the classroom. So we were told we could read um, read questions for the learners. That was interpreted differently though by some. (Post-ANA interview, p. 3)

Recordings, and my observations, reveal evidence of hints and references to prior instruction. The four teachers were inclined to mediate for learners by rephrasing questions to ensure better understanding or association with prior instruction. T5 explained that, "*I re-phrased a question where I knew they would understand a certain way, cause obviously after a whole year you know your children and you know how, how they understand things* (Post ANA interview, p. 2).

6.5.3 Teachers' roles and responsibilities in Phase 3

The teachers described the 2014 ANA administration process as follows:

I think it's absolutely ridiculous the amount of paperwork that followed the exam was unbelievable. We had to sit doing schedules for goodness knows how long, filling in marks, um, it was incredibly time consuming. It took days to get everything done and then they made half a hundred mistakes; we would be sent a schedule, oops, sorry no there was a mistake; we are going to resend it and resend it. I think eventually, and even on the final schedule that we had to complete there were errors. We had to adjust according to the errors. (T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)

Um, it went reasonable smooth, we had a few hiccups with the memo and the memo discussions so it was a bit frustrating and um, the only other thing that didn't go smoothly was the spreadsheets we had to complete and they were forever sending us wrong ones or faulty ones. So that was a bit of a hiccup, but the rest, we had the papers on time, we got the memos besides the meeting we went to that was on the wrong day. (T3, Post-ANA interview, p. 1)

The mark sheets, we had to do all that. There is a lot of admin involved which is very time consuming and we can't get our other work done so it puts a lot of pressure on the teacher, on, you don't want to say unnecessary pressure but, I keep on saying the timing is not very good. (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 7)

Yes, the only thing I didn't feel comfortable with was the results, that we had to, those columns, I wasn't even aware that you had to do that and the one day (refers to Head of Foundation Phase) came to me and said, "Oh, I want this tomorrow" and I thought to myself, "But what is this, that you are referring to?" I hadn't a clue. (T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 5)

All of the Grade 3 teachers made reference to the mark sheet analysis that is provided by the EC DoE to support the formative purpose of the ANA. More experienced teachers completed the mark analysis sheet during the marking of their scripts while T5, who has no prior experience, was not aware she had to complete an analysis of individual learner results, resulting in time wasted (Post-ANA interview, p. 5). It would appear teachers complete the mark analysis sheet as a matter of compliance rather than seeing it as a useful document to inform teaching and learning. This may be because teachers associate the mark analysis sheet with the systemic purpose of the ANA. (See Chapter 5:5.3.4 for further discussion)

The ANA administration requirements appear to impact negatively on their planning and instruction time. T4 indicated that the timing of the ANA at this time of the term was not ideal (T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 8; Research Journal, 16 October 2014). T2; T3 and T4 expressed concerns that the completion of the mark sheet impacted on teacher time. T2 and T3 indicated that errors on EC DoE forms further complicated the mark capturing and submission process. T4 explained the process as follows:

Just extremely time consuming because you have to sit and write every little mark for every little question. Then you had to go and retype everything onto a spreadsheet and then you had to go and check it all, if there were one or two mistakes their (administrator) had to type it up and there was a mistake there and he had to redo it and then we had to do, this one where the department, for our language only went up to certain, F or whatever. They didn't include all the questions for language. This is Maths. Didn't include all the Language ones, so our total didn't tally properly and

then we couldn't understand why and eventually we found out the, didn't' add in all the questions. So it's time consuming, wasting time in a sense. (Post-ANA I interview, p. 8)

Despite repeated requests for correction, the CD-format FP submission documents were not corrected by the EC DoE (Research Journal, 16 October 2014). It appeared that teachers did not discuss or compare findings between classes or use the results formatively during planning meetings (T1, Post-ANA interview, p. 4). These comments indicate that the 2014 ANA results were not utilised correctly. As discussed in Chapter 5: 5.2.2, teachers' uptake of the formative purpose of the ANA has been limited.

Prior to the ANA, teachers reported feeling anxious about reporting results to management (T2, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2; T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 2). The DBE maintains that "teachers must fully understand the implication of the statistical information and the diagnostic information so that learning gaps can be identified and addressed" (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 104). After the ANA, teachers reported receiving no feedback from school management regarding learner performance apart from confirmation that their scripts and results had been timeously received (T1, Post-ANA interview, p. 4; T4, Post-ANA interview, p. 10; T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 8). This was confirmed by the Principal (p. 4).

