

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSES  
CONSTRUCTING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT PRACTICES  
IN THREE EASTERN CAPE SCHOOLS**

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## Abstract

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In 1998, South Africa introduced outcomes-based education to affect the shifts in pedagogy considered necessary following the move to democracy in 1994. Across the globe, the use of the portfolio to assess learners is increasingly being promoted as a form of progressive pedagogy. Hence, its adoption by the country as a new form of assessment practice was warranted. However, how the portfolio is constructed and perceived by educators within the classroom can become problematic in practice. This was apparent in the South African context and justifies research into how the portfolio is constructed as an assessment method in educational policy and by educators in the classrooms. The *Curriculum Guide Directive* text and the transcripts of twenty-one interviews carried out in three Eastern Cape schools served as the source of data for this study.

Discourses make up a powerful framework of spoken, written and symbolic texts of institutional bureaucracies. Within these institutions human subjects are defined and constructed. Therefore, discourse construction acts as institutional forms of knowledge which can exude power over the individual if not made transparent. I used critical discourse analysis to uncover the discourses that were embedded within the *Curriculum Guide Directive* and to identify the discourses entrenched within the educators' perceptions of the portfolio. The discourses in the *Curriculum Guide Directive* suggest the construction of the portfolio as a method of surveillance to track whether the educators are preparing learners for the school leaving examination and instructing the educators to provide evidence in the form of a portfolio. Analysis of the transcripts of the twenty one interviews with educators from three schools in the Eastern Cape indicated that the portfolio was not seen as a form of assessment by the educators, but as a form of discipline put in place by the Department of Education to ensure that they are preparing the learners for the school leaving examination and are able to produce proof of this preparation in the form of a portfolio.

The discourses from the research highlighted that the school leaving examination is hegemonised into South African educational pedagogy as a form of traditional assessment and is not challenged even when it is no longer bringing about the dominant ideological goals. The portfolio was not seen as an assessment method by the educators nor represented as such in the *Curriculum Guide Directive*. Therefore, the job of the portfolio became that of a policing tool. Thus, a school curriculum which has been introduced with the intent of furthering social justice can become exclusive in practice, even with the best intentions.



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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

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C2005 – Curriculum 2005

CASS – Continuous Assessment

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CGD – Curriculum Guide Directive

CLAS – California Learning Assessment System

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Union

DoE – Department of Education

EA – Educator Assessment

ESL – English Second Language

GRE – Graduate Record Examination

IQ – Intelligence Quotient

MATRIC – The Grade 12 school leaving examination

MENSA – Organisation for the top 2% in IQ scores

NCS – National Curriculum Statement

NLS – New Literacy Studies

NQF – National Qualification Framework

OBE – Outcomes-Based Education

SABEA – South African Bantu Education Act

SAI – South African Information

SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority

SASA – The South African School Act

SAT – Standard Achievement Test

SATA – South African Technikon Amendment

SGB – School Governing Bodies

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 The South African Context

This study occurs during a time in South African education when there is great change and, arguably, confusion among educators. Before the shift to democracy, the South African education system was divided along racial lines as schooling was provided unequally for the different population groups in segregated schools. Education was also viewed as imposing a particular ideology on the nation's children (Morrow, 1989). Since 1994, the focus has been on the transformation of the education system so that it meets the needs of all population groups equally and, importantly, so that it serves the needs of a contemporary African nation.

The capacity of educators to cope with the transformation of the education system is clearly related to apartheid history (Kros, 2002). Following the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the training of white educators was made the responsibility of the four provinces constituting the Union – a system which continued even after South Africa attained independence from Britain in 1931. The history of education in South Africa was characterised by inequity even before the formal introduction of apartheid in 1948, however, and the training provided for white educators under the provinces needs to be seen in this context. Following the formal introduction of apartheid, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 addressed the training of black educators (SABEA, 1953). A segregated teacher training system emerged stratifying Coloured, Indian, and African peoples. In the 1960s, the apartheid government set about pursuing its Homeland policy and this had profound effects for teacher education. The ten 'homelands' or Bantustans were made responsible for their own teacher education programmes (Kallaway, 2002, SABEA, 1953, Sayed, 2002a, and Sayed, 2001b). As a result of the overall policy of segregation, each college or university trained educators to teach in specific types of schools. Segregated training of educators was motivated by the needs of the system as a whole and, as such, it was determined by the apartheid system's specific political and ideological rationale. Given the role of the education system in sustaining apartheid ideology, before 1994 teacher professionalism also involved obedience to authority (Fleisch, 2002, and Jansen, 1998, 1999).

As a result of the policies of segregation, by 1994 there were 19 education departments responsible for training educators, with 32 self-governing universities and technikons<sup>1</sup>, and approximately 105 colleges spread throughout the system. The bulk of black colleges and universities concentrated on training educators in the humanities and arts, resulting in gaps in mathematics and science education. During this time the main source of jobs for educated black people was through teacher training, therefore reproducing the need to keep its existence (Sayed, 2002b).

One of its first acts of legislation on the part of the new national government elected in 1994 was the National Education Policy Act of 1996 which sought to redress issues of inequality, segregation, and democratic rights for all citizens in South Africa regardless of race (Sayed, 2002a). As a result of this legislation, the Minister of Education was empowered to set guidelines for the accreditation of educators and to oversee the development of the new curriculum frameworks (*ibid*).

## **1.2 Tensions in Educational Reform**

“South Africa’s resistance history is influenced by trends in the international and continental struggle for democracy” (Nekhwevha, 2002:134). In the 1970s and 1980s, the work of Paulo Freire influenced the anti-apartheid struggle in the area of education. His key work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* played a pivotal role in educational thinking at the time (*ibid*:138). Freire’s work exerted an enormous influence on those who recognise the politics of education and understand that it can be viewed by those who choose to act on the side of the oppressed as a biased activity. This influence in educational thinking was apparent during a National Consultative Conference on the crisis of education held on 28-29 December 1985, in Soweto where the idea of the People’s Education for People’s Power was conceptualised (Nekhwevha, 2002). A student leader, Lulu Johnson, shared the podium with Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa and introduced Freire’s conception of education. As a result, delegates at the conference gave their endorsement to the idea of People’s Education for People’s Power (*ibid*). In discourses of liberation, the concept of the people and the community therefore came to take centre stage and are echoed in the educational reform which has taken place since 1994.

The main goal of the People’s Education for People’s Power movement was to reject the apartheid education system which was seen as an “education for domination” (Nekhwelvha,

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<sup>1</sup> Technikons were institutions which provided learners with education in specific technical fields (SATA, 2005). Technikons offered qualifications mostly at diploma and certificate level. Following the reorganisation of higher education in the early 2000s, technikons became universities of technology.

2002:136). Members of the movement wanted the core elements of the reformed curriculum to centre on creativity, critical thinking, and shared power in the learning process (Fleisch, 2002, and Kgobe, 2001). Thus, an alternative curriculum needed to be designed that would instil these ideas which are very different to those privileged under the apartheid education system. Another key point advocated by the movement was that the curriculum needed to be designed in a participatory fashion, and was not intended to be delivered in a final form until all stakeholders had a chance to participate in the development processes. The People's Education for People's Power movement felt that the community should have input into the curriculum development in a form of an open dialogue and that this process would make the curriculum acceptable to all (Barnes and Haya, 2002). One of the major concepts being projected by this movement was that education was for the benefit of all South Africans and not a select few. Additionally, the movement wanted to ensure that all had equal access to education.

Thus, the movement was strongly opposed to the authoritarian and elitist apartheid education. With the influence of Freire's writings and critical theory the movement advocated more involvement from educators who would play a key role in the learning process in the classroom and who would work with students as facilitators of learning rather than as authoritarian dispensers of knowledge. However, for these changes to be made, the oppressed needed to gain political power and overthrow the government – a process which was eventually achieved peacefully (Nekhwevha, 2002).

Although South Africa had a tradition of drawing on what might be termed more radical reform movements during apartheid, the biggest challenge for reform after the 1994 election focused on the need to address issues of global economic competitiveness in a technologically driven world and to create an educational system that would give all citizens an opportunity for quality education and training in a world which called for a high level of skills (Lewin *et al.*, 2002). "National reconstruction and development [demand] that the knowledge and skills base of the working and unemployed population are massively upgraded, and that the young people still at school have better opportunities to continue their educational training" (DoE, 1995:14). As a result of this need, a national body, the National Qualification Authority (NQA), was proposed with the aim of allowing both business and education to participate in developing an education system which would meet the demands of the global society and would balance a greatly skewed scale in the provision of quality education (McKay *et al.*, 1999).

In the early 1990s, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) advocated the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as part of a set of proposals

aimed at restructuring education and training within South Africa. Following an Act of Parliament, the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) was established on 5 October 1995 to oversee the development of the NQF and its implementation (SAQA, 2000).

SAQA stakeholders were representatives from labour, business, provincial education departments, the Department of Education and the Department of Labour (DoE, 1995 and Pretorius and Lemmer, 1998). The establishment of SAQA lay in the need to ensure that the NQF and its implementation met the growing need to produce skilled workers and prepare for a global market. In addition to this, lay the need to balance an unfair educational system that prevented the majority of the country's population from gaining an equal education.

### **1.2.1 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**

The principles of the NQF are intended to restructure education and training, to promote upgrading of learning standards, allow for mobility between the three learning bands (General Education and Training, Further Education and Training and Higher Education and Training), create a new curriculum that is more student centred and to regulate the quality of education given to students (DoE 1998, McKay *et al.*, 1999, Pretorius, 2002, and Pretorius and Lemmer, 1998). The aim of the NQF was to unite the education and training systems into an outcomes-based qualification grid that would meet the goal of training and educating society as a whole from primary school to doctoral degrees. Prior learning would be acknowledged and credit would be given to those who could demonstrate evidence of prior learning (McKay *et al.*, 1999, and Motala and Pampallis, 2002). This would allow those who had not been given educational opportunities in the past to gain credentials for learning achieved outside formal education. Outcomes-based education<sup>2</sup> (OBE) was appealing in the South African context because it proposed empowerment for students who could now take control of their learning, a position obviously not afforded to them under the old government regime (Wilmot, 2004).

The development of a new curriculum based on an outcomes-based approach to education tended not to privilege the texts produced in the context of the People's Education for People's Power movement. The need to create a curriculum that would produce skilled workers in a global market took centre stage and "a lack of interest in understanding the roots of [South African] education . . . resulted in the relative exclusion/marginalisation of Freirean educational insights" (Nekhwevha, 2002:142). Hence, policy development tended to

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<sup>2</sup> Outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa is based on Dr. William Spady's theory of student learning and assessment. OBE is a "design down approach" that looks at the outcomes before developing instructional activities and constructing assessment criteria (Chisholm, 2000:92, but also see Ryder 1996, Spady, 1988, 1994, 1998, 2004b, and Wilmot, 2004:7).

proceed without any reference to Freirean education. However, in a document produced in 2001 (DoE, 2001), the differences between apartheid education and OBE are pointed out and the distinctions are akin to the Freirean distinction between the 'banking' and 'emancipatory' educational systems (*ibid:141*). Although stakeholders in the negotiations of the new curriculum policy in 1994 can be seen to draw on Freire, the need to be competitive in the global market to which South Africa had recently been admitted after following years of exclusion as a result of boycotts took precedence (Kraak, 2001).

The new curriculum was launched in Cape Town 24 March 1997 by the Minister of Education. Leading up to the unveiling of the new curriculum, schools and the National Department of Education were told that January 1998 was a non-negotiable date for implementation of outcomes-based education (Jansen, 1999). Within just a few months there was a plethora of activity trying to translate the language of OBE into "workable units of information for teaching and learning which would be ready for the first phase of implementation" (Jansen, 1998:2). The old education system promoted passive rote-learning, teacher centeredness, examination for selection, separatism, and a rigid, content-based curriculum (Morrow and King, 1998). OBE was seen as learner-centred, democratic, promoting critical thinking, and perpetuating a class environment of collaboration. OBE was thus seen as a perfect fit for the new democratic government's goals in reforming education. A White Paper (DoE, 1998) was developed in December 1998 which would address assessment and quality assurance under the new curriculum policy.

### **1.2.2 Assessment in Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in South Africa**

In the White Paper published by the Department of Education (DoE, 1998) in December 1998 (number 19640), assessment is defined within the context of an outcomes-based education paradigm which advocates clearly defined outcomes that will give credit to learner achievements at every level in their education. The White Paper notes that this should be done regardless of the pathway followed by the learner or rate of achievement. Assessment in OBE, as defined by the Department of Education, requires the use of tools that appropriately assess the learner's achievements and which encourage 'life long' learning skills. Continuous assessment (CASS) is considered by the DoE as the best model to assess an outcome and should be used to "support the learner developmentally and to feed back into teaching and learning and should not be interpreted merely as the accumulation of a series of traditional test results" (DoE, 1998:9).

One of the DoE's main principles within the paper is to enhance the conditions of assessment for each learner which should be "continuous, coherent and progressive making

it one of the key elements in the quality assurance system” (DoE, 1998:9). The document continues by declaring that modes of assessment must be used other than tests and examinations which function primarily to rank and grade the individual. For that reason the DoE identifies the need to improve training for educators in developing and designing assessment instruments under the OBE paradigm.

Types of assessment are outlined in the document as: formative assessment, summative assessment, diagnostic assessment, and evaluative assessment. Formative assessment is described as providing information on the learners’ “positive achievements” which can be “discussed [so that] the appropriate next step may be planned”. Summative assessment is described as a record of the “overall achievement of a learner in a systemic way” (DoE, 1998:11).

Diagnostic assessment is described as finding ‘learning difficulties’ so that remedial help and guidance can be administered. Evaluative assessment is described as a form of assessment that “compare[s] and aggregate[s] information about the learner’s achievements so that it can be used to assist in curriculum development and as an evaluation of teaching and learning” (DoE, 1998:11).

Therefore, formative and summative assessments are seen as a showcase of a learner’s achievement that should feed back into learning and teaching practices. These forms of assessment are to be recorded in a portfolio which allows the stakeholders to view assessment in a holistic way in contrast to the old assessment practice which only measured rote-learning. The *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD) (DoE, 1998) developed from a need to give guidance to the new OBE assessment requirements which advocate portfolio construction and is discussed later in this chapter and at length in Chapter Four of this study.

### **1.2.3 Implementation of Curriculum 2005**

The new reform in South African education effectively demands a shift in the way educators think about their pedagogy which is intellectual. How educators interact with new policy and interpret its meaning will have an impact on teaching within the classroom (Spillane *et al.*, 2002). Research was conducted by Jansen (1999) in South Africa in Grade 1 classrooms and the results showed that educators in 38 different classrooms had varied understandings of OBE and had difficulty in understanding how to implement it within the class environment. The study concluded that the range of meaning among educators is a “clear signifier of the

lack of coherence between policy and C2005”<sup>3</sup> (*ibid*:206). Jansen’s research is an example of how educators interact with the new curriculum and difficulties that can arise in implementation. The lack of understanding of OBE and difficulty in implementation is echoed throughout the South African educational system. Chisholm’s (2000, 2003) review of C2005 identified some of the same problems that are still being addressed today.

Thus, implementation of the new curriculum proved to be problematic in practice. In 2000, the Department Of Education (DoE) established a Ministerial Review Committee to examine C2005 with the aim of identifying changes that were needed to make its implementation successful. The Committee gave a comprehensive critique of the curriculum and determined that C2005 had difficulties with:

- a skewed curriculum structure and design
- lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy
- inadequate orientation, training and development of educators
- learning support materials that are variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms
- policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms
- shortage of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005
- inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments (Chisholm 2003:5).