Teachers reported that parents appeared to be disinterested or to lack knowledge of the ANA (T1, Post-ANA interview, p. 4; T2, Post-ANA interview, p. 8; T3, Post-ANA interview, p. 4; T5, Post-ANA interview, p. 2). The teachers felt that by assigning a mark/level on the report, parents received no constructive feedback on the learning areas their child may require further assistance with (T4, Pre-ANA interview, p. 5). (See Chapter 5:5.2.2 for further discussion.)

Grade 3 teachers relied on photocopying and paper supplies to complete ANA reports and analysis. Foundation Phase DBE documentation was provided on a CD (Research Journal, 16 October 2014). It appears that the EC DoE assumed school resources would allow for technology to access and ensure dissemination of information and documentation during Phase 3.

6.5.4 Discussion of findings

A summary of the Grade 3 teachers' roles and responsibilities is provided in table 6.7:

Table 6.7 Summary of findings: Grade three teachers' roles and responsibilities

1	The teachers view the ANA as part of their work
2	The teachers accept responsibility for the preparation and implementation
3	The teachers are self-determining and display a high level of autonomy
4	The teachers use different methods to prepare their learners for the ANA
5	Internal accountability is valued more than external accountability
6	The teachers implemented the ANA alongside CAPS assessment tasks which dominate classroom activities
7	The teachers are compliant; they do not resist or reject the ANA
8	The cascade model of disseminating information from the EC DoE to the Principal and HOD and then to the teachers was adequate
9	The teachers used old ANA test papers to prepare their learners
10	The ANA exposes Grade 3 learners to a formal test format
11	The teachers model the question and answer format of the ANA in their classrooms
12	Grade 3 ANA implementation at the school was not standardised
13	The teachers mediated the ANA according to learner needs
14	The ANA impacts on teacher time
15	Grade 3 learner results not utilised effectively
16	Limited feedback given to parents and learners (only marks)

Teachers do not appreciate the formative assessment purpose of the ANA. Regardless of Taylor's (2015) insistence that if assessments are to function effectively they should be administered and marked by teachers (p. 3), this group of teachers view the ANA as a systemic initiative that has little value to teaching and learning in the classroom. This corroborates the view expressed in the Strategic plan 2011-2014 that policies are not being clearly communicated to key role players (South Africa. DBE, 2011b). My observations record that, despite complaining, teachers did not resist the 2014 ANA, and responsibilities were carried out. The teachers displayed an attitude of compliance towards the ANA.

Due to time constraints and the nature of teaching and learning, it is difficult for principals and

HODs to continuously ensure correct curriculum coverage and check up on individual staff members. Spaul (2015) emphasises the importance of professional accountability in education as "... it shifts the focus away from specifying the minutiae of procedures and standards and moves towards a reliance on professional knowledge and judgement" (p. 119). He notes that "... only when schools have both the incentive to respond to an accountability system and the capacity to do so will there be an improvement in student outcomes" (Spaul, 2015, p. 136). It would appear that schools with good levels of internal accountability, such as this one, and teachers who hold themselves accountable appear to be able to prepare for the ANA implementation.

This school demonstrated a high level of personal accountability amongst the Grade 3 teachers, which may result in tension between the internal and external accountability measures (Broadfoot, 2007; Haywood, 2015). Schools with high levels of internal accountability may display resistance to external forms of accountability as teachers feel the external measures "downplay professional values and impact on teacher professionalism" (Mausethagen, 2013, pp. 425 - 426). This was not an issue in this study.

While the DBE intends for assessment to be used as a tool to improve learner performance through the modification of teacher pedagogy (EC DoE interview, p. 4; South Africa. DBE, 2011b), the Grade 3 CAPS assessment requirements appear to be promoting an accountability approach towards assessment (See Chapter 5). This may result in a disregard for the individual needs of learners (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Teachers may adapt instructional activities to be "... more patterned and predictable and less responsive and adaptive" (Hoffman, Assaf & Paris, 2001, p. 490). These challenges highlight the prominence that assessment is taking within the CAPS curriculum. There is a danger of learners struggling to integrate new knowledge, which may encourage memorisation of facts without developing deeper insights (Frame, 2003).

As discussed in Section 6.3.3, a cascade model was adopted by the EC DoE to disseminate information pertaining to the ANA. This support was technical and procedural in nature with little effort being made to develop the teachers' understanding of the ANA. At the school where this research was undertaken, the Grade 3 teachers were afforded high levels of autonomy when preparing learners for the 2014 ANA. They drew on their prior experiences and used exemplar or old papers to prepare learners. There is concern that the similarities between exemplars and ANA question papers may be resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum and teachers teaching to the test (Graven & Venkat, 2014). Gains in learner performance may not be a true reflection

of increased learner ability, rather an increased knowledge of the format and style of the ANA papers (Graven & Venkatakrishnan, 2013).

Ratnam-Lim and Tan (2015) describes how “teachers tend to administer tests with the aim of improving students’ test taking abilities rather than diagnosing children’s learning” (p. 71). There is a view that this results in a “superficial implementation” of the assessment instead of an adjustment of pedagogy (Hopfenbeck et al., 2015, p. 46). Van Laren and James (2008) and Brown (2004) document how teachers adopt pedagogies based on their individual understandings of an assessment. There is evidence in this study that suggests that because the teachers’ understanding of the ANA was narrow and it was viewed as something ‘extra’ that needed to be done, it had little impact on pedagogy.

The 2014 ANA implementation in the five Grade 3 classes was not standardised. Teachers mediated according to the needs of their learners. Graven and Venkat (2014) show that factors such as learners’ language and reading abilities may compromise the fairness of the ANA and do impact on learner performance levels. Issues such as the format and timing of the assessment, learner language and reading abilities and learner stress have a far-reaching impact at the level of Foundation Phase and strategies to lessen their impact must be sought. Spaul (2015) calls for the ANA to be externally evaluated and marked. This, he argues, will ensure higher reliability and validity of data pertaining to learner performance and assist in correctly identifying learning areas that require further support.

The Grade 3 teachers’ comments indicate that tensions exist between the prescribed CAPS curriculum assessments and the ANA (refer to Chapter 5:5.4). The teachers appear to be struggling to mediate between the CAPS assessment requirements, classroom practice and learner needs.

Graven and Venkat (2014), raise concerns about the amount of teaching time that is allocated to the ANA. As shown in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, teachers are responsible for the majority of ANA activities. Errors and a lack of communication by the EC DoE contributed to the amount of teacher time that was lost during the 2014 ANA process. Time constraints appear to influence the amount of feedback learners receive. Black et al. (2005) maintain that feedback is an important component of the assessment process as it assists learners to situate themselves as beneficiaries of the testing process rather than victims.

As discussed in section 6.3.3, there is a reliance on school resources for the successful

implementation of the ANA. Teachers must be able to access photocopiers, paper supplies and computers in order to administer the ANA effectively. This raises the question of how the majority of schools (Quintile 1 to 3 schools) are coping with this requirement.

6.6 SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed and discussed events and processes associated with the 2014 ANA in a particular context (Grade 3 in a selected ordinary public school). It has shed light on the role and responsibility of the EC DoE and the school management and the five Grade 3 teachers participating in the study. The findings illuminate how teachers in an organised and effectively managed school managed to implement the ANA without any significant difficulties. It also identified a number of challenges that need to be attended to if the ANA is to be an effective tool for monitoring the learning outcomes at key stages of schooling, and supporting and enhancing teaching and learning at the level of the classroom.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This case study research has described in rich detail five teachers' perceptions of the Annual National Assessment at one level of the school system (Grade 3 of the Foundation Phase) at an ordinary public primary school. Secondly, the study described the process of preparing for, implementing and assessing the 2014 ANA at the selected school. This chapter reflects on the key elements and findings of the research and it identifies the lessons that can be learned from the study.

7.2 SYNTHESIS

2014 was an important year for the ANA because, according to Mrs Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education:

2014 is the year that His Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Africa, singled out in his State of the Nation Address in 2010, as the year by which at least 60% of South African learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9 should achieve acceptable levels of achievement in both Literacy (Language) and Numeracy (Mathematics) (South Africa. DBE, 2014a, p. 6)

This study describes in rich detail the 2014 ANA process from the perspective of five teachers. It illuminates how teachers perceive and experience the ANA at the micro-level of the classroom. My main contention is that unless teachers understand and appreciate the different purposes of assessment the ANA serves, and have the skills to implement and administer the ANA effectively, this externally driven assessment intervention is not likely to achieve its intended goals.

7.2.1 The research design and goals

The goal of the study was to describe and analyse how an ordinary public primary school prepares for, implements and uses the Annual National Assessment with a view to understanding Grade 3 teachers' perceptions of the ANA and what, if any, impact it is having on their classroom practice.