All of the above were seen by the Committee to be weaknesses in C2005 and issues that needed to be addressed in a revised curriculum which came to fruition as a policy document in 2002 entitled *The Revised National Curriculum Statement* (DoE, 2001). The draft indicated that C2005 in its original state would be phased out by 2008 (*ibid*). However, very little progress has been made in unravelling the complex problems that have arisen from C2005 and implementation is still an issue today. Therefore, it is clear that further research needs to be conducted in the field. It is to this body of research that this thesis aims to contribute.

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<sup>3</sup> C2005 refers to the form of the new outcomes-based curriculum intended to be fully implemented by 2005.

### **1.3 Approach to the Problem through Critical Discourse Analysis**

I position myself within critical theory which looks beyond that which is being studied and looks at the relationship between society and the individual, the researcher and society, and the individual and the researcher (Sayer, 2000). This can only happen if the researcher is reflective and looks at society with different lenses to see how the individual interacts within that realm (see Chapter Three). Critical theory frames Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis. Fairclough incorporates critical theory into his method of looking at the three layers of discourse: text description, interpretation and evaluation. His method of critical discourse analysis looks at texts with different lenses with the aim of giving a more comprehensive interpretation of the individual and their social reality (see Chapter Three for further explanation of this method).

Some critical theorists, basing their thinking on Horkheimer (cited in Nel, 1995), argue that there is a traditional theory which looks at a set of statements within a particular discipline in order to deduce a set of facts. These facts then must be tested through research to determine if there are discrepancies. If discrepancies do exist then revisions must be made until a universal truth is discovered in that social reality. Critical realist Roy Bhaskar (1978 and 1993 but see also Collier, 1994 and Sayer, 2000) believe that this method of theory was flawed since it only looked at scientific knowledge, not practice. These theorists argue that the researcher works within society and therefore needs to look and reflect on practice. "The view that science is independent of other social processes is an illusion" states Nel, (1995:126). I agree and take this position in this study. Therefore, the aim of using critical theory in the context of the research reported in this thesis is to look beyond scientific knowledge and reflect on how discourse plays out in practice. The hope then, is to emancipate others from a sense of "false consciousness or half rationality; lifting the veil" so that the individual is aware of "what lies beneath the surface" (Janks, 2003:329).

As noted in the previous section, educators have had difficulty with OBE and assessment practices in the form of portfolio construction since its introduction. Foucault (1979, 1980) uses the term discourse to describe how institutions name, define and regulate their practices such that a discourse is the place where power and knowledge converge. In this study, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used in order to arrive at an understanding of the way portfolio assessment is constructed in i) the *Curriculum Guide Directive* and ii) by educators themselves; thus, identifying the discourses that may be apparent to those who, nonetheless, are implicated in sustaining and reproducing those discourses further.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258) define critical discourse analysis as the “relationship between language and society and the relationship between analysis and practices analyzed”. Therefore, discourse analysis is often defined as an analysis of language that goes beyond the actual sentence. Sergiovanni and Corbally (1986:154) state that “language is power and those who control the language control thought, and thereby themselves and others”. Hence, power can be exuded onto another through the legitimacy of policy documents and embedded in discourse. Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis looks deeper at the relationship between language and society to uncover that which may not be apparent to the individual.

Fairclough (2001) declares that discourse is shaped and controlled by the social structures, cultures, beliefs, and by the language we use, in the past and the present; a point of view that Gee (1999) also shares. Additionally, Fairclough notes (2003:3) that “no real understanding of the social effects of discourse is possible without looking closely at what happens when people talk or write”. Language thus takes a role in reproducing and/or transforming society. In other words, language is considered not only a part of society, but also helps shape it. Language thus takes a role in reproducing and/or transforming society. There is a relationship between what is being analysed and the analysis itself.

Critical discourse analysis itself is a way of intervening in social practices and relationships to try to bring about change. Therefore, critical discourse analysis based on Fairclough’s method is concerned with not only the language in the text, but also with the underlying purpose of the text. Therefore, Fairclough’s method of critical discourse analysis combines critical theory with the aim of uncovering that which may not be apparent on the surface.

Atkinson (1885) declares that there is no such thing as pure text, and that texts are reproduced in other texts and are, thus, circular. It can be assumed, that based on this assumption, old text can be repackaged or blended with new text to reproduce popular ideologies. He also affirms that researchers need to understand their involvement in how they will reproduce and interpret meaning and should therefore opt for a method that allows them to explore intertextuality and contextual importance; Fairclough’s method of discourse analysis is therefore best suited for this research.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

Using critical discourse analysis, the research reported in this thesis aims to address the following questions:

- How is the continuous assessment portfolio constituted discursively in the *Curriculum Guide Directive*?
- How is the continuous assessment portfolio constituted discursively by educators in three schools in the Eastern Cape Province?

The aim of the research is therefore to contribute to understandings of the complex way the introduction of OBE has played out in practice in the South African context.

## 1.5 Structure of the Thesis

As already noted, the research reported upon in this thesis constitutes an attempt to contribute to the understandings of the way the new curriculum has been implemented and, thus, identify ways in which change can be supported further.

Given the critical role of educators in the curriculum implementation process, the research focuses primarily on the way educators construct the portfolio as an assessment tool at Grade 12 level and how, through discourse, the *Curriculum Guide Directive* directs them in this endeavour.

Chapter Two serves as a literature review which uses economic benchmarks in history as the format to discuss the evolution of assessment from a critical stance. Chapter Two thus incorporates an overview of assessment and a link between education, the economy, and societal needs. This provides the backdrop for Chapters Four and Five in which I discuss the discourses identified and use some of the theory introduced in Chapter Two to deconstruct those discourses.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology underpinning the research and a space to discuss more thoroughly the positioning of this thesis in critical theory. In this chapter I explain why I position myself within this orientation and how this has determined the research framework. I then provide details about the research process with an emphasis on critical discourse analysis. Connole (1998:22) states that “meanings are found in language” therefore this study is concerned with the language of the discourses used to construct portfolio assessments within the classroom and how policy guides educators in doing so. I discuss discourses that create a certain understanding of how language, literacy and learning interact. Chapter Four observes the discourses that emerge from the *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD) and how those discourses reproduce or perpetuate a particular view of assessment. Chapter Five considers the discourses that emerged from the interviews with educators and how they compared or contrasted to the discourses of the CGD and how these discourses serve to construct particular ways of teaching and

assessing. Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a reflection on the implications of the findings.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Assessment Reform and Economic Needs**

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#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of how assessment has evolved and gained importance in history. The discussion is presented as a historical account of the development of assessment and how it relates to economic and social development under three main headings. For simplicity, the headings are presented here as if they were distinct periods in time in which different forms of assessment were clearly identifiable and as if one form of assessment was set aside for another as time progressed. The reality, however, is far more complex and with a great deal of overlap between one set of assessment practices and another and with many small curriculum adaptations along with major reform occurring along the way.

Each of the periods identified is related to the need for educational reform in response to economic considerations. The first period is characterised by the hierarchical nature of societies marked by strict class divisions and where assessment came to be used as a means of accessing privileged positions in a growing number of professions (Popkewitz, 2001b). This first period is marked by the introduction of the examination as a form of assessment on a large scale. The second period is related to industrialisation and is also marked by shifts in population patterns as large numbers of people moved into urban areas. During this period, developments in assessment were derived from science. The third period, termed in this chapter “New Capitalism”, relates to the emerging globalised community which is redefining assessment practices in society to meet the needs of a highly technological global market.

As already indicated in Chapter One, educational development in the form of assessment has been related to significant curriculum change and reform in South Africa over the last fifteen years. In the years leading up to 1994, South Africa’s educational systems were fragmented. The need to create a cohesive and unified educational system had to be addressed alongside the need for South Africa to be able to compete in a globalised economic system. Outcomes-based education (OBE) was adopted as part of national educational policy because of its focus on upgrading skills and because of its potential to contribute to the development of a workforce that can meet the nation’s need to be competitive in a global economy (DoE, 1996). The analysis of the development of assessment in this chapter needs to take place against this backdrop.

## 2.2 Assessment and Hierarchical Societies

Assessment<sup>4</sup> has a long history beginning with the development of the first examination in China under the Han Dynasty which reigned from 206 BC to 220 AD (see Black, 1998, Broadfoot, 2001, Dietel *et al.*, 1991, and Gipps, 1999 for a complete historical overview). The function of the examination was to select candidates for the prestigious and powerful positions available in government service. Only those who met the strict criteria would be selected to become bureaucrats; therefore, competition became a key characteristic of the examination (Gipps, 1999). Black (1998) recounts the point that earlier assessment practices placed great emphasis on rote-learning and the regurgitation of facts which did not prepare the bureaucrats for meeting societal needs. These first examinations were nonetheless interested in testing for memorisation of facts that were considered to show intellect and wisdom.

The examination was introduced into Northern Europe<sup>5</sup> in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in order to select candidates for Government positions (Broadfoot, 1979, 2001, Broadfoot and Black, 2004, and Gipps, 1994, 1999). Before the nineteenth century the family's social class and patronage determined position, not educational ability or training<sup>6</sup> (Black, 1998). This meant that an individual's position in society was determined at birth, a situation which was perpetuated by the hierarchical political systems (Broadfoot and Gipps, 1996, Madaus and Kellaghan, 1993, and Moon, 1999).

It was not until Europe needed a better educated middle class to fill the void produced by industrialisation and capitalism that the hierarchical system was looked at critically (Gipps, 1999). Prior to this time in history, the working class was mainly farm hands, servants, or day workers. The middle class was considered to consist of small merchants, small farm owners, and tradesmen in a particular craft (Hooker, 1996). It was not until the industrial age that the skills of the working class and middle class were in great demand to meet the needs of a growing population in the context of the progress of technology (Black, 1998). Traditionally, the workers would not migrate, but stay within their own village or town (Shepard, 2000). The advancement in the metropolitan areas caused a flood of workers to travel into city areas

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<sup>4</sup> The word assessment dates back to 1626 meaning to estimate or evaluate. It was linked to education in the United States in 1956, and was first used to describe the federally funded test sample conducted nationally in 1968. The word was adopted later in England as an opposition to the word examination which had developed a negative connotation (Madaus and Kellaghan, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The examination moved from Prussia (which was dissolved in 1934 by the Nazi regime), to France, then England (Gipps, 1999:356).

<sup>6</sup> I am using the word training in this context as agricultural farming and apprenticeship trades such as blacksmithing.

which brought about housing, sanitation, and a host of other problems. Applying the methods of science to education was thought to curb the problems brought about by the influx of workers into these urban areas. According to some theorists, such as Graaf (1987) and Ball *et al.* (1990), the growth of education was also about disciplining the working class because of the social problems that permeated from the influx.

Eckstein and Noah (1993:3) note that “as modern states industrialized, improved communications, and evolved their large bureaucracies, the practice of selection by written, public examinations previously confined to China, became increasingly common”. In Europe the “industrial capitalist economy flourished”, creating an increasing need for a trained middle-class worker in “the professions and in managerial positions” (Gipps, 1999:357). The growing middle class realised that education was a “means of acquiring social status” because it was perceived to be a competitive, open way to eradicate favouritism and elitism that had been so dominant in the past and bring about social entry for those denied access before (*ibid*:357). Hence, the examination, which was once used for government entry, was now being used on a broader scale to allow individuals to enter trades once closed to them. According to Trevelyan and Northcote (1853 cited in Gipps, 1999:357) the examination during this time in history was intended to avoid “the evils of patronage” and to select “the fittest person” for positions.

Examinations entered the universities in England around 1850 and Oxford and Cambridge set up examination boards to set criteria for university entrance. Others, such as London and Durham, soon followed suit (*ibid*:357). By 1855 most universities in England were using some form of examination to limit access and to select candidates for entry as discussed in detail in Section 2.2.2 of this chapter (Broadfoot, 1979).

At school level, examinations in England were not formalised until the early twentieth century when the school certificate was introduced as the standard for leaving school and the minimum requirement needed to qualify to take the entry examination at the university level (*ibid*). In the United States the examination was used in a similar fashion as England.

The examination was used to give entry into government jobs and “to curb political patronage”<sup>7</sup> (Black, 1998:17). The examination and certification process became wide spread in America and also limited access to all but a privileged few who were from dominant social groups. In the late eighteenth century William Farish, a Cambridge

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<sup>7</sup> Gipps (1999:358) states that political patronage is used in practice by politicians to “favour supporters with jobs”. Eckstein & Noah (1993) argue that the examination was introduced in all levels of American government to curtail this practice.

University tutor, applied the same grading system to his learners that was used on the factory floor (A, B, C, and D) to determine if a product was “up to grade” (Hartmann, 2005). By applying a grading system from superior to inferior instead of a pass or fail grade, it was thought that learners would feel compelled to better their ranking and move up the letter scale. This form of self-disciplining was considered needed in society to improve the ‘quality’ of the individual, much like the products being produced in factories (*ibid*).

Foucault (1979) believes that to discipline the individual a series of routines must be applied. Through disciplining the individual, control is exerted over the masses. For Foucault, schools then become the place where the individual is taught the routines, rules, or laws of the dominant society and disciplined into compliance. Gramsci (1971) states that the domination of the working class becomes common sense and embedded in social practices to the point that it is rarely questioned, which I describe in detail below.

### **2.2.1 The Development of Formal Schooling**

Education and the development of formal schooling can be seen going hand-and-hand with the need for a highly skilled labour force in a technologically growing society (Black, 1998 and Brown, 1994). Access to education (and therefore assessment) was viewed as problematic only if it was not efficient at meeting the needs of providing a labour pool (Broadfoot, 1979).

From the earliest times, according to Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz (1995), education has been tied to political and social agendas. Gramsci (1971) put forth the notion that when the dominant society needs to implement change in order to bring about conformity or discipline over another it uses education as the entrance or exclusion to elite positions. Foucault (1979) states that education is used to instil discipline over the working class by giving hope of eventually entering into the dominant group.

The Gramscian (1971, 1979) view is that mediocrity is derived from the need for economic domination and intellectual and moral leadership. Therefore there are two forms of social control; coercive and consensual control. Coercive control is an act of direct force involving the dominance of one group over another (hegemony), while consensual control arises when the individuals assimilate to the world view of the dominant class (common sense) and the individual aspires to gain access to the higher status. “The individual also has advantages or limitations placed on them” based on what Bourdieu (1986:241) calls the “cultural capital” that they acquire during their life.

Bourdieu (1986) notes that cultural capital has three subtypes that an individual works within: the embodied state which is passed on through family traditions and practices, the objectified state involving things considered as cultural goods (for example a painting owned by an individual) and the institutionalised state which is predominant in schools. The institutionalised state is based on academic qualifications that are understood to bring about monetary rewards for certain institutional levels of achievement and entrance into the privileged group (Bourdieu, 1993).

As mass education was introduced, the working-class saw mandatory schooling as an opportunity to better their quality of life (Hooker, 1996). Until this point in history, only those who could afford to pay for an education had access; thus perpetuating and reproducing<sup>8</sup> the ideology of the working class as the work horse<sup>9</sup> in society (Gipps, 1999). The growing middle class saw education as an opportunity to better their social standing for themselves and their children. Hebert (1992), Madaus and Kellaghan (1993) and Brown (1994), believe this was the first time that upward mobility became a realistic option on a wide scale.

### **2.2.2 The Development of the Examination Board**

As already noted earlier in this chapter, examination boards in England were established in the 1850s to determine entry into academia (Gipps, 1999). The establishment of an examining board legitimised the universities as the key selectors of those to enter into professions and consequently became the standard for entry to those professions. The universities, for that reason, believed that the examination was a “necessary evil” (Black, 1998:10). As a result of this process, the universities themselves began to control certification and qualification processes and thus, according to Gipps (1999), selection for entry to the professions itself, a phenomenon exemplified in the following quotation:

As a boy in Cambridge I learnt that if a man got first class he might be happy; if he got a second class he would be unhappy; and if he got a third class, nothing but misery and a colonial life awaited him (MacLoud and Moseley, 1992:203 cited in Black, 1998:10).