In order to accomplish this goal, a qualitative, interpretive research orientation was adopted and a case study method was used. The study is bound by a particular phenomenon (a regulatory state assessment) at a particular time (2014), in a specific place (one ordinary primary school) with a specific focus (five Grade 3 teachers).

For convenience, I decided to undertake the research at the school where I was employed. This meant I was in constant close proximity to the teachers and able to work from an insider position. By not focusing on the grade I teach (Grade 2), I was able to maintain some distance, which helped me to counteract the possible bias and subjectivity.

Within the context of this study, the ANA has been implemented annually with this group of Grade 3 learners since they entered Grade 1 in 2012. No research had been done at the school on how teachers prepare for, implement and use the ANA tests in their classrooms and what, if any, challenges and issues arise. Anecdotal accounts were the only source of information. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on how the ANA is being implemented at the level of the school and classroom. This study sought to address this gap.

My decision to investigate the ANA at the selected ordinary public school was for convenience purposes and, importantly, because I knew that the school's organisation and management structures were such that the school was able to adhere to the EC DoE's ANA timelines. The school was one of eleven schools in the Circuit group to submit ANA results to the EC DoE (EC DoE Circuit 9, 2014). A circuit group consists of between 15 and 30 schools (South Africa. DBE, 2013e). The teacher participants were characterised by diversity in terms of experience and LoLT. This is seen as contributing to the richness of the study. A detailed school profile was included because this school, like many other former Model-C schools, has undergone significant change since 1994. Learner diversity in terms of race, socio-economic class and language coupled with a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking staff meant that the school was an interesting choice of research site. This diversity must be borne in mind when considering the challenges and issues that emerged in the data analysis.

The research took place over two years. During the first year, I was an inside researcher (Merriam, 1991) (refer to section 4.6.1). I adopted the role of a participant observer (Merriam, 1991; Yin, 2003; Cohen et.al., 2011). As a teacher myself, I was able to contextualise the literature with reference to events within my own classroom. I had access to daily events that an external researcher would not have obtained (Yin, 2003). This allowed me to develop insights and hunches, which are an important part of qualitative research (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The

use of a critical friend and critical engagement with my supervisor helped me to address issues of validity and reliability.

My insider position was not without its challenges. Members of staff struggled to differentiate between my role as a participant observer and an educator. Initially the school's managers assumed I would play an active leadership role in the 2014 ANA process. I found it necessary to distance myself from discussions in which personal views on the ANA were expressed. I used my research journal to record and reflect on my personal views. This helped me to separate my personal views from those of the participant teachers.

The data gathering process was challenging because the teacher participants were colleagues with whom I had established friendships. My teaching at the school over an extended period of time (eight years), meant that I enjoyed a level of autonomy that a new or less experienced member of staff or outside researcher would not have been afforded.

The length of time spent gathering data was a challenge. As evident in Table 4.1 and Table 6.1, preparing for and implementing the ANA takes place over a period of several months. I had to work within the tension of balancing my normal teaching responsibilities and my research work. I was mindful that the ability of a case study to display "consistency and replicability over time" improves the reliability (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 199). I found the prolonged period of gathering, organising, storing and analysing data necessary but very time-consuming.

At the end of the first year of research (2014), I withdrew from the field. This allowed me to step back and reflect critically on the case. I found this distance reduced the challenge described by Merriam (1991) that "an observer cannot help but affect and be affected by the setting and this interaction may lead to a distortion of the real situation" (p. 88). In 2015, I took a teaching post at another school. This further distanced me and it helped me to gain perspective while maintaining good relations with the research site and participants. I was able to complete the transcription of interviews, compile case records, and begin the process of case study analysis and research report writing. Throughout the two years, I continued to read and review literature in the field of educational assessment. This helped me to keep abreast with trends and developments in assessment internationally and the latest research and reports on the ANA. Balancing my research process work, readings and full-time teaching load was an ongoing struggle.

This study has helped me to deepen my understanding of the two main purposes of the Annual

National Assessment, namely, to support and enhance learning, and to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of a public schooling system in terms of learner achievement. It has also enabled me to understand teachers' perspectives on the ANA and their experiences of preparing for and implementing the ANA in their classrooms.

7.2.2 Synthesis of key findings

This study provides evidence that suggests the five teachers do not understand the formative assessment purpose of the ANA in spite of it being intended as “a diagnostic tool that can be used to inform, plan and improve classroom practice” (South Africa. DBE, 2010; 2013d; Graven & Venkatakrisnan, 2013; NEEDU, 2013). There is little, if any, evidence of the teachers analysing or using the ANA results for formative assessment purposes. Furthermore, they do not analyse and use the ANA results to inform their teaching, nor have they provided detailed feedback on performance to parents and learners. Teachers are key role players in the process of administering the ANA. Opportunities must be available for them to improve their knowledge and understanding of the purposes of assessment, the CAPS curriculum and how assessment can be used to support and enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.

There is also little evidence of the ANA changing teachers' classroom practices. It is a time-consuming process involving a lot of paperwork, which the teachers found administratively burdensome. The ANA, like the numerous assessment tasks required by the CAPS curriculum, impacts on teachers' lesson preparation time. This research showed that only the newly qualified teacher had taught all of the methods included in the Mathematics curriculum. There is also evidence which suggest that the time required for the ANA may mean that less time is being spent on learning areas that are not assessed, for example Life Skills.

The Grade 3 teachers prepared for and implemented the 2014 ANA with little fuss or disruption of normal teaching and learning. Good school management and leadership facilitated and administered the process efficiently. The school was policy compliant and it meets the criteria of a 'School that works' identified by Christie et al. (2007) (refer to section 3.2.1). The school timetable was adjusted to ensure the timeframes aligned with the EC DoE guidelines, the ANA documentation provided by the EC DoE was photocopied at the school and distributed to the teachers, and regular meetings were held to support and guide the ANA process.

The five teachers were intrinsically motivated and professional. They took responsibility for implementing the ANA and made their own decisions about how to prepare their learners and

implement the ANA in their classrooms. As a result, there were differences in the way they implemented the ANA, which raises questions about standardisation and reliability of the ANA.

This study found preparation, implementation and administration of the 2014 ANA differed among the five Grade 3 teachers. The methods selected to prepare learners and implement the assessment were driven by each teacher's belief and understanding of the purpose of the ANA (Van Laren & James, 2008).

The findings of this study provide evidence that suggests that language barriers may limit learners' understanding of the ANA. It also revealed how the 2014 Afrikaans HL ANA contained a different question to the isiXhosa and English HL papers, which made comparisons between Grade 3 HL results in Grade 3 at the school impossible.

The study also revealed how learner registration details, received from the EC DoE in January 2014, contained errors in all grades (refer to Chapter 6:6.3.1). Documentation received by the school confirms that, as of 17 November 2014, only 11 primary schools in the School Circuit had submitted results (EC DoE Circuit 9, 2014). From this one may infer that the ANA results are partial as opposed to comprehensive. It was beyond the scope of this study to follow up with the EC DoE on what sanctions are in place for schools that do not submit results, who these schools are, and what this means in terms of reliability of the results. The NEEDU Report (2013) warns that the introduction of high-stakes assessments may result in schools altering results in their favour. The EC DoE participant confirmed that this has been the case in some instances (Refer to Chapter 6: 6.4.3).

7.3 LESSONS LEARNED

The findings of this study have shed light on teachers' perceptions of the ANA and the way in which they prepare for and implement the ANA. The lessons that can be extracted from this study include the following:

7.3.1 The EC DoE administration and support should be strengthened

The interaction between different levels of the education system must be strengthened and improved to ensure effective and efficient communication of the purposes, implementation guidelines and administrative requirements of the ANA. This will result in less resistance from teachers and encourage an improvement in the standardisation of the ANA tests.

7.3.2 Teachers' formative assessment knowledge and skills need strengthening

The introduction of assessments as a tool to ensure accountability is driving teaching and learning. If teachers are to be the key role players in the ANA, further opportunities must be available for them to improve their knowledge of the purposes of assessment, the CAPS curriculum and the implications of assessments for teaching and learning. This will assist teachers to mediate effectively and ensure the ANA and CAPS curriculum requirements do not impact negatively on teaching and learning.

7.3.3 Teachers do not implement the ANA in the same way

This research has shown that teachers' understandings of the ANA influence the uptake and implementation of the ANA. The uneven implementation and administration of the ANA are impacting on the validity of the data regarding learner performance levels. At present, learner results are not comparable or effective in identifying areas of poor performance. Spaul (2015) contends that the ANA have not been implemented properly to date and that by seeking to incorporate different purposes for the ANA "we achieve none of them".

In order to improve issues of standardisation and reliability, experts have recommended the ANA are externally administrated (Van der Berg et al., 2011).