To receive qualifications and certification was not enough, however, as, within those qualifications, the individuals were placed in a ranking order based on their examination

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<sup>8</sup> Sewell (1992:10) states that humans are apart of the social system and therefore play a part in the reproduction of rules and have “means” to use resources that are human or non-human to reinforce the system or change it.

<sup>9</sup> I am referring to the character Boxer, (a horse), in the socially driven novel by George Orwell titled, Animal Farm. Boxer represented the working class that was fed and given a warm place to sleep as long as he worked. He never questioned the authority of the pigs, nor looked critically at how he was treated, but believed that he “must work hard” for the good of the farm. When Boxer was of no use to the pigs anymore, he was sent to the glue factory for execution.

score. Brown (1994:265) notes that examinations “appear to provide an effective means of sorting out those at the top, the middle, and the bottom, and directing them towards an appropriate niche in society”. Thus, the examination was afforded status to the extent that for some, like the learner above, happiness in life was dependent on whether they could get a high enough ranking to be considered ‘first’ in the standing order (Foucault, 1979).

As sites of professional education, the universities became the gate-keepers to the professions, with the examination playing a key role in this process (Black, 1998). Foucault (1979) would call this form of surveillance a way of increasing not only entry into the dominant group, but a way of increasing power over others. According to Foucault (1979), discipline requires not only control of the examination, but also the space in which the domination occurs. In achieving this, the universities exercised control over who would get access to the professions by setting stringent examinations that would discipline the learner into studying harder and conforming to the dominant ideology.

Thus, the ideology became common sense and was embedded into the social structure. Giroux (1988 and 1997) states that when learners experience the differences between class and status that exist in society they will often conform to the dominant social structure; the desire to gain elevated social status will take precedence over resistance. The individual will internalise the experiences, knowledge, and behaviours which provide access to dominant social groups as common sense and will then reproduce them naturally. This form of domination becomes the currency that is used to reward or punish the individual into compliance.

The universities adapted the examination used by the professions to control who would be awarded the qualifications and certificates which would give the learner access to a particular social position (Ecclestone, 2000, 2004). Therefore, as Broadfoot (1979) notes, the university became the oppressor and the liberator at the same time in society.

### **2.2.3 The Essay**

The use of the essay as a form of traditional assessment has been used for more than 200 years, essay writing has been seen as an expression of orderly knowledge and, thus, of positivist theory. What has been termed ‘essay text literacy’, according to Scollon and Scollon (1981:44), grew out of the Enlightenment idea that nature was “lawful and orderly and independent of human activity”. Language was thought to mirror this reality and thus good language was also lawful and orderly in the sense of being clear and transparent. The essayist style which, as Olson (1977) shows, had earlier roots in the development of alphabetic writing systems which could capture speech thus, came to be privileged as the

way of writing which was considered to be closest to the truth or reality because of the way it valued language which was unambiguous.

More recently, however, work of scholars such as Brian Street (1984, 1993, and 1995) and others working in the field which has become known as New Literacy Studies have developed theories which contest the privileged position of essayist literacy. Street distinguishes between what he terms autonomous and ideological models of literacy. The autonomous model holds that language is independent of the context in which it occurs and that literacy is a single, unitary phenomenon involving the ability to encode and decode meaning from print. Street calls this ability a technology.

In contrast, the ideological model holds that literacy is far from being the neutral phenomenon the autonomous model holds it up to be. Rather, literacy is understood to be embedded in social context and the way reading and writing are derived from those contexts. In many respects Applebee (1984:581) pre-empts Street's ideological model by stating that "writing is better viewed as a medium for many uses of language and trying to trace its effects we need to look at the functional roles that writing and literacy play in particular cultural or individual settings".

According to the ideological model then, essayist literacy is not a neutral phenomenon as many would claim. Rather it is but one way of producing and interacting with script which is value driven and which has been privileged above others because of claims made for it which can now be challenged. Sometimes claims are made that literacy confers cognitive advantage; this claim is made in particular of essayist literacy and at universities the claim is often made that writing essays teaches students to think (White, 1995).

Scribner and Cole (1981) conducted research on the multiple literacies of the Vai people of Liberia and found that the combination of different written languages learned allowed them to separate the effects of literacy from the effects of schooling. As a result of their study of the contexts in which the Vai people engaged with written language, Scribner and Cole found that the effects of literacy on an individual's intellectual abilities were related to the particular kinds of knowledge and skills associated with the use of particular script. The biggest effect on cognition was the influence of formal schooling because of its focus on tasks requiring verbal explanation, the sorting of decisions, the explanation of logic, and the application of the rules of grammar, the following of instructions in games and the provision of answers to hypothetical questions. According to Scribner and Cole (1981:244), "school fosters abilities in expository talk in contrived situations", abilities which are often linked to the cognition itself.

Thanks to Scribner and Cole's work, the idea that it is literacy *per se* which bestows cognitive advantage is largely dismissed in favour of the understanding that cognitive advantage is itself a social construct associated with western schooling. This means that the claims made for essayist literacy are attacked on yet other grounds.

Gee (1996) uses the construct of Discourse (with a capital or big D) to refer to the way a group of people think, talk, read, write, and generally behave because they share similar attitudes and values. The ability to demonstrate membership of a Discourse is termed, by Gee, literacy. Some Discourses are dominant and these are generally associated with western schooling. Everyone is born into a Discourse (and Gee terms the ability to operate within this Discourse as one's primary literacy). Thus, one gets membership of the primary Discourse and the primary literacy for free. Some Discourses and literacies are closer to school-based Discourses. This means that if children are fortunate enough to be born into a primary Discourse which shares many literacy practices with schooling, they get a head-start on life. This head-start gives them an advantage since it forms the basis of most assessment especially where that assessment is based on essay text literacy.

This relationship between some primary Discourses and school-based Discourses has led to researchers working in the field of New Literacy Studies doing work which deconstructs texts and identifies roles, stereotypes, power positions, cultural context, values, influence and attitudes. This work has then led to the understanding that primary literacies which are substantially different to school based literacies and are often unrepresented in text (Freebody and Luke, 1990).

According to Brannon and Knoblauch (2006:1), educators sometimes ignore the writer's intentions and impose their own ideal text on the writer. This idea relates to Gee, Hull, and Lankshear's (1996), statement that individuals moving from one cultural background to another are forced to adapt and change to conform to the practices of the dominant class. They use the example of a learner that comes from an impoverished background entering law school in the United States. The learner would not have prior experiences with the style of debating and of other forms of talk in the lecture room and, in addition, would not necessarily have had experience at posing an argument in writing. This would not be the case for middle class learners, who would have had access to contexts valuing such practices in the past. Therefore, the working class learners would have to read the methods, values, beliefs and procedures of the context, and would have to develop understandings of the new forms of literacy being used in the new learning context. The working class learners would have to work twice as hard to read into the situation than those who have prior experience and practice.

Wood (1998) also believes that language can be seen as a sign of class separation. Wood, like Gee et al. (1996), claims that children from middle class homes are likely to be socialised, controlled, and talked to in different ways than children from working class homes. These differences in language can lead to children having different world views. Those from the working-class would have different beliefs, values, and cultural practices than those from a middle-class background and would thus have a different primary Discourse.

As an example of a dominant literacy practice associated with schooling, the use of the essay, as a form of assessment, has the potential to be highly problematic yet, over time, its use in assessment has become increasingly prevalent. In 1945, Horace Mann, a United States public education advocate was “calling for a standardized essay test” (Mathews, 2006:1) and by 1978, Mehrens and Lehmann were noting that the essay is “the only means we have to assess an examinee’s ability to compose an answer and present it as effective prose” (*ibid*:124) – a view which echoes Street’s (1995) autonomous model of literacy.

As a form of assessment, the essay does not end with a learner’s answer, but depends to a large extent upon the person who reads their answer and assigns a grade to that answer, as well as the grading method used (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1978). Therefore honing the assessment criteria for essays and creating a standardised way of marking became of great importance in future educational reform. As a form of assessment, the essay is seen by some reformists including Mehrens and Lehmann (1978:135) as a “poor predictive of validity” because of its potential to lead to unreliable and subjective marking. The marking of the essay is thought to be subjective because the biases of the examiner can filter into the assessment. This point will be elaborated upon in Sections 2.4.5 and 2.4.7 below.

Although the use of the essay as a form of assessment can be seen as a means of allowing learners to demonstrate the extent to which they have acquired membership of secondary Discourses and mastered the literacies associated with those discourses (Gee, 1992, 2003, and 2004), it can also be a means of identifying resistance to assimilation into dominant Discourses.

### **2.3 Industrialisation**

The need for a well trained workforce brought about the need in society to rank and sort individuals for particular positions on a larger scale. Scientific measurement was seen by the dominant in society as an undisputable way of separating and ranking the individual.

Thurstone,<sup>10</sup> in the 1940s was one of the first academically respected psychologists to apply the field of psychometrics<sup>11</sup> to education in a system which is still being used today (John, 1998, Jones, 1998 and Thurstone, 1936). His method not only validated the use of numbers in assessment, but also created a scale to measure attitude. Until this point in history, only an individual's intelligence<sup>12</sup> (a concept which will be dealt with in more detail below) had been researched and administered in relation to the populace. As a result of Thurstone's work, however, their attitudes toward a series of questions came to be measured and given a ranking. This was the beginning of the multiple choice tests that are still very popular in modern assessment practices today.

Thurstone's method attached quantitative marks to performances across oral and written portions of university examinations. The introduction of numeracy allowed for finer grading and aggregation to occur, a process which could also be used to rank schools and universities against one another. Universities were labelled from top to bottom; schools were ranked and targeted for reform or status elevation based on their scores, and this method has become so vastly entrenched in educational assessment discourse that it often goes without scrutiny (Christiansen *et al.*, 1997, Ecclestone, 2004, and Mattson and Harley, 2003).

Numbers are considered scientific and contribute to the discourse of accuracy. In terms of assessment itself, by making grading more scientific, the use of numbers legitimised the selection process and allowed those who received lower scores to internalise their perceived failure and work harder to conform to the dominant social *status quo*. The introduction of numbers not only ranked learners in first, second, third classes, and so on, but also separated them even further within those rankings by allocating marks such as 70, 69, 50, and so forth (Ecclestone, 2004).

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<sup>10</sup> Thurstone was an assistant to the American inventor, Thomas Edison, who at this time had registered 1,093 patents and was considered the "Father of Invention". His work ethic made an impression on Thurstone who at that time was an engineer, but later switched to psychology. After receiving his doctorate, Thurstone was able to procure a position in the same office building that the American Council of Education, (ACE) was housed. He befriended some of the staff and was able to get financial support from them to take his research to Chicago and further the development of a college entry guide (Jones, 1998:88-89).

<sup>11</sup> Psychometrics literally translates from Greek to mean the "measurement of the soul" and was applied by Joseph R. Buchanan, a physiologist who used his learners as test subjects and "theorized that objects have souls that retain a memory". This type of application was not thought to be scientific however and it was not until Thurstone that psychometrics became popular in academia ( Jones, 1998 and Thurstone 1936).

<sup>12</sup> The Stanford-Binet intelligence scale had been the dominant form of mental testing until this time (Jones, 1998:90).

The refinement was seen as scientific and based on mathematical formulae and therefore could not be judged as biased or unfair, but equitable and scientific. Foucault (1979:187) argues that the introduction of written examination marks was the “beginning of a pedagogy that functions as a science”. The examination defines what is expected and forces learners to reveal periodically how their learning is progressing. Thus, the examination became an even more efficient way throughout the world to restrict access of certain groups to more elevated positions in society.

In 1955, Linquist’s invention of the high speed optical scanner along with the multiple choice format made it economical to mount large-scale testing nationally. In 1992 the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), which is the entrance examination into Master’s programmes in the United States, began offering a computerised version which is advocated as being more accurate, less time consuming to score and administer, and an overall more efficient way of measuring aptitude for study at postgraduate level (Fuhrman, 1999). The technology in the United States has stream-lined the examination to make it cost effective and better at sorting out those who are not deemed worthy of postgraduate education (Lambert, 1997a, 1997b, and Little and Wolf, 1996). Multiple choice tests, however, are generally thought to be fair and unbiased even though the subjective judgment of the test writer enters into the writing of the test and the selection of the materials and answers that are chosen to be correct (Gipps, 1999, and White, 1995).

It would seem, then, that in the case of tasks such as essays and multiple choice, assessment is not the neutral and fair activity it is usually assumed to be. By having those being dominated performing assessment related activities, they are positioned as co-constructors of their own positions in society (Ball, 2004, and Foucault, 1979).

### **2.3.1 Intelligence Testing**

In 1905, Binet, a French psychologist, designed a test that was to identify children who were thought to need special educational attention. He was commissioned in 1904 by the French Ministry of Public Instruction to create a test that would identify learners that needed to be selected and placed in special schools because they were seen by their educators as unsuccessful in their ability to learn at the same rate as their classmates. This is widely acknowledged as the development of the first intelligence test. The Binet-Simon scale<sup>13</sup>,

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<sup>13</sup> <sup>9</sup> The formula was originally  $IQ = MA/CA \times 100$  the problem however was trying to find the learners’ mental age. This differed depending on the psychologist administering the test or variation of the test administered. The deviations also were not constant and fluctuated between 12 and 20 and also differed depending on the learner’s age. Thus, the IQ test, that was seemingly mathematically sound, was influenced by the examiner and how the formula’s denominator was calculated (Mehren and Lehmann, 1978, and Gipps, 1999).

(Théodore Simon helped Binet create the scale), consisted of thirty tasks that the learner would perform under the watchful eye of the psychologist and was supposedly a simulation of everyday problems that the learner should recognise. During this same time period, scientists were working on the theory of intelligence. One of the most noted researchers was Spearman, who published a paper on general intelligence in 1904 (see Black, 1998, Broadfoot, 1979, Broadfoot and Gipps, 1996, Brown, 1994, Firestone *et al.*, 2004, Gipps, 1999, and Moon, 1999).

Testing of what became known as the intelligence quotient (IQ) was taken up in Britain because of the overcrowding which had resulted from the introduction of compulsory primary education and the worry that some of the learners were not able to learn and needed to be extricated from normal classes and put into special schools for the mentally impaired (Moore and Muller, 1999). Binet's test was considered the ideal test to select those who needed to be put in alternative schools because of its perceived ability to separate "feeble minded" learners from those deemed normal by the dominant class. Ball (2004:30) states that education is largely "a palliative designed to contain and pacify, rather than to educate and liberate". This was certainly the case in nineteenth century as the rural poor flooded into urban areas to find the work generated by the industrial revolution and education was seen as a means of containing social order. Testing of intelligence was promoted as being fair and emancipatory, providing help for the so called intellectually challenged when it was really marginalising and silencing those who had not acquired, in Gee's (2004) terms, the literacies related to dominant school-based Discourses by naming them as abnormal (Foucault, 1979 and Gee, 2004).

Much like the belief that a person was born into nobility, the belief was that one's intellect was innate and could be measured and was therefore used to provide evidence of those who were considered to be superior to others (Moore and Muller, 1999). Separate curricula were then developed for those considered to be intellectually superior and for those who were considered inferior (Ball, 2004, and Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998). The development of separate curricula thus provided a means for the dominant class to maintain the elite positions previously afforded to them as their given right through a new claim of intellectual superiority whilst those deemed less fortunate intellectually were to be taught the basics to get by in life and become the workers (Giroux, 1988). Education was therefore being used much like Foucault's (1979) theory of the penal system to discipline learners into accepting their place in society.

IQ testing was understood as a means of revealing the innate intelligence of the child and at the time, it was thus thought that neither environment nor culture had an impact on the

score. It was also thought that the score would not change and would remain the same over the life of the individual (Black, 1998, Broadfoot, 1979, and Gipps, 1999). As the IQ test was seen as infallible at measuring the intelligence of a learner then no consideration was given to the idea that it would need to be modified or honed to meet the cultural needs in a different context (Ball, 2003, Davis, 1998a, 1998b, Foucault 1979, Fuhrman, 1999, Headington, 2000, and Morgan and Wyatt-Smith, 2000).

As the IQ test was supposedly designed to factor out environment and culture, the fact that, over time, it has had to be modified and changed is cause for a critical concern in terms of the construct itself and also in terms of its reliability and fairness when administered to all learners (Ball, 2003). The IQ test has not been called into any serious question, however, and has simply been refined to make it more efficient because of its perceived success at sorting out unwanted learners from what was considered normal education (Broadfoot, 1979:90). Kamin (1974 in Broadfoot, 1979:92) states that the intelligence tests have worked so well over the years that “research is devoted to developing and honing the tests rather than questioning the fundamental reason for using them at all”.

The IQ test was used in the United States to differentiate or to track learners into ability levels within the schools. The highly acclaimed Stanford-Binet method developed by Terman at Stanford University in 1916 was a modification of the Binet-Simon test which was thought not to work for the learners in California. The IQ test was considered very important during this time period because of the influx of immigrants into the country in the first part of the twentieth-century from Eastern and Southern Europe (Black, 1998, Broadfoot, 1979, 2001, Broadfoot and Black, 2004, Firestone et al., 2004, and Gipps, 1999). According to Gipps (1999:359):

As with the IQ test in England, there were two purposes: identify learners who had special educational needs to remove them from normal schooling and grouping learners of similar ability for instructional purpose.

The United States also used the IQ test to track and separate learners based on their score. The test was so popular that in 1917, the United States military called together psychologists, including Terman, to develop group IQ tests, (The Army Alpha and Army Beta), which could be given to a large number (over two million recruits) and which could be scored and managed much easier than Binet’s test. Yerkes, the head of the committee and a military psychologist, suggested the two newly developed tests could be administered to “large numbers at once” (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1978:423). The Army Alpha could be given to English speakers who could read and write and the Army Beta could be given to speakers of English as an additional language whose language competence was not deemed

adequate to deal with the Alpha test and to those who could not read and write. The Beta was often given orally in pantomime and physical demonstrations. The purpose of both tests was to sort recruits quickly for deployment during World War one (WWI). Neither test needed to be administered, scored or interpreted by a psychologist and could be given in a short period of time. After the war, business, education and industry saw great potential in psychological testing for selection purposes (Davis, 1998a, 1998b, and Morgan and Wyatt-Smith, 2000).

The Army Alpha test was modified into a norm-referencing<sup>14</sup> style examination which consisted of short answer, multiple-choice<sup>15</sup> and essay questions. Norm-referencing was considered to be more reliable and the growth of the scientific management and application of examinations to educate and to measure efficiency was on the rise<sup>16</sup>. Gipps (1999:360) states “the provision of an apparently fair [examination fosters] competition [and] allows those who are not successful to accept their own failure, thus controlling resentment among the privileged”.

The mass use of achievement tests such as these helped to establish commercial testing<sup>17</sup> and gave commercial test providers their first foot in the assessment door. In 1926 universities began using the achievement test, the Standard Achievement Test (SAT), as an entrance examination. Currently the written essay has been dropped from the SAT because it was not cost effective and was not seen to be as reliable. Gipps (1994, 1999) states that in the 1940s research revealed that the intelligence score did not remain the same over the life of the individual and that the environment and culture of the individual impacted on the score. Further research conducted found that IQ tests were biased towards middle-class white males and excluded individuals from different social groups. Gipps and Murphy (1994) state that IQ tests are developed and based on the values, beliefs, and culture of white

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<sup>14</sup> Norms are based upon the actual performance of the learner in various grade levels or ages in a standardised group. The average of the standardised group is considered the norm and all others are measured against this statistic. IQ score, ranking, grades and stanines fall into this category. The specified group that others will be measured against is called the point of reference. “[N]orms are not standards...[they] tell us how a person actually performs, not how they should perform... It tells us how [he/she] compared to others” (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1978:141).

<sup>15</sup> Multiple choice testing was developed by Fredrick J. Kelly in 1914 at the University of Kansas. It was first used to assess the abilities of WWI recruits and later adapted to be used as a university examination (Davis, 2001 and Mathews, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Mehren and Lehmann (1978) concur that even if the norm group chosen is from diverse ethnic groups, different socio-economic status, race gender, etc., the standard group may not all be willing participants and can therefore bias the test. The learners taking the test are not privy to the sampling procedures and are expected to believe that the tests are fair and unbiased even if they are not.

<sup>17</sup> Scoring technology has been the main change with this style of testing (Mathews, 2006).

males and not on the individual<sup>18</sup>. Thus, equity became an issue that needed to be addressed. Moore and Muller (1999:190) affirm the "...dominant or hegemonic form of knowledge represented in the school curriculum is identified as bourgeois, male or white as reflecting the prescriptives, standpoints, and interest of dominant social groups" and this can be seen to be reflected in assessment.

When intelligence testing is interrogated from a social perspective, claims of inclusiveness that deny the privileging of dominant groups can be seen to be a means of reproducing the interests of those groups. IQ testing has thus become a way of privileging some and excluding others in society. An individual with a low score is conditioned into believing that they cannot rise above their position in society and, as a result, the IQ test has become a way of legitimising and disciplining the individual into a social station (Foucault, 1980).

Over time, then, it can be seen that various kinds of assessment have been used to sort learners on the basis of their performance on various kinds of tests. Those in the higher performance ranking are given opportunities to achieve higher rewards and occupational entrance. Those who are struggling academically and performing below expected levels in assessment are limited in terms of their entrance to high-level occupations and have fewer rewards. The premise that such tests are fair given their alleged testing of innate constructs, Broadfoot (2001) claims, is taken for granted both by educational experts and the general public and never interrogated (see also Black, 1998, Broadfoot and Black 2004, Broadfoot and Gipps 1996, and Gipps, 1999).

MENSA<sup>19</sup>, a so-called intellectual society, for example, appears to be inclusive in their acceptance of individuals from around the world, but is actually highly exclusive in practice. Those who would like to join must meet criteria which are determined by testing. Not just anyone can do the testing, in that the tester must be approved by MENSA, and the individual taking the examination must score high enough on the IQ test to be considered in the top 2% intellectually. Only then is an invitation to join the exclusive society extended (Keirsch, 2006).

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<sup>18</sup> The gender specific label is based on research which identifies early assessment as being designed and honed by white males. It is not intended to be a derogatory remark, but is specific to those who designed assessment for societies.

<sup>19</sup> MENSA which means table in Latin was established in 1946 in England by Roland Berill and Dr. Lance Ware. Their goal was to establish an intellectual society whose IQ was in the top 2% of the population (Keirsch, 2006:1).

### 2.3.2 Behaviourism

Simola, Heikkinen, and Silvonen (1998), argue that modernisation has not only impacted on the physical landscape, but also on the lives of the individual as a social being. Part of this impact involves segmenting a person into discrete behavioural attributes that can be observed and supervised and measured, an approach which has become known as behaviourism. Edward Thorndike, considered the originator of the behaviour objective test<sup>20</sup>, worked with behaviourist psychologists such as B.F. Skinner who envisaged learning as an accrual of stimulus-response associations that could be measured to create non-biased objective tests (Black, 1998, Shepard 2000, and Taylor, 1998). It was thought that scientific principles could be attached to assessment to bring about reliable, valid and fair examinations for learners and solve the problems brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation<sup>21</sup> (Broadfoot and Black 2004, Broadfoot and Gipps, 1996, and Lewis, 1992).

Skinner (1954:94) states that the whole process of becoming competent in any field must be divided into a “very large number of very small steps”, and reinforcement must be “contingent upon the accomplishment of each step”. Skinner believed testing learners frequently reduced the chances of them getting the answer wrong. The “one-skill-at-a-time” items on the test could be taught, practiced, mastered and assessed scientifically (*ibid*).

Behaviourists believe that those who lack skills naturally can be conditioned or behaviourised into learning or mastering skills needed in society (Shepard, 2000:5). Stimuli/response methods were therefore used in education to encourage learners to repeat the skill until they had mastered it successfully. The educator’s role was to apply the stimuli and evaluate the response based on criteria pre-established by scientific domains. This, of course, is a shift from a belief in natural ability that could not be changed – a belief which had led to the development of intelligence testing – to a belief which argued that shifts in the external environment could bring about change. Behaviourist tests were considered to be fair because of the understanding that anyone could learn given the appropriate stimulus – i.e. that learning was dependent on stimulus rather than on factors inherent to the individual (Davis, 2001, and Shepard, 2000).

While behaviourist testing might have indicated a shift away from individual accounts of the ability to learn to accounts which encompassed the external environment, critical perspectives on behaviourist testing still argue that entry into dominant social groups is

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<sup>20</sup> Also called norm-referencing in the literature.

<sup>21</sup> The problems I am referring to are over crowded schools, population growth, and a need to educate and discipline the society into the new era (Black, 1998, Broadfoot, 1979, 2001, Foucault, 1979, Gipps, 1999, Moore and Muller, 1999, and Shepard, 2000).

dependent on whether the individual conforms and complies with the behaviours (Gipps, 1999, and Simola et al., 1998). From this perspective, applying a scientific approach to learning and assessment was a way of legitimising the seeming short comings of the individual, but offering a scientific way of levelling the playing field.

In modern society, science has gained the stature of being seen as an unquestionable structure of truth and as a form of fairness for all. Foucault (1979) disagrees and argues that science is a way of legitimising the dominance of others and disciplining the individual into compliance. From this perspective, behaviourist tests, as a form of entry into the dominant class, can be seen as a way of gaining entry by those who had been excluded in the past and as a way of behaviouring the skills they have been told they lacked (Broadfoot, 1979, and Killen, 2003). Of course these skills need to be taught, measured and made subject to surveillance and ranking. The individuals now have to measure themselves against others as worthy or non worthy in society according to the extent to which he/she managed to internalise and regurgitate valued behaviours on a test (Broadfoot, 2001, Furhman, 1999, and Nitko, 1995). Bringing about a change in assessment can work towards the reformulation of a learner's values and attitudes in a positivist way so that the interests of elite groups are served. As a result of this process, learners are "deceived into conformity" (Gee, 2004:31).

Foucault (1979:160) claims that "breaking the steps down with repetition and frequent reward and punishment", is the best way to get the individual to conform quickly to the dominant ideology in society. He also notes that the military uses this same method<sup>22</sup> to break down the behaviours of individuals and to rebuild the behaviours deemed important in a soldier.

Skinner's theory, as noted earlier in this chapter, is based on the idea that learning is a function of change in obvious behaviour. The theory behind the objective test, behaviourism, argues that the learner would be motivated to learn if the steps were broken down and reinforced<sup>23</sup>. This of course is making the assumption that learners will want to be conditioned and disciplined into learning the skills deemed important.

From a critical perspective, it can be argued that the application of these scientific principles by the Behaviourist movement has resulted in the legitimation of the assessment practices

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<sup>22</sup> An example that Foucault (1979) uses in his research is the soldier marching and drilling for endless hours in a repetitive manner. He states that the soldier will first count 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. to get the timing down, then will internalise the drill and will be able to march, turn, salute, etcetera, as a natural behaviour.

<sup>23</sup> A reinforcer is anything that strengthens the desired response (Skinner 1954, 1968).

associated with it under the shroud of advancement and empowerment for those harmed by the IQ test movement. Behaviourist tests, however, effectively perpetuate the same separation and selection, but now offer a solution to help the so-called inept (Davis, 1998a, Gipps, 1999, and Shepard, 2000).

A handful of early-twentieth-century educators in the United States, including Bobbitt, Charters, Finney, Peters, and Snedden, gave credence to what has come to be called the social efficiency movement in education (Franklin, 2009). Schools during this time were dealing with the “disruptions and dislocations in American life that they associated with the nation's late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century transformation into an urban, industrial society” (*ibid*:1). The purpose of education, they argued, “was to prepare [learners] for the specific [jobs] and citizenship roles, which they would hold when they reached adulthood, and in so doing deliver a more orderly and stable society” (*ibid*:2). A mark of success for the social efficiency movement came from whether schools and their programs met the dominant societal purpose (Franklin, 2009). Bobbitt, one of its key thinkers, believed that schools should assign the learner to a specialised curricular track on the basis of their examination scores which were thought to determine intellect, and thereby set the individual on a path which would determine their future. Thus, the principles applied to factories to improve performance could earn equal success if applied in schools (*ibid*:3).

Giroux (1997) notes that American educational discourse is flooded with behaviouristic language and that it often retreats into a discourse of management and administration with an emphasis on efficiency and control. As noted earlier in this chapter, grading scales themselves came from the ranking method used in factories and which were applied to education to apply pressure on the individual to discipline themselves into ranking higher (see Giroux and McLaren, 1989, and Hartmann, 2005). As also noted, behaviourists believe that a person can be conditioned into mastering skills through repetition and exposure to ongoing feedback in the form of reward and punishment, until the individual is disciplined into showing their mastery on tests in a way which is constructed as impartial and scientific (Shepard, 2000:5).

In the Behaviourist movement, positivist discourse was being applied to learning in a way different to that of IQ testing. Intelligence testing involved a belief that the individual was genetically programmed to learn and explicate their knowledge. The Behaviourist movement believed that, under controlled and proper stimuli, the genetically deficient learner could behave their way to success. This, of course, is making the assumption that there is a genetically elite score or point to be reached and that those who lack naturally can strive for the fabricated goal (also discussed in Chapter Four) by conforming and behaving their

way closer to the false illusion (Ball, 2004, Gee, 2004, Gee et al., 1996, and Giroux, 1988). Therefore, the objective test functions to legitimise the selection and separation of learners that was being challenged in the context of IQ testing.

Behaviourist types of assessment are still the most popular and widely used assessment forms in countries around the world today as they claim to allow the scientific measurement of validity and, also, to increase of reliability<sup>24</sup>. This type of assessment also allows stakeholders to compare schools and learners and to evaluate their progress or their intellectual shortcomings. From a critical perspective, this sort of surveillance allows the elite to monitor each cultural, gender or socio-economic group and reward or discipline them into compliance when they are seen to fall short on what is expected by the dominant force in society (see Foucault, 1979, and Gee *et al.*, 1996). Some constructivist theorists discussed in Section 2.4.1 argue that behaviourist forms perpetuate rote recall and can encumber what is deemed to be real learning. Broadfoot and Black (2004), emphasise the need for several sources of data to be collected to give a broader picture of the learners' learning, rather than a snapshot perpetuated by a once off test (Little and Wolf, 1996). This idea was developed in to the construct of portfolio assessment elaborated in Section 2.4.8 of this chapter.

The growth of behaviourism coincided with World War II when the world was in turmoil and the need for factory workers to perform manual jobs was at an all time high. The selectivism of the IQ test was not meeting this need for workers and the result was a turn to science to fill the gap with behaviourism. The need for production and high volume in business thus became one of the driving forces of the Behaviourist movement - a force which has become entrenched in contemporary thinking and which is arguably behind the move towards outcomes-based education in South Africa.