7.3.4 ANA results are not being submitted by all schools

Principals were informed at the principals' meeting (Chapter 6: 6.3.1) of the submission date for ANA results. Communication forwarded to 33 schools confirmed that this school was one of 11 that had met the submission date. Schools' non-compliance impacts on the reliability of the data used to support the systemic purpose of the ANA.

7.3.5 Teachers in this study were able to implement the ANA efficiently because the school management and leadership was good

Teachers at this school are qualified and exhibit high levels of professionalism. The school management and leadership team meet weekly and ensure that events within the school are coordinated and communicated timeously to teachers. There is a high level of autonomy afforded to teachers, who are expected to carry out their responsibilities efficiently. As a result, the 2014 ANA was implemented according to the DBE timeframes.

7.3.6 The ANA places additional administrative work on teachers

As illustrated in Tables 6.1 to 6.3, teachers are mainly responsible for the ANA implementation and administration (Refer to Chapter 6:6.4). These duties must be completed timeously over and above normal teaching responsibilities. Large class sizes and no added support coupled with errors on EC DoE paperwork and confusion surrounding different phase requirements significantly increased these teachers' workload.

7.3.7 The ANA is a burden on school resources

The ANA places a burden on school and teacher resources. The challenges for under-resourced schools and departments to implement the ANA are substantial. Schools would benefit from further support.

7.4 CONCLUSION

By locating my research in a functional school that is compliant with policy requirements and which has good management and leadership, resources (photocopiers etc.) and committed teachers, I have been able to describe in rich detail the process of preparing for, implementing and assessing the 2014 ANA. I have provided insights into the ANA from the perspective of five Grade Three teachers. According to Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2012) this type of research can provide rich insights and identify problems, which are as valuable as finding 'answers'. The lessons learned from this study may be of value to departmental officials and educators in primary schools.

POSTSCRIPT

The 2015 ANA tests for eight million learners were scheduled to take place in September 2015. The DBE confirmed that ANA test papers had been printed and distributed in a press statement on 1 September 2015 (South Africa. DBE, 2016a*).

After deliberations between teacher unions and the DBE on 8 and 10 September 2015, it was decided to postpone the ANA implementation until further “remodelling of the ANA by a joint task team” could take place (South African Democratic Teachers’ Union [SADTU], 2015). The unions, while supportive of the systemic purpose of the ANA, were opposed to the use of the ANA as a “high-stakes assessment” (SADTU, 2015). The ANA were described as not effective and requiring reforms (Nicolson, 2015). The unions called for the ANA to be implemented every three years in order to allow for remedial action (Nkosi, 2015).

On 11 September 2015, teacher unions, including SADTU; National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa [Naptosa]; SA Onderwysunie [SAOU]; and the Professional Educators Union [PEU], united to release a joint press statement announcing the decision to postpone the ANA until 2016 (SADTU, 2015). The postponement of the 2015 ANA was confirmed in a press release by the DBE, stating that the ANA would be implemented in February 2016 (South Africa. DBE, 2016b*).

In a confusing and conflicting media briefing on 11 September 2015, the DBE disputed the unions’ position (South Africa. DBE, 2016c*). While agreeing to talks regarding reforming future ANA tests, the DBE announced the 2015 ANA tests would be implemented in December 2015. The teacher unions responded quickly, calling the announcement “irresponsible and illogical” (Nkosi, 2015) and vowing to block teachers from invigilating the assessments. They confirmed their views that the ANA in its present form was a “burden for teachers” and “not beneficial to the system” (Nkosi, 2015).

Schools’ responses were mixed, with some schools electing to administer the tests but not mark or process them, while others disregarded the 2015 ANA. The school participating in this research elected to write the ANA and submit the results.

During the 2016 academic year, despite being provisionally timetabled by schools for September, no communications regarding the ANA had been received from the DBE by September 2016. Teacher unions have not released press statements or communicated with teachers regarding the ANA.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PRE-ANA INTERVIEW GRADE 3 TEACHERS

My research aims are:

- To describe and analyse Grade 3 teachers, at an ordinary public primary school, perceptions and understanding of the Annual National Assessment.
- To describe and analyse how the Grade Three teachers implement the ANA and what, if any, challenges and difficulties they may experience, and how they deal with these.
- To describe and analyse emergent factors that impact on policy (ANA) implementation.