Gee et al. (1996), state that, from the end of World War II to the early 1970s, and especially in the United States, old industrial mass-market capitalism had resulted in the saturation of markets with consumer goods. This led to economic success for large corporations because competition was not as fierce as it is today and competition, in any case, was located in closed economic and political contexts. However, the innovation of technology and the open global market has changed the way products are consumed as well as the way they are produced. Concomitant with this has been a change in the selection of individuals for the workshop as well as the way those individuals are trained. Contemporary educational

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<sup>24</sup> For critical social theorists, for the assessment method to be deemed reliable then it must measure what the dominant class believes to be measurable and worthwhile to its existence and reproduction.

reform, as indicated in Chapter One, can therefore be seen as a means of meeting the demands of the New Capitalist market.

## 2.4 New Capitalism

New Capitalism has resulted in the need for a very different kind of workforce. As already noted, the old Fordist models of production which dominated the early and mid twentieth century resulted in the saturation of markets. Advances in technology as the century progressed, however, allowed goods to be reinvented on an ongoing basis for niche, rather than mass, markets. The development of information and communication technologies then allowed these goods to be advertised in ways previously never imagined. The result was the hyper-competition (see Barnett and Covanagh, 1994, and Gee *et al.* 1996) of global market and a chance of survival only for businesses which can produce high quality innovative products at competitive prices. While Fordism required large numbers of workers who could perform fairly low level tasks repeatedly, New Capitalism has resulted in very different demands being made of the workforce.

In facing the challenges posed by globalisation, New Capitalism puts a great deal of energy in creating goals, core values, a vision, a culture and a literacy to communicate to its workers, who are now called partners and colleagues<sup>25</sup>. According to Gee *et al.* (1996:24), one of the key indicators of success in New Capitalism is the creation of “core values that underlie, integrate, and guide the social practice of their distinctive discourse”. The innovation of new products and technology are not sufficient conditions for success – rather the individual has to take on the core values of the company and believe that they are co-partners in it and are thereby responsible for its success or failure. To create the new kind of partner/worker required by New Capitalism, pressure is placed on “other learning centres”<sup>26</sup> (*ibid*:24). These non-traditional schools are established to recruit learners who will become “suitable subjects or citizens for the New Capitalist” (*ibid*:24). This is done under the guise of partnership between schools and business.

Gee *et al.* (1996:5) go on to argue that “[t]he business world, as part and parcel of a massive global economic, technological, and social change, now sees knowledge as its primary value”. Countries no longer compete entirely on the basis of products or services, but rather on how much learning and knowledge they can use to lever and expedite inventions, production, innovation, and so on, in order to be competitive in the global arena.

Traditionally, knowledge production has been located in universities and research institutes

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<sup>25</sup> A form of inclusiveness

<sup>26</sup> Non-traditional universities, universities of technology and specialty schools.

– institutions which came to assume sole guardianship over what could count as knowledge. Shifts in contemporary modes of economic production has shifted knowledge production away from these traditional sites into new domains with the result that universities, as they are currently structured, no longer have complete control over learning or over the production of knowledge.

As already noted, the socio-technical practices of New Capitalism require a commitment to continuous innovation. “Knowledge then, is like potential energy in physics, energy that can be released in various forms for various purposes” (Gee *et al.*, 1996:7). School reform is influenced by the need for this new knowledge and schools are requiring tangible evidence that knowledge has progressed in new assessment formats, in an environment that is collaborative, since collaboration in business is essential to the “new work order” (*ibid*:8).

According to Gee (1996), Discourses construct roles for their members and, in doing so, prescribe saying/doing/valuing combinations which are acceptable and which demonstrate membership of the Discourse itself. Discourses thus create and reproduce opportunities for people to be recognised as certain types of people, (i.e. mother, father, husband, wife, and so forth). Discourses at particular historical junctures create and constrain these different kinds of roles to the extent that “new kinds of learners, citizens, leaders and workers are being created as we speak by the New Capitalism” (Gee *et al.*, 1996:25).

This new work order places enormous emphasis on the need for life long learning and the need for continual change and modification. New skills often have to be developed on the job if economic competitiveness is to be maintained and if the economic and social benefits which accrue to individuals from such success are to be achieved (*ibid*:7). The demands created by the new work order have entered into the educational arena under the guise of reform to bring about changes in society. Therefore, educational theory and practices have evolved in order to conform to dominant ideologies (*ibid*).

#### **2.4.1 Movement of Change**

The current trends in education which I will call the new paradigm have emerged from shifts at an economic level and are calling for a shift in assessment practices to consider the whole learner, where the term whole includes culture, beliefs, values and attitudes about learning.

New forms of assessment are therefore not simply concerned with whether or not a learner achieves well on a test. The new paradigm, which ostensibly is focused on equality, shared power, diversity and developing knowledge, is tied to constructivist theory and calls for

assessment to recognise that learners come to school with prior knowledge, different backgrounds and learn differently from one another (Klenowski, 2004).

Constructivism, defined by Mazzotti (1999), makes the assumption that knowledge is based on mental operations, and the individual's capacity to make judgment. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) illustrated this when he proposed that the pure capacity of judgment be based on a "priori synthetic judgments of space and time" (Kant cited in Mazzotti, 1999:1). However, positivist discourse is so embedded in the school system that what appears to be an alternative voice is often appropriated. One of the main claims made by Black and Wiliam (1998a), Klenowski (2004), Shepard (2000), and others in the field, is that there should be an alternative to the impact that high-stakes standardised testing has on learning within the school environment. In line with the overall thrust of this chapter and its focus on the way assessment has been used in history to serve dominant interests, this claim will be challenged as the discussion continues.

Constructivism has not evolved in a linear fashion or in any single theoretical orientation. However, for the sake of this discussion, I will categorise the movement into two main schools of thought: genetic and social. Genetic constructivism, as explored by Piaget (1970) is based on the assumption that underlying cognitive structures (based on scientific assumptions) correspond to the stages of a child's life (discussed later in this section). Social constructivism has its roots in phenomenology which considers the intention and meaning held by the individual (Black and Wiliam, 1998a).

Social constructivists such as Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe in multiple interpretations of an object and Mazzotti (1999:2) argues that "realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experimentally based, local and specific, dependent from their form and content on the person who holds them". The majority of the social constructivists such as Shepard (2000) and Black and Wiliam (1998a) however, believe in shared power in the classroom. Learners are encouraged to express their knowledge even if it differs from that of their educators; this helps both the learner and the educator find a mutual and acceptable option which Klenowski (2002) and others in the field call "active learning in a child centered environment". Thus, social constructivism (discussed later in this section) considers the environment and the social interactions that one human has with another - thereby bringing about new knowledge for the individual. It is through interaction and sharing of ones knowledge that learning takes place.

This is strikingly different from the behaviourist approach, which believes that learners are empty vessels just waiting to be filled with new knowledge, skill-by-skill. For this reason,

assessment based on genetic and social constructivist understandings is performance based in real world situations or simulations (Barnes *et al.*, 2000a, Baxter *et al.*, 1996, and Bencze, 2004).

Learning based on Bruner's (1986, 1996) theory, which is based on genetic constructivism, is an active process in which learners construct new ideas based on current and past knowledge. The learner relies on cognitive structures to make decisions, interpret information and construct theories. Bruner believed that curricula should be developed in a spiral format so that learners can continually build on what they already have learned. Bruner's theory is a framework for instruction based on cognitive development much like that of Piaget which I describe below (Bruner, 1986, 1996).

Jean Piaget's (1970) theoretical framework is called genetic epistemology and, as already indicated, has dominated educational circles for more than six decades. Piaget was interested in how knowledge developed in humans. The key concept was that of cognitive structures which he believed to be patterns of physical or mental action that underlie specific acts of intelligence and correspond to the stages of a child's development (Baxter *et al.*, 1996, and Shepard, (2000). While the stages of cognitive development are associated with characteristics of age spans, they can vary from individual to individual. Piaget believed that a constant effort must be made to adapt to the environment in terms of assimilation and accommodation. Piaget (1970) believed that when learners are confronted with social and historical information, the learner will adapt and modify to assimilate or accommodate, but will not assume absolute truths but versions of it.

Assimilation involves the interpretation of events in terms of existing cognitive structures whereas accommodation refers to changing the cognitive structure to make sense of the environment (*ibid*). A central component of Piaget's developmental theory of learning and thinking is that both involve the participation of the learner. He believed that learning is much more meaningful if the learner is allowed to experiment on his/her own rather than just listening to the educator lecture. This form of learning is considered active and the educator must have the confidence in the learner's ability to learn on their own. Thus, the child is allowed to make mistakes and learn from them (Bencze, 2004).

John Dewey (1897, 1916, and 1961), like others subscribing to social constructivism, believed that the role of the educator was to create problems for the learners to solve and that the learners, in turn, would be motivated to solve the problem. There should be a focus

on the child rather than on the content<sup>27</sup>. During the nineteenth century, and as already indicated earlier in this chapter, the learners who came to school from the working class in England and United States were thought to be undisciplined and unruly. Discipline, in these contexts, involved classrooms of desks arranged in rows with the educator allocated a supervisory role at the front of the class. The role of the learners was to look alert and listen and a failure to do this resulted in corporal punishment and humiliation. In contrast, Dewey believed that the learner should be able to interact with the educator and be given tasks that would stimulate their minds (Popkewitz, 2001a).

Discovering what a learner can do independently and what they can do with adult guidance is integral to Vygotsky's (1978, 2004) Zone of Proximal Development<sup>28</sup>. Vygotsky argues that learners develop cognitive<sup>29</sup> skills when they interact with someone with more experience and knowledge (Klenowski, 2000, 2002, 2003b, and Wood, 1998). Social interaction based on this theory helps the skilled to teach the unskilled in a shared cognitive process (Popkewitz, 2001a). Learners should be able to make connections between what they already know from prior knowledge and the new experiences and ideas shared in the social environment. Vygotsky considered the social environment critical for learning and thought the integration of social with personal factors produces learning (Popkewitz, 2001a, Schunk, 1996, and Vygotsky, 2004).

This interactive, social approach to learning allows the educator to gain insights into how a learner's understanding can be extended. This approach is thought to be only applicable to a one-on-one basis. Current research (see Lave and Wenger, 1991) suggests that it can be extended to groups, if the learners are socialised into a community-based approach where reasoning and offering feedback on their developing competence is a part of the social group's dynamics (Hein, 1991, and Shepard, 2000).

Lave (1988) believes that learning is situated, and is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it takes place. Social interaction is thought to be an important part of situated learning and the learners must become involved in a community of practice which includes certain beliefs and practices that become acquired (*ibid*). Situated learning is a theory of knowledge acquisition that novices learn from experts in the context of everyday activities.

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<sup>27</sup> A famous line by Dewey was "learn by doing" which is also the keystone in outcomes-based education pedagogy discussed at length later in this chapter (Dewey, 1961:4).

<sup>28</sup> "[ZPD] is the amount of learning possible by a learner given the proper instructional conditions" (Schunk, 1996:215).

<sup>29</sup> As already noted, Jean Piaget's theory is based on the assumption that cognitive development happens at certain stages in a child's life. Piaget's theory is the skeleton for constructivist learning theory today (Wood, 1998).

The constructivist movements (genetic and social) in education followed such thinkers as Piaget (1970), Bruner (1986), Dewey (1897 and 1916) and Vygotsky (1978), who all agree that learners should construct knowledge for themselves and become active in the learning process. Active learning<sup>30</sup> is considered a cumulative process. The educator's task is to aid learners in the construction of meanings that align with the desired outcome and give the learners opportunities to develop their learning and metacognitive<sup>31</sup> skills. Cocklin (1995:3) in Devlin (2000:1) defines an outcome<sup>32</sup> as a "culminating demonstration of what the learner has learned in a real-life situation or simulation"; his definition echoes that of Spady (1988, 1994, 1998) discussed later in the chapter.

One of the purposes of assessment that is advocated in some present assessment theories, is the use of assessment to "foster learning, improving teaching, providing valid information about what has been done or achieved, and enabling learners and others to make sensible and rational choices about courses and careers and other activities" (Brown, 1994:271). This sounds very liberating and empowering for the learner, but who determines what is sensible, rational and achievable? The learner has very little control over what is deemed appropriate to learn, how it is taught, and how it is interpreted. How can learners be seen to be included in the process when they are excluded from all parts, other than providing evidence?

Therefore, many modern types of assessment based on constructivist epistemologies are thought to hegemonise the dominant ideology (Gramsci, 1971) onto the individual under the guise of active learning just as more traditional forms did. Broadfoot (1979) argues that many modern forms of assessment use surveillance and discipline to *reproduce*, rather than change, the *status quo* in society. It is arguably the case, therefore, that so called new forms of assessment introduced in relation to New Capitalism are no different to what has preceded them.

## 2.4.2 Outcomes-Based Education

As discussed by Gee *et al.*, (1996), in the new global order the commodity that is of great importance for advancement and economic gain has shifted from a tangible object to the

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<sup>30</sup> Svinivki (2006) defines active learning as constructing and deconstructing understanding of the world as interaction with the world occurs. Existing cognitive structures known as schemata are modified based on this new information and new knowledge is formed, only if it is built into existing schemata from past experiences. Reflection on learning is key in assisting new knowledge to develop.

<sup>31</sup> "Metacognition refers to the deliberate conscious control of one's cognitive activity" (Schunk, 1996:204).

<sup>32</sup> In Australia and the United States the word outcome has replaced the word objective. In Britain, the term attainment target is used to convey the same idea (Devlin, 2000:1).

power of innovation. Outcomes-based education, developed in the early 1970s with the objective of transforming education through the incorporation of learner centred approaches advocated by constructivist learning theorists such as Bruner (1986) and Vygotsky (1978), (discussed earlier in this chapter) can be shown to have worked hand in hand with the development of the new work order.

The OBE movement developed at the same time that globalization took root in the economy (Gultig, 2003, and Killen, 2003). In OBE approaches, the individual is encouraged to strive for excellence by performing tasks in real world simulations based on a criteria preset by the educator (Brindley 2001, Ecclestone, 2004, Little and Wolf 1996). Outcomes-based approaches can therefore be seen to be a form of discipline which draws from the language of the new educational paradigm in conjunction with the theory of the constructivist movement (Jansen, 1998, Shardelman, 1998, and Shepard, 2000).

Outcomes-based education focuses on the idea that academic success is best measured by what a learner has actually learned, as opposed to how much they can recall. The goal in an OBE system is to have clearly defined outcomes that can be demonstrated in a real-world situation or simulation of a real-world situation (Spady, 1988). This involves a shift from the rote-regurgitation in response to a stimulus valued by the behaviourist movement, to an evidence based performance of what has been learned (Clegg, 2005, and Killen, 2003). This method is appealing to many countries because of its potential to challenge traditional educational practices and to promote discourses valuing the liberation of learners in democratic spaces (Manno, 1994).

Outcomes-based education, as explained by Spady (1994) means clearly focusing and organising everything in an educational system around what is deemed essential for all learners to be able to demonstrate successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means the stakeholders must start with a clear picture of what they consider to be important for learners to be able to do. The curriculum (which includes instruction and assessment) is then organised in order to ensure that the desired learning actually takes place. According to Killen (2003) OBE is based on the assumption that it is possible to determine what things are essential for learners to learn and that it is possible to demonstrate this learning in assessments.

This, coupled with Spady's (1994) recommendation that outcomes should always contain an action verb<sup>33</sup>, which is also present in Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1954, and Harrow, 1972), often leads to the assumption that assessment decisions can be reduced to placing learners into categories such as achieved/not achieved or exceeded/satisfied/partially satisfied/not satisfied education (Cumming and Maxwell 2004, and Department of Education 2002 Australia in Killen 2003:10). The process of sorting, sifting, and positioning learners in classrooms is arguably no different to the processes of sorting, sifting and positioning which has dominated assessment practices for centuries.

Outcomes-based education has failed in many countries for various reasons, but the dominant one is that it is seen to push an agenda of changing values and beliefs (Manno, 1994). Outcomes-based education reform has drawn on behaviourism to explain how learners can achieve the outcome if they are given multiple opportunities to learn the skill and perform that knowledge in a real-world setting or simulation (Ecclestone, 2004). OBE also maintains that skills can be broken down into small segments that can be mastered little by little; much like Skinner's theory discussed earlier in this chapter. It also put forth the notion that learners can be assessed on their beliefs and values; this of course is where the theory becomes problematic. Parents do not want the values of the school to be imposed on their child or have their child exposed to beliefs that they themselves do not hold (Sizer, 1992).

For an example of the backlash that developed in the implementation of OBE one must look at the United States religious groups who argued that the government was exerting too much power over the spiritual side of the individual and began a campaign to challenge the educational policy that promoted the perceived imposition of values and beliefs. Although the religious groups did not succeed in eliminating OBE from policy, they did raise questions about whether stakeholders were trying to manipulate society through education (Manno, 1994). Up until this point, the role that assessment had had in moulding society had largely not been questioned in the United States. However, as noted in Chapter One, in South Africa the People's Education for People's Power did question the role that education played in domination and thus challenged its motives.

The California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) was developed in 1992 to try to shift the state's assessment system to performance-based testing. The Rutherford Foundation filed suit on behalf of parents who believed that the tests violated privacy law. The CLAS met

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<sup>33</sup> Inserting action verbs into written objectives was derived from Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1954). Bloom believed that the way an objective or question is written can manipulate the behavior (Eisner 2000, Harrow, 1972, and Killen 2003).

its demise and stood as a constructive lesson to policy makers who are committed to assessment reform rooted in performance-based testing (Barnes et al., 2000b). The lawsuit against the state of California was one of many that questioned the intent of reform using outcomes-based education.

### **2.4.3 Performance Assessment**

It is apparent from the discussion put forth above that outcomes-based education is a form of performance based education. Associated with the idea of performance based education is that of performance based assessment. In this thesis, the term performance assessment is used synonymously with the term portfolio assessment. Learner achievement and competence in the ability to think and reason has influenced educational practitioners and policy makers as they have turned to performance based assessment as a major instrument of reform (Barnes *et al.*, 2000a, and Shepard, 2000).

As an assessment tool, the portfolio functions in much the same way as a portfolio used by an artist to collect samples of work in that it provides a space for the learner to showcase performance examples which meet the outcomes set by the educator or examining boards (Smith and Tillema, 2003). The focus on this type of assessment has come from the belief that skills taught and knowledge gained in the educational system will automatically be carried over into employment (Davis, 1998b). As already noted, the need for countries to be competitive in a globalised market has resulted in a surge of educational reform around the world (Gee *et al.*, 1996). Ranking learners and collecting scores for selection is no longer sufficient since economic competitors need to prove that they are prepared for the global market through the availability of a trained workforce.

As also noted, performance based assessment developed out of the need to have greater depth and insights beyond a test score. The portfolio, which relies on the use of different assessment methods to gain insights into an individual's learning, has been identified by stakeholders as a means of providing evidence that they have a population that is innovative and ready to meet the technological trends in a global market (Bottery and Wright 2000, and Davis, 1995). Killen (2003) suggests that there is a change from prediction to explanation; that scores, a feature of traditional assessment, do not give the breadth that is needed to understand the underlying constructs at work in learners' learning. He suggests that to understand the importance of assessment the focus must change from mere interpretation of raw scores, to the relevance and value that assessment brings and a better understanding of the way learners learn and achieve. The design of performative assessment allows the educator to look at each learner separately in his or her social world – an important shift

since the ranked score system of much traditional assessment only allows us to look at learners as a cumulative whole (Gultig, 2003, and Spillane *et al.*, 2002).

Problems may arise however, with the learner's traditional views of learning which may conflict with active learning. The learner may have been conditioned in rote style learning that privileges the regurgitation of facts for tests, involving only right and wrong answers, judged by the educator (Harlen, 2007, and Stobart, 2004). The behaviours that are asked of the learners in an active learning environment are often ambiguous unless the educator makes an effort to negotiate the outcomes of the activity along with the learners - a practice which is advocated by the new paradigm. However, it may be up to the learner to decipher the outcomes written by the educator or included in a packaged curriculum and to identify what the educator deems important for the learner to write and study for future assessments.

Perry (1970 in Svinicki 2006) proposed that, when learners enter university, they often use the skills they developed in school to help them remember and assimilate new information. "When they are asked to engage in more complex, self-directed, self regulated approaches that require interpretation and analysis, we are going against their very belief about what constitutes learning" (*ibid*:2). Learners are asked to engage in strategies for learning they have never used before and this places them in a vulnerable position and challenges their perception of what constitutes knowledge. The "illusion of understanding" that learners experience comes from listening to an educator describe information which may appear clear and comprehensible until the learner is asked to apply the new knowledge (*ibid*:2). At university, moreover, learners may feel uncomfortable and confused but still not ask for feedback because they are unfamiliar with active learning methods, have a fear of failure and are not prepared to take risks (Black and Wiliam, 1998a and 1998b).

Active learning, advocated under the new paradigm as a method that creates opportunities for meaningful learning, can also create anxiety and the sense of being judged by the educator and one's peers if barriers are not broken down between the educator and the learner to create an open, safe space for feedback and discussion and complete transparency (Klenowski, 2002 and Klenwoski, 2003b).

The type of assessment described above is promoted by the new paradigm as producing significant learning gains which exceed those produced by other educational interventions (Black and Wiliam, 1998a and 1998b). Epistemologically, the shift is considered to be from a static, passive view of knowledge transmission to a more active view of knowledge construction that is seen as an "interactive, organic process" of reorganisation and restructuring by learners (Klenowski, 2002:123). This sort of approach to assessment calls

into question the extent to which individuals are allowed to draw on resources and practices from their own primary Discourses in order to construct new learning or whether learners are actually required to master the practices of secondary and possibly unfamiliar Discourses in order to demonstrate competence (Gee, 1996). The answers to such questions are indicative of the extent to which such new approaches to assessment can be empowering or disempowering for learners.

#### **2.4.4 The Portfolio in Practice**

In this section, the focus of the discussion shifts from the learning theory behind the notion of performance to that of the practice of creating the portfolio in the classroom as an assessment tool. Portfolio assessment in the literature is best described by Arter and Spandel (1992) in Klenowski (2002) as a purposeful collection of a learner's work that tells the story of the learner's efforts, progress, or achievements in a given area. They suggest that the involvement of the learner in making selections, judgment and producing evidence of self reflection are essential in the construction process (see Black and Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b, Dale, 2008, and Klenowski, 2002).

The portfolio takes on different characteristics based on how the information within the portfolio will be used (Broadfoot, 1995, 2001, Gipps, 1994, 1999, Gipps and Murphy, 1994, Nitko, 1995, and Stobart and Gipps, 1997). In a summative format, the portfolio will include a collection of the learner's work drawn from a larger collection and will include a reflection piece written by the learner to justify their selection (Dale, 2008, Klenowski, 2004, McCullum *et al.*, 1995, and Wiliam and Black, 1996). I discuss the summative process in the next section of this chapter. In a formative process, the portfolio is considered as means of providing feedback on learning and of showing the growth which emerges as a result of interaction between the educator and the learner. The formative portfolio is thus constructed as an exhibition of the process of learning that a learner goes through when mastering a skill.

Arguably, and drawing on Foucault (1979) both summative and formative portfolios can be seen as a form of policing. The educators must make sure that every learner has a portfolio and collects the pieces that provide the best evidence (Wiliam *et al.*, 2004). Following Foucault (1979), the educator is thus involved in surveillance.

The portfolio is seen in the new paradigm as an excellent assessment tool, but can create a record-keeping nightmare for the educators and learners if the educators implementing their construction have not been trained properly (Calfée and Perfumo, 1996, and Klenowski, 2002).

The alignment of portfolio use with constructivist learning theory supports the development of important skills such as critical thinking, comparisons, judgment, and evaluation outlined by learning theorists discussed earlier in this chapter (Flores, 2001). Therefore, portfolio assessment in the new paradigm demands well trained educators with flexibility and time to ensure that they are truly gathering a compilation of the learner's work and not just a few assignments thrown together to please stakeholders and which demonstrate that portfolios are being implemented (Hassard, 2004, and Wood, 1998).

#### **2.4.5 Criteria and Continuous Assessment**

Criterion-referenced assessment is based on constructivist and behaviourist theories of learning and is open to multiple interpretations. Therefore, a rubric, or grading scale, that identifies criteria against which judgements will be made, needs to be constructed. The rubric is created based on criteria identified by the educator or examining board and on the basis of what are deemed to be appropriate responses to those criteria (Luckett and Sutherland, 2000, and Whitty, 2002).

Criterion-referencing is thought to become more objective and fair if the educator gives it to the learner prior to assessment. Of course, it is still designed and graded by the educator and therefore cannot be objective entirely (Carrim 2003, Lambert *et al.*, 1996, and Shay 2008). Hence, what is valued and represented as knowledge through the use of assessment judgment is often left unquestioned. As a result, the educational process can appear to function as being neutral even though it may be contributing to the reproduction of the inequalities that exist in society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

The criteria are used as guides for learning by the learner and again by the educator during the grading process. The process of identifying criteria (what the assessor needs to see to be sure that the learner can, indeed, meet the outcome) is thought to allow for transparency (Hassard, 2004). However, as discussed earlier in the chapter, the criteria are often far removed from those who are to be judged by them (Shay, 2008) and the involvement of learners in the development of criteria, a process involving asking learners what evidence they could produce to demonstrate mastery of the outcome, is not common practice.

The purpose of this continuous assessment is ostensibly to provide feedback to learners on their learning and to educators on their teaching (Nitko, 1995). Continuous assessment is thought to be conducive to gathering the evidence needed for summative and formative purposes discussed in the next section of this chapter. For continuous assessment to work in the classroom, as advocated by Klenowski (2002), Black (1998) and others in the field, the learner should have well defined criteria and scoring rubrics to assess their own progress

(Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999). The main focus of this method is to involve the learner in the process so that they understand how they are going to be assessed. As already noted, continuous assessment is used in the classroom to supply the educator with various forms of evidence produced by the learner (Broadfoot and Black, 2004).

Davis (1995) notes that, in the United Kingdom, there has been an overuse of criterion-referenced testing. He argues that the pressures put on educators to validate reliability and work with criterion-referencing is causing them to distort teaching objectives concerning learners' knowledge development and understanding. Educators who have not been trained properly in devising criterion-referenced materials are seen to have difficulty in implementing classroom assessment. If the professionals are having difficulty creating criterion-referenced materials and assessment tasks, then it is logical to assume that the learners will have difficulty interpreting them. In the portfolio movement it is considered essential that educators are given support and training.

#### **2.4.6 Summative Assessment**

The popularity of summative portfolios stems from how they are used after their construction (Davis, 1995, Gipps, 1999, and Stobart and Gipps 1997). As already noted, the summative portfolio is a sample collection of the work completed during a period of learning that provides evidence that learners have met the outcomes identified as necessary for the demonstration of learning (Nitko, 1995). From a critical perspective, the summative portfolio can also be understood as a record that the educator has taught the prescribed curriculum and that the learner has been properly disciplined in to trying to meet those outcomes. The main purpose of summative assessment is to provide a record of a learner's overall achievement in a specific area of learning at a certain time in their education. Although educators have a role in any assessment, the term Educator Assessment (EA) is used where the professional judgment as well as gathering evidence allows the educator to draw inferences about the learner's learning. The fact that the educator exercises surveillance by collecting evidence of a learner's ability can be seen as yet another form of ranking and disciplining (Foucault, 1979 and 1980). The learner takes part in their own domination by providing the proof that they have met the requirements set down by the bureaucrats who approved the curriculum (Gee *et al.*, 1996). Summative assessment can therefore be understood as a collection of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced work completed by the learner to ensure accountability is being met by the learner, educator and school.

According to Chisholm (2004), educators have received little encouragement in South Africa on how they are supposed to develop classroom assessment outside the dominant high-

stakes tests and examinations. Brooks (2002) notes that educators globally have had difficulty developing classroom assessments even when training and modelling have occurred, and fall back into traditional assessment methods.

Heavy summative assessment, argue educational theorists such as Black and William (1998a, 1998b) Klenowski (2003, 2004), and Brooks (2002) can limit the potential of enhanced learning and teaching when it is only considered as a body of evidence of preparing learners for tests and examinations. Broadfoot and Black (2004:18) note “[t]hat learners may well interpret all assessments as summative [in the context of gathering evidence], and both devalue and/or resist their involvement in them”.

The negative effect of summative assessments and positivist influence on learning has brought attention to the portfolio. Some in the portfolio movement identify the portfolio as a tool exerting dominance over the learner and the educator and would like a shift to occur which would focus the role of the portfolio as a reflective body of work that demonstrates the learning process rather than merely acting as a record of tests and examinations (Brooks 2002). The formative portfolio is thought by authors such as Klenowski (2002, 2004) Brooks (2002), Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) to be an alternative to summative approaches. However, the same authors caution that it too can become a burden and not meet its purpose if not constructed with real world objectives and lessons which will allow the individual to reflect on their own learning.

The development of the formative assessment has come from a variety of theoretical positions on teaching and learning, resulting in a formative assessment discourse which lacks coherence and clearly defined meaning (Black, 1998, and Black and Wiliam, 1998). However, it has its roots in social constructivism and is a part of the new paradigm evolving toward authenticity<sup>34</sup> in learning and teaching.

#### **2.4.7 Formative Assessment**

Diagnostic or formative assessment is the process whereby information on learners is gathered with the expressed purpose of evaluating strengths and weaknesses so that future learning needs can be identified and organised efficiently (Benze, 2004, Bloom et. al., 1971, Eisner, 2000, Hein 1991, Klenowski, 2002, and 2003a). Formative assessment normally happens within the classroom, between the educator, learner and parents (Devlin, 2000, Morgan and Wyatt-Smith, 2000, and Schunk, 1996). Learners are seen as active learners

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<sup>34</sup> Authenticity in social constructivism is defined as “an attempt to measure performance directly in a real-life setting” an interest in constructing tests that assess performance in “more authentic” settings (Davis, 2001:1).

whom are already holding ideas which they will use to make sense of their everyday experiences (Brindley, 2001, Torrence, 1995a, 1995b, and Wood, 1998). As noted earlier in this chapter, the move for learners to be active in their learning and assessment practices is drawn from constructivist learning theory. Formative assessment is thought to engage the learner actively in the selection and construction of their portfolio as learning and teaching tool. It is not seen as a collection to be evaluated as a grade or mark, but as a document that shows the process of learning (Klenowski, 2004). This differs from the summative portfolio which collects evaluated pieces to demonstrate achievement in the subject matter.

The portfolio in this context is used as a learning tool to get the learner and the educator to act upon their understandings and knowledge as it develops. The learner will produce a draft and will be asked to reflect critically about the work they have done (Black and Wiliam, 1998a). The learner will get feedback from educator and peers in a constructive way to allow better insights into how their work is perceived by others and suggestions on how it can be modified or enhanced for better clarification and understanding (Klenowski, 2004). Feedback of this nature can be understood as a means of facilitating access to a Discourse (Gee, 1996). Members of the Discourse (in this case the educators) attempt to guide novices in the ways of behaving which characterise the Discourse. It is thus possible to construct this form of feedback as a form of socialisation or acculturation into dominant modes of being.