PARTICIPANT:	DATE:	
Questions	Prompts	Probes
The Annual National Assessment		
1. (a) What do you understand by Annual National Assessment?	<p>Explain</p> <p>Tell me more...</p> <p>When did you...?</p>	<p>DBE's Assessment Policy – Do you know it?</p> <p>Are you familiar with why the ANA were developed and the different purposes they serve?</p> <p>Why do you think the ANA should be written in the Foundation Phase?</p> <p>Grade 3?</p>
(b) Could you tell me how you have experienced the ANA at your school and in your class?	<p>Have you implemented the ANA?</p>	<p>At a school level?</p> <p>Personally?</p> <p>Others' beliefs, practices, attitudes around assessment</p>

<p>(c) How would you say schools are implementing the ANA?</p>	<p>What do you see?</p>	<p>Schools in general? Management's role</p>
<p>(d) What support have you had with the ANA?</p>	<p>What do you see?</p>	<p>District office? School Management's role (Principal/HOD)</p>
<p>(e) What do you do with the ANA results?</p>	<p>Tell me more about how you use the ANA results?</p>	<p>Feedback to parents, learners? Feedback to the school? To enhance individual's teaching?</p>
<p>(f) What is your understanding of assessment?</p>	<p>Tell me more... How do you assess?</p>	<p>Practical considerations? Effects and Influences within your classroom? Challenges?</p>
<p>(g) How do you think the ANA implementation could be improved?</p>	<p>Explain Elaborate</p>	<p>Practical considerations Procedures Participation</p>
<p>(h) What do you think is meant by formative assessment?</p>	<p>Your experiences</p>	

Conclusion: Is there anything you want to add or ask?		
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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PRINCIPAL AND HOD

My research aims are:

- To describe and analyse Grade 3 teachers, at an ordinary public primary school, perceptions and understanding of the Annual National Assessment.
- To describe and analyse how the Grade Three teachers implement the ANA and what, if any, challenges and difficulties they may experience, and how they deal with these.
- To describe and analyse emergent factors that impact on policy (ANA) implementation.

PARTICIPANT:	DATE:	
Questions	Prompts	Probes
The Annual National Assessment		
1. (a) What do you understand by Annual National Assessment?	<p>Explain</p> <p>Tell me more...</p> <p>When did you...</p>	<p>DBE's Assessment Policy – Do you know it?</p> <p>Are you familiar with why the ANA were developed and the different purposes they serve?</p> <p>Why do you think the ANA should be written in the Foundation Phase? Grade 3?</p>
(b) Could you tell me how you have experienced the ANAs at your school?	<p>Have you implemented the ANA?</p>	<p>At a school level?</p> <p>Personally?</p> <p>Other's beliefs, practices, attitudes around assessment</p>

<p>(c) Could you describe the preparation that is necessary to participate in the ANA?</p>	<p>Impacts on school routine? Practical considerations</p>	<p>District level? School Management level? Classroom level?</p>
<p>(d) How would you say schools are implementing the ANA?</p>	<p>What do you see?</p>	<p>Schools in general? Management's role</p>
<p>(d) What support have you had with the ANA?</p>	<p>What do you see?</p>	<p>District office? School Management's role (Principal/HOD)</p>
<p>(e) What do you do with the ANA results?</p>	<p>Tell me more about how you use the ANA results?</p>	<p>Feedback to parents, learners? Feedback to the school? To enhance individual's teaching?</p>
<p>(f) What is your understanding of assessment?</p>	<p>Tell me more... How do you assess?</p>	<p>Practical considerations? Effects and Influences within your classroom? Challenges?</p>
<p>(g) How do you think the ANA implementation could be improved?</p>	<p>Explain Elaborate</p>	<p>Practical considerations Procedures Participation</p>

<p>(h) What do you think is meant by formative assessment?</p>	<p>Your experiences</p>	
<p>Conclusion: Is there anything you want to add or ask?</p>		

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: POST-ANA INTERVIEW GRADE 3 TEACHERS

My research aims are:

- To describe and analyse Grade 3 teachers, at an ordinary public primary school, perceptions and understanding of the Annual National Assessment.
- To describe and analyse how the Grade Three teachers implement the ANA and what, if any, challenges and difficulties they may experience, and how they deal with these.
- To describe and analyse emergent factors that impact on policy (ANA) implementation.