Formative form of feedback is advocated in the new paradigm as a form of feed-forward which will improve the learner's critical thinking and feed back into the educator's teaching practice (Hein 1991). The portfolio becomes a gauge to evaluate how a concept or standard was perceived and whether further practice or probing is needed to move to the next exercise (Brindley, 2001). This type of portfolio relies on the writing process<sup>35</sup> to facilitate this deeper understanding. The portfolio in this form of assessment is also used as a showcase to show the steps taken in the learning process and how the learner overcame or worked out problems along the way (Carrim, 2003, and Whitty, 2002). The educator can use it to evaluate the learner's progress over the year and as a clear indicator of where the learners will go next in their learning.

Assessment by educators within the formative method is advocated as having the potential for providing cumulative information about a learner's attainment since educators can build up a representation of the learner's accomplishment across the varying activities and goals (Wiliam *et al.*, 2004). Other benefits asserted comprise less pressure on learners and educators compared to external assessment, greater sovereignty of educators to pursue

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<sup>35</sup> The writing process is advocated in the new paradigm as rewriting over and over until the learner meets the criteria and has shown that they have met the outcome (Klenowski, 2002).

learning goals in ways best fitting to their learners, the potential to gather information about their learners that can be used formatively to help feedback into learning, and to avoid the negative impact of test on learner's self-esteem (Harlen, 2007).

If feedback is not acted upon for instance, if an educator simply makes a record of results or a learner ignores their implications for future performance-then the activity could not be regarded as formative. Feedback must be for both educator and learner. This does not mean that pupils need to engage in a never-ending circus of practical activities ... just because an educator assesses pupils regularly ... in a routine mechanical way such as periodically collecting sets of books for marking and relying on ticks, marks and terse ... it cannot be assumed that this activity is formative (Brooks, 2002:15).

Feedback and feed forward based on the new paradigm needs to address the whole child, not just the cognitive aspect (Brooks, 2002). This sort of thinking is in accordance with the idea of gaining membership of a Discourse where membership involves getting an entire role right (Gee, 1996:xv). Learning is not just a thinking activity but involves emotional and social dimensions based on social constructivist theory (Brown, 2002). What one believes about one's own capacity to learn, based on prior experiences, will have a positive or negative influence on future learning (Gultig, 2003, and Morgan and Wyatt-Smith, 2000). Feedback and feed forward needs to attend not only to the cognitive aspects of learning, but also to these more veiled social and emotional elements. When the feedback and feed forward unmask what the assessment may also be measuring without learners being aware, then criticality needs to be exercised (Bergen, 1993, and Conca *et al.*, 2004).

In the new paradigm the learner is given access to the learning process and is encouraged to self-assess and take part in educational practices and this allows the learner, rather than the educator, to take the lead in classroom activities (Black and Wiliam, 1998b). The learners are given the power to reflect on their learning critically and grow from the experience. However, all too often what happens in practice is that the learner must judge their own work and therefore become the administrator of their own domination.

A study by Broadfoot (1988) cited in Brooks (2002:69) describes how learners who did not have knowledge of the assessment criteria or how the educators would judge their work tried to guess and adapt their self-assessment to please the educator, thereby defeating the point of self-assessment. Black and Wiliam's (1998b) study concluded however, that learners who self-assessed with a clear knowledge of the criteria<sup>36</sup> had significant learning gains. They concluded that self-assessment should not be a luxury for the learners, but a necessity. From a critical perspective, it could be argued that self assessment is a means of disciplining

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<sup>36</sup> Criterion-reference assessment tool given to the learner.

learners into the dominant ideology. Learners know how the ranking and selecting is going to occur and participate in this process (Sutherland and Peckham, 1998). Self-assessment therefore becomes an assessment tool to keep the learners in line. It could also be argued, however, that self assessment in which learners have an understanding of the criteria, allows learners the choice of conforming with, or resisting, membership of dominant Discourses.

As already noted, Foucault (1979) demonstrates how new recruits to the military are made to drill, one arm up, right foot out, as a means of disciplining them into submission. Having the learners grade their own work based on criteria that have been developed by the dominant figure can be seen to be like having soldiers march in step. The term authentic is used in promoting this method because the discourse being legitimised is seen as real. Disciplining the learner by using authentic self-assessment can only be made possible if pupils are given access to the assessment criteria associated with the task in hand and then encouraged to become actively self-monitoring (Wolf, 1995). "The more they practice at scoring themselves, the better they become at being disciplined into becoming part of their domination" (Brooks, 2002:69).

Self-marking and self-assessment are vastly different in formative assessment states Klenowski (2002). "Self-marking is an established technique for speeding up assessment of items which have a single correct answer or where answers can be drawn from a limited range of alternatives but it should not be confused with self-assessment" (*ibid:106*). When learners are trained to conduct self-assessment, they are usually honest and capable of assessing their own work and that of peers with accuracy when they have been conditioned to do so. Self-marking is just a managerial task that is usually done by the educator. The grade, no matter how the marking is to be done, is still ranking the learner and positioning them against others. In both activities, argues Brooks (2002) the learner is participating in their own reward or punishment.

According to Black and Wiliam (1998a and 1998b), reflection on learning encourages critical thinking and allows the learner to make judgments. This is not the same as self-marking and self-assessment. Self-assessment and marking involves placing the educator's criteria and judgments onto the learner's work. Even when a peer evaluates the work, the criteria remains that of the educator and not that of the learner (Frazier and Paulson, 1992). Therefore, Black and Wiliam believe that reflection is different to self-assessment.

Studies (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, Johnson, 1998, and Spady, 1994) have shown that learners who are encouraged and given constructive feedback in educator assessment will

ultimately do well if they are asked to complete objective tests. Learners, who are given access to their own learning, will know why they didn't finish a task completely, or what they did well, they will know the criteria in advance and will have seen examples of the different levels to gain an understanding of what is expected and what they must do in order to meet assessment criteria (Gipps, 1994, 1999). According to Klenowski (2004) learning should be done *with* learners, not *to* them, if they are to be able to look at how they are being positioned in society and, ultimately, if they are to be able to make their own decisions as to whether they should reproduce or confront the dominant ideology and not just so that they can conform and do well on assessment (Bergen, 1993, Conca et. al., 2004, and Shepard, 2000).

Scaffolding<sup>37</sup> may be extended to assessment suggest Gipps (1997:27) in Brooks (2002:14) "to move beyond static assessment of what is known to ... a more interactive model looking at learning potential". She further suggests that adults should only give aid when needed, allowing the learner to show competence when they can. The Black and Wiliam (1998a) study showed that learners benefit from feedback most when it is rapid and not delayed. According to Black and Wiliam (1998a), timing is everything when giving feedback; the longer the time between performance and feedback, the less effective the feedback is likely to be in correcting errors and enhancing future performance. Feedback based on their research should be used to enhance the learner's criticality and not as a discipline tool to get them to comply and raise scores for accountability. When the only reason feedback is given is to correct the wrong behaviour in application; then it is not allowing the learner to question why they need to do the assignment in the first place and how it pertains to them (Gipps, 1994, Hardy, 1995, and Shepard, 2000).

Black and Wiliam (1998a) also state that feedback should not only allow the educators to modify their teaching plans and adjust the curriculum to meet the learner's needs, but also should show the learners how to improve their performance as well as motivate them to want to do so. In this sort of argument for the provision of feedback, the product seems to take precedence over the producer. The learner's knowledge is not as important as having their performance rate increase. However, performance gains are important today because the shift has caused schools and educators to be just as accountable as the learners have been for hundreds of years (Broadfoot, 1979, 1995, 2001, Hebert, 1992, Lambert, 1997b).

Black and Wiliam (1998b) in the study discussed earlier in this chapter indicate that educators in the United States felt uninformed of the learning needs of their students

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<sup>37</sup> The idea that learning can be scaffolded by asking questions and giving examples was developed by Jerome Bruner.

because of the over emphasis on grading and collecting evidence and the important pedagogical consequences of relying too heavily on summative approaches in the classroom. Brooks (2002), Meyer (1992), O'Neil (1992), and Wiggins (1992) argue that western schools, and often educators themselves, are placing greater demands on the learners to provide evidence in order to gain performance ratings so that their own accountability is not questioned. They also affirm that an over emphasis of rote-recall in examinations is still dominant in western societies.

An example of the over emphasis on examination practices was evident on a morning radio show in South Africa when the Minister of Education explained the low scores on the Grade 12 school leaving examination in the Eastern Cape where fifty-one schools did not have one learner who passed the examination. This was accompanied by an outcry from parents and other stakeholders for those involved in education such as the educators and principal to be held accountable (Surtly interview on SABC 2, 2006). Some of the principals blamed the educators and the learners for not doing their part. The educators blamed the learners and non-active parents. The government sent in a task force of trainers and monitors to investigate why the learners did not perform up to expected standards and to decide who will be blamed. The examination itself was not brought into question at all. The schools that did not do well on the assessment were rural schools that had limited access to resources and most did not have adequate buildings to house the learners or basic utilities. From a critical perspective, the school population has been treated unfairly and dominated for generations, yet is expected to rise above their daily struggle to meet basic needs to perform well on assessments that have never brought about empowerment and liberation into the dominant class in any case (Broadfoot and Gipps, 1996, and Conca *et al.*, 2004).

While it might appear that making the learner a part of the learning process provides them with control, the reality of that control needs to be questioned. It may sound admirable to want the learner to be a part of their learning process and have control, but do they really have control when they are told what they will learn, when they will learn, and how they will be assessed on what someone in authority deems important? How, then, is the learner a part of their own learning? Learners are a part of the record keeping, evidence production and self discipline characteristic of domination (Foucault, 1979, and Ball, 2004).

Ideally, formative assessment is not just the employment of techniques that benefit learning, but rather a negotiation between the educator and the learner. Lockett and Sutherland (2000:103) argue that, since the purpose of assessment often remains unclear and embedded, there is a risk that the different purposes, (i.e. summative and formative) become

confused and conflated. As a result, assessment often falls short of playing a truly educational role.

#### **2.4.8 Constraints in Assessment Practice**

Educators are often viewed as not having the training or decoding skills to interpret portfolio assessment and therefore increased monitoring systems are put in place to evaluate their compliance (Davis, 1998b, Foucault, 1979, Jang and Ryan, 2003, Lambert, 1997b, and Torrence, 1995a, 1995b). Moreover, external tests and pressure for learners to produce high examination scores can influence educators to teach to the test. If examinations are the presumed indicator for success, then they will become the driving force in the classroom (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b, and Harlen, 2007). Therefore, examinations tend to dictate what pupils are taught, narrowing teaching and learning to what it is possible to assess - if test results are the sole or even partial arbiter of the individual's future educational choices then the stakes are raised further. Thus, the "more important the consequence of the test results, the higher the stakes and the more powerful the influence on what is taught" (Brooks, 2002:17).

A study conducted in South Africa by Johnson (1998) set out to ascertain the extent to which educators could construct profiles of literacy achievements of their learners whilst working in a learning framework. The study also wanted to know if the demands for performance-based assessment techniques created problems for the educators in implementation and if educators could develop a portfolio of evidence on which to base their judgment of the learner's literacy achievements and provide a record of this achievement. The case study trained educators to use formative assessment methods in the classroom. The findings concluded that the educators were able to apply the framework at some level and use a meta-language to describe the learners. However, the educators did not adjust their teaching practice and fell into a traditional stance. The collection of evidence was seen as daunting to the educators and they were unsure of the type and amount of evidence wanted, therefore, they kept everything that they thought could be construed as evidence. The lack of resources available in most schools caused a problem in the range of evidence that could be gathered. The educators also thought that the framework that they were working under took up a great deal of time and had problems with time management. None of the educators in the study was able to keep a profile on all of the learners; most kept records on a few learners and did not reflect and provide feedback consistently. The study concluded that educator would need a great deal of training in re-orienting the classroom environment and teaching style to accommodate the framework.

Implementing performance assessment methods in education is costly and can perpetuate marginalization in society if resources and training are not equally established across the board (Jang and Ryan, 2003). Hardy<sup>38</sup> (1995:121-134) categorised the cost of performance assessment into three sections: development costs, administration costs, and scoring costs. He suggests that development costs are often disguised or difficult to determine because current staff are often used to implement training and develop curriculum.

If equipment and supplies are needed for a learner to complete a task, then that cost must be factored into the budget (Shardelman, 1998). The learner cannot conduct a performance assessment if they can not perform the task in a real-world situation or simulation (Manno, 1994). Most performance assessment tasks require some level of analysis and interpretation by human readers therefore causing for higher costs (Devlin, 2000). In South Africa the cost is not limited to the government and schools, but also to the learners (Jansen, 1998).

Portfolios required for each subject can become a financial burden on the learner and family who may be struggling just to pay school fees and buy uniforms.

Calfee and Perfumo (1996:42) completed research with educators and their experiences with portfolios and found that there was a huge gap between the “general rhetoric and actual practice”. They found that the educators paid little attention to external standards and did not produce evidence that learners understood why they had completed the work. There was an indication that the feedback was not being given in an appropriate manner to lead to feed-forward being produced from the learners and educators. The study concluded that the future of portfolios hung in the balance of becoming too standardised and not meeting its full potential in reflecting information to the learners and educators that would develop deeper understandings and learning. The need for staff development in relation to assessment is therefore critical. The costs of assessment can therefore be broken down into two subcategories: administering tasks to learners and staff development (Kirst and Mazzeo, 1996). Of equal significance in South Africa, however, is the capacity to develop capacity given the huge development needs of educators.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

As this chapter has attempted to show, shifts in assessment policy have occurred because of developments at a global level have perpetuated the ideology of selection which can be traced back through history. The need for economic growth has placed a supply and

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<sup>38</sup> Hardy had devised a table that outlines the cost of tasks in subject areas in several states in the USA. He estimated that the cost in 1995 to train one educator to administer four tasks was \$150.00.

demand trend into motion. Decisions about assessment measures, mainly those concerning high stakes testing of different kinds are often based as much on political appeal as they are on limiting access to particular professions. The universities that were once tied to professions are now being influenced by government policy and reform (Broadfoot and Black, 2004, and Darling-Hammond, 1989). State educational systems are also controlled by what the government deems to be the right curriculum and assessment to provide to learners, and prepare them for a rapidly growing global market (Brooks, 2002, and Jang and Ryan, 2003). The promise that bureaucratic accountability mechanisms make is that violators of the rules will be apprehended, and consequences will be administered for non-compliance (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

In the bureaucratic assumption educators only need to be able to follow the rules and implement the curriculum handed down to them from the hierarchy. Their superiors will inspect the educator's work to make sure that they are in compliance (Foucault, 1979). Accountability is achieved by moderation and reporting systems to ensure that the rules and procedures are being followed to the letter (Broadfoot and Black, 2004, Darling-Hammond, 1989, Jang and Ryan, 2003, Jansen, 1998, and King and Van Den Berg, 1992).

Schools are being held accountable by bureaucrats, parents and the general public for examination scores that they often have little or no control over (Brooks, 2002). The assessment given to the learner is designed, administered and graded or scored by those who operate in the discourse of schooling (Gee, 2004). The learners, especially those from impoverished areas, do not have access to this discourse and are given very little choice in whether they take the assessment laid before them or not. Gee (2004) states that the middle-class learners will have access to academic discourses before they even step foot in schools as discussed in the beginning of this chapter.

In the United States many policy makers equate accountability with something like the monitoring of learners' test scores, pass rates in classrooms, schools and districts (Jang and Ryan, 2003). Some policy makers believe that accountability can be enacted by prescribing management procedures, test and curriculum (Broadfoot and Black, 2004). These approaches to accountability unfortunately leave the learner, educator and parents out of the educational loop (Brooks, 2002, and Darling-Hammond, 1988, 1989). If the outcomes are not satisfactory, the final assumption is that the prescriptions are not yet sufficiently detailed or the process of implementation is not efficiently exact (Broadfoot, 2001). Thus, "the solutions to educational problems always lie in more precise specification of educational management processes" (Darling-Hammond, 1989:63).

The Committee for Economic Development in the United States (2000) conducted a study on using assessment and accountability to increase student learning. The study argues that Americans are in support of testing and that “[w]ithout standards that articulate expectations for learners and measures of their performance on the standards, we have no way of gauging the success or failure of our educational system” (*ibid:2*). The study then goes on to note that schools need to be in compliance and organised to focus on this mission and adds that tests serve a vital role to measure the outcome that education has on academic achievement since they provide the necessary evidence and record of how the school is managed and the daily interaction between the learner and the educator - “where the real-work of learning occurs”. (*ibid:2*).

The study also notes that testing can help improve teaching and learning and can provide a means for monitoring the educational system as a whole. We must keep in mind that this study was conducted by an organisation that has 250 business leaders and educators amongst its members. The study was conducted to evaluate the impact that testing has on learning and accountability in education and its conclusions support what might be termed a policed educational system. As already noted, Foucault (1979) argues that for domination to be successful, those being dominated must be policed in such a way that it becomes natural to those who are being dominated. The new focus or fabrication is the need to compete in a global market. To be competitive and be successful as a country, then the people who live in that society must strive for excellence or they will be left behind. This ideology states Popkewitz (1984) is socialising the individual into blaming themselves for the short comings of their country and not the political system. Any attempt to change the form and purpose of classroom assessment to make it fundamentally a part of the learning process must acknowledge the power of these embedded hidden beliefs (Vulliamy, Kimonen, and Webb 1997, and Shepard, 2000).

Another study completed in Malaysia in the mid 1970s showed that science educators wanted their learners to be active in their learning (Little and Wolf, 1996). The overall objective was to develop attitudes toward the exploration of the science in real-world situations. However, what was revealed in class teaching and final assessment practices was that rote-recall predominated and very few real-world experiments were completed in class. The perceived need for a good “pass rate on examinations took precedence over the curriculum objectives” (Little and Wolf, 1996:17). This study provides yet more evidence that educators will teach to whatever assessment practice is deemed by bureaucrats as important. Even when educators are keen to be learner centred, they will fall back into traditional patterns to provide the evidence that stakeholders want for selection. Therefore,

assessment of learners in schools is often interpreted as being a technical matter. It is seen by pupils, educators and parents as an inevitable part of education process which is usually quantifiable (Brooks, 2002, Carrim, 2003, Conca et al., 2004, Gultig, 2003, Harlen, 2007, Lambert, 1997b, and Torrance and Pryor, 1998).

As Darling-Hammond (1988), McNeil (2000), and others have pointed out, external accountability testing leads to the de-skilling and de-professionalization of educators (see Chapter Six). “High-stakes accountability teaches learners that effort in school should be in response to externally administered rewards and punishment rather than the excitement of ideas” (Shepard, 2000:9).

In South Africa, the argument has been advanced (Mattson and Harley, 2003:286) that the professionalism of educators is tied to what actually happens in the classroom since their thinking “is rooted in experience rather than theory and research”. For many educators, policy does not just represent a change in pedagogy, but a change in their beliefs and values. This causes a tension between implementing the policy and community commitment. This same tension exists when educators are given training to become reflective practitioners. The framework that is set for the educators to work within, often clashes with their beliefs and values. It is within this framework that educators play along and blend in with the dominant discourse, an act which has been called a “strategy of mimicry” (*ibid*:297).

In this way, policy falls into the trap of social meliorism, where commitment to vision of what should be clouds the ability to consider what is, so that the “good intentions of social reconstructionism have more influence on the policy agenda than social and school realities” (Mattson and Harley, 2003:285). According to Kgobe (2001), the lack of training provided to South African educators is perpetuating what Mattson and Harley term mimicry in education. Kgobe also states that any deviation in the policy message or resistance to it is “seen as irrational and a barrier to successful implementation... and the difficulty a reform encounters is dependent upon the extent of departure from values and procedures of an existing order” (*ibid*:6).

Kgobe also notes that South African educators have low morale and have a lack of trust due to the lack of training, the fact that many have been relocated to different schools and to the fact that many schools are under resourced. In addition, there are problems within the education system itself. The interpretation of policy documents between local and national bureaucrats has also added to the confusion of educational policy. If the bureaucrats themselves interpret policy documents differently, then it stands to reason that the educators will have difficulty in implementing educational policy. It is to an exploration of the

implementation of portfolio assessment against the background sketched in this chapter that this thesis now turns.

# Chapter 3

## Research Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted for the research reported on this thesis. In Chapter Two I conduct a historical overview of assessment and its evolution in education from 206 BC to the present, to set the stage for the data-based chapters; Chapters Four and Five. As already indicated, this thesis uses discourse analysis to explore the introduction of portfolio assessment in three South African schools. In Chapter Four the document entitled *Curriculum Guide Directive* is carefully analysed to identify discourses constructing portfolio assessment. The next chapter, Chapter Five, reports on the analysis of interviews conducted with educators from three Eastern Cape schools in order to identify discourses constructing portfolio practice in the schools and to explore any differences in the way portfolio assessment is constructed by the educators when compared to the construction in the *Curriculum Guide Directive*.

My understanding of what is considered key and valid is reflected in each step taken in this journey. This chapter on the research methodology serves to make my judgments behind the thesis choices transparent and to discuss how I have positioned myself within the research. I begin this chapter by positioning myself in the critical realist position. Next, I move on to specific processes of the data collection and the analysis used in Chapters Four and Five.

### 3.2 The Ontological Orientation of the Study

The ontological assumptions informing this study are derived from Roy Bhaskar's (1978) critical realism. Bhaskar (1978) argues that there exists a reality independent of our own.<sup>39</sup> This reality and our experience of this reality operate in different domains: the transitive<sup>40</sup> which is epistemological and the intransitive<sup>41</sup> which is ontological. Bhaskar notes that reality exists on three layers which he calls the empirical, actual, and the real. The empirical (transitive) is the world of the senses and experiences. As human beings we can only access reality through this layer of sensory experience. At the level of the empirical,

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<sup>39</sup> Critical realism is a "philosophical view of science and/or theology which asserts that our knowledge of the world refers to the way things really are, but in a partial fashion which will necessarily be revised as that knowledge develops" (Southgate, 2004:42).

<sup>40</sup> Our perception of reality

<sup>41</sup> Actual underlying structures of reality

therefore, is a constructed world which is fallible and relative in that what we experience depends on who we have become. The layer of the actual consists of events in the world. My experience of an event at the level of empirical might differ from another who is experiencing the same event. We account for and describe that event differently based on our constructed world. The last layer in his theory is the real (intransitive). This layer encompasses the structures and mechanisms that come together in ways to make the other two layers emerge. A discourse is a mechanism which might come together with other structures to produce events at the actual level and the experiences at the level of the empirical. In critical realism research, one tries to identify structures and mechanisms at the level of the real. Most importantly, those structures and mechanisms are not understood to be causal-rather they are tendential. The existence of structures and mechanisms does not mean that certain kinds of events and certain kinds of experiences of those events will be produced. Structures and mechanisms can be dormant or they can be active and they act together as emergent properties. Critical realist research attempts to identify the structures and mechanisms in operation at any given time and to understand the way they work to produce events and experiences.

For a critical realist, then, key to research is the identification of the structures and mechanisms which are perceived to underlie events and experiences (Bhaskar, 1978, 1993, and Collier, 1994). Critical realists such as Bhaskar (1978), Dobson (2002) Mannion (2002), Sayer (2000), and Versteegen, (2004) agree that our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning and cannot be understood independently from the social actors involved.

Critical realist theory acknowledges that social phenomena are inherently meaningful and that meaning is not only externally descriptive of them, but also representative of them. Critical realists seek to make substantial connections among phenomena rather than formal associations or regularities. "What *must* be the case instead of what *can* be the case" (Sayer, 2000:27). In the context of the research reported on in this thesis, uncovering the discourses at play is important in understanding what is happening in the social domain.

Critical realists also recognise meaning has to be understood and cannot be measured or counted as in positive research. According to Fairclough (1992:185 cited in Sayer, 2000:36), "the relationship of words to meaning is many to one rather than one to one...words typically have various meanings, and meanings are typically worded in various ways". Researchers attempting to understand the relationships of words to meanings (i.e. discourse analysts) therefore need a framework of analysis that is complimentary to finding that which is not immediately transparent. Words take on meaning based on the wording and contexts in which communication occurs and implicated in these meanings are values and beliefs.

Meaning is thus inherently ideological and analysis is needed to explore meaning at this level.

Sayer (2000) suggests that meaning does not really exist until the individual communicates the intent. "Language is not about bits of matter or whatever but about the sense the world makes to us" (Sayer, 2000:38). Critical realism supports interpretation and bringing to the "forefront that material circumstances and referents are relevant to the level of meaning" (Sayer, 2000:2). Significantly, however, critical realism "does not offer much on how to achieve [this analysis]" (*ibid*:2). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis provided the tool that Kowalczyk, Sayer, and New (2000) note is missing from Bhaskar's theory.

Critical discourse analysis compliments critical realism by providing major insights into the role of social life, but we must not forget that text are "social-structuring and socially-structured" (Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer, 2002). Researchers need to explore not only how texts generate meaning, but also how meaning itself is constrained in society (*ibid*:3). There is a dialectical relationship between language, texts, social relationships, and practical context that must not be overlooked by the researcher. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis<sup>42</sup> allows the researcher to explore the relationship between these elements with a lens which is ultimately concerned with social justice.

### **3.3 The Research Process**

My main data source for the research reported upon in this thesis was the *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD) and interviews with educators in three Eastern Cape schools. I analysed the transcripts from the interviews and the text in order to identify emerging discourses. I used Nvivo as a data management tool for the analysis. In the remainder of this chapter I will describe the methods used in the research process in an attempt to make the choices made in the research transparent.

#### **3.3.1 Data Collection: *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD)**

A copy of the *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD) is included in the *Curriculum 2005* (C2005) books given to all educators in the country and can be viewed in Appendix A. The CDG is a supplemental book which is included as a helpful guide to the collection of evidence in portfolio assessment. Because I am not South African, I conducted research on the history of education within South Africa so that I could gain insight into the three educational

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<sup>42</sup> . "Critical discourse analysis refers to the use of an ensemble of techniques for the study of textual practices and language use as social and cultural practices"(Fairclough, 2003:42). Fairclough's methods theoretical origins are within Western Marxism and Foucaultian's view of analysing text (Gough, 2001:2)

systems that existed before. In addition, understanding the urgency that was present in the creation of C2005 and the accompanying CGD was important background information to acquire before analysis. I relied on Jank's interpretation of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis heavily when analysing the text (Janks, 1997). Her interpretation gave a systematic format for uncovering the discourses within the document. This will be discussed in Section 3.3.3 below.

### **3.3.2 Data Collection: Educator Interviews**

I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews, which allowed flexibility within the interview for both the researcher and the interviewee. The interviews took place in three co-educational schools in the Eastern Cape: a private school that uses English as the medium of instruction, labelled as school **A**, a state school that uses both Afrikaans and English as media of instruction labelled as school **B**, and another state school which, in practice, uses both isiXhosa and English in the delivery of instruction with isiXhosa being the primary language of instruction labelled as school **C**. I have tried to reflect on the discourses as they emerged as honestly as possible and took into consideration how they compared to the discourses of the CGD.

I conducted interviews with twenty-one educators. Initially there were ten interviews per school scheduled, but nine of the educators declined interviews. The interviews were completed after the history and critical discourse analysis had been completed on the CGD. This method allowed me to gather insights into the interviewees' understandings of what constitutes a portfolio assessment and how it is constructed and managed within the classroom (Cohen and Manion, 1994, Fontana and Fray, 2000). I recorded the data and had it transcribed by a South African who spoke all three languages. The transcripts were written in a dialogue format and were entered into the Nvivo data base for analysis (see Appendices B and C).

#### **School A Context**

School A is an upmarket private, co-educational school located in the Grahamstown, a small town in the Eastern Cape renowned for its university, Rhodes University, and prestigious schools. In School A, the daily instruction is given in English only. The school has an international student body from Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East with class sizes of fourteen to seventeen. The school is known for its music school and its progressive approach to education. Teachers must have a minimum of a degree plus a one-year teaching qualification. However, most of the educators have a Masters or Honours degree. There are seventeen teachers in the junior school, five in the music school and forty five in

the senior phase. The teachers are well resourced and have ongoing training in assessment practices. Fourteen of the teachers have completed a specialist qualification in assessment at Rhodes University.

The eight educators that participated from School A had a range of teaching experience from three to twenty nine years. Four of the educators had fewer than ten years experience, one had fourteen years, and three had over twenty years of experience. The educators' portfolio training was irregular and varied from training in portfolio implementation and construction which formed part in the specialist qualification in assessment to no training at all. Five out of the eight educators interviewed had had some form of training from outside the school, however.

The selection of the interviewees was made by the Head of Department and was emailed to me with contact details for each educator. Most of the interviews were conducted with Grade 12 educators. In Grade 12, the third term of the academic year (the time when interviews were conducted) is very busy but educators were nonetheless willing to take the time from their busy schedule to allow an interview. When I arrived for the interviews I was welcomed with a cup of tea in the lobby. The lobby was very well decorated with plush chairs and a sofa. A painting, by the son of one of the interviewees, hung on the wall. Educational magazines were scattered on the coffee table for viewing by anyone waiting for appointments. I was not permitted to meet the educators in their classrooms; I had to wait for them to arrive in the lobby to escort me to where they would like to be interviewed.

The interviews were mostly conducted in classrooms, however although one educator chose to be interviewed in the library because her room was across campus and it was raining. The consensus from the educators was that they had a lot to say about the use of the portfolio as an assessment tool in Grade 12 and the interview was seen as a means of expressing their perception of the portfolio from the ground up. Several of the educators offered me completed portfolios by the learners from the 2004 school year. The educator in the library brought a portfolio with her to use for elaboration as we conducted the interview.

### **School B Context**

School B is a diverse community with a mix of poor and affluent students located in Port Alfred, a growing town on the Eastern Cape coastline about eighty kilometres away from Grahamstown. The student body is from a black township located on the outskirts of Port Alfred and a more affluent, mostly white, community. There are forty teachers on the staff

and class sizes range from seventeen to twenty seven. The school is a former Model C<sup>43</sup> school that supplements its budget by renting out campsites in the summer months to tourists. The extra monies allow the school to maintain good educator to learner ratios. The language of instruction is mixed between English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa. Teachers are well-trained with a degree and teaching certification, and attend all government training sessions. The teachers, however, expressed the opinion that they are under-resourced in implementing the curriculum.

The four educators that participated in the research from School B have teaching experience that ranges from six months to twenty six years. Three out of the four have fewer than ten years of experience. Two out of the four teachers received training in assessment from the government. One received training from the Independent Examining Board<sup>44</sup> (IEB) and the other stated that she had not been teaching long enough to receive training and that her colleagues were helping her cope with the implementation of portfolio assessment and the construction of portfolios.

In order to conduct my research, I called the headmaster at the school and requested permission to present an informal presentation on my research topic. He suggested that I should come to a regular staff meeting, present my topic and ask for volunteers to assist in the project. I did this and although ten volunteers agreed to be interviewed on the day of my visit, only four kept to their commitment. Those who dropped out felt that they could not spare the time from assisting students in exam preparation and portfolio work.

The four teachers that did participate wanted the interviews to take place in the tea room. I had wanted the interviews to take place in the classrooms so that I could see the portfolios, but the educators felt that the tea room was a more pleasant space