PARTICIPANT:	DATE:	
Questions	Prompts	Probes
The Annual National Assessment		
1. (a) Could you describe your experience of the ANA this year?	<p>Explain</p> <p>Tell me more...</p> <p>When did you...</p>	<p>DBE's expectations of teachers?</p> <p>Your thoughts on the tests papers and memo's?</p> <p>Your personal feelings?</p>
(b) Can you share some positive and negative aspects of implementing the ANA within your class this year?	<p>How did you implement the ANA?</p>	<p>At a school level?</p> <p>Personally?</p> <p>Other's beliefs, practices, attitudes around assessment</p>
(c) What support did you have with the ANA?	<p>What did you experience?</p>	<p>District office?</p> <p>School Management's role (Principal/HOD)</p> <p>Colleagues'?</p>

<p>(e) What have you done with the ANA results?</p>	<p>Tell me more about how you used the ANA results?</p>	<p>Feedback to parents, learners? Feedback to the school? To enhance individual's teaching?</p>
<p>(f) What will you do differently next year?</p>	<p>Tell me more</p>	<p>Practical considerations? Effects and Influences within your classroom? Challenges?</p>
<p>(g) What do you understand by the term accountability within an educational setting?</p>	<p>Explain Elaborate</p>	<p>On a school level? Within your classroom?</p>
<p>Conclusion: Is there anything you want to add or ask?</p>		

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: DoE OFFICIAL

My research aims are:

- To describe and analyse Grade 3 teachers, at an ordinary public primary school, perceptions and understanding of the Annual National Assessment.
- To describe and analyse how the Grade Three teachers implement the ANA and what, if any, challenges and difficulties they may experience, and how they deal with these.
- To describe and analyse emergent factors that impact on policy (ANA) implementation.

PARTICIPANT:	DATE:	
Questions	Prompts	Probes
The Annual National Assessment		
1. (a) What do you understand by Annual National Assessment?	<p>Explain</p> <p>Tell me more...</p> <p>When did you...</p>	<p>DBE's Assessment Policy – Can you explain the expectations?</p> <p>Are you familiar with why the ANA were developed and the different purposes they serve?</p> <p>Do you think the ANA should be written in the Foundation Phase? Grade 3?</p>
(b) Could you tell me how you have experienced the ANA at within the Eastern Cape Department?	Have you been involved the ANA?	At a school level? Personally?

		Other's beliefs, practices, attitudes around assessment
(c) Could you describe the preparation that is required to participate in the ANA?	<p>What tasks are involved?</p> <p>Expectations of principals?</p> <p>Expectations of teachers?</p> <p>Practical considerations</p> <p>(Timing)</p>	<p>District level?</p> <p>School Management level?</p> <p>Classroom level?</p>
(d) How would you say schools are implementing the ANA?	What do you see?	<p>Schools in general</p> <p>Management's role</p> <p>Teachers' role</p>
(d) What support is the DBE able to provide?	<p>What do you see?</p> <p>Practical issues?</p> <p>Training?</p>	<p>District office</p> <p>School Management's role (Principal/HOD)</p> <p>Teachers</p>
(e) How are the ANA results used?	Tell me more about how you use the ANA results?	<p>By the DBE?</p> <p>Feedback to national?</p> <p>Feedback to the school?</p>

	How are they intended to be used?	Feedback to parents? To enhance individuals teaching?
(f) Can you share your thoughts on the memo meetings?	Purpose Effectiveness	How were they managed? How were schools informed? Were they successful?
(g) Could you share your opinion of the Grade 3 language and mathematics papers?	Relevance? Links to CAPS? Standardisation?	Did they provide access to learners? Where they standardised?
(h) What is your expectation/ understanding of CAPS (classroom based) assessment?	Tell me more Personal thoughts? DBE expectations?	Practical considerations? Effects within South Africa? (National scale) Effects and influences within a school? Effects and Influences within a classroom? Challenges?
(i) How are the ANA being implemented?	Describe Explain Challenges	National level? Departmental level? School level?

		Classroom level?
(j) How do you think the ANA implementation could be improved?	Explain Elaborate	Practical considerations Procedures Participation
(k) What do you think is meant by formative assessment?	Your experiences	
Conclusion: Is there anything you want to add or ask?		

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
B.Journ.	Bachelor of Journalism
B.Prim.Ed.	Bachelor of Primary Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CD	Compact Disc
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist
DoE	Department of Education
EC	Eastern Cape
EC DoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDO	Education District Officer
FATS	Formal Assessment Tasks
FP	Foundation Phase
HL	Home Language
HOD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IP	Intermediate Phase
IQMS	Integrated Quality Monitoring System
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa

NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Union
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEU	Professional Educators' Union
P.G.C.E.	Postgraduate Certificate of Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
P.T.A.	Parent Teacher Association
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAOU	Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysunie
SMT	School Management Team
SP	Senior Phase
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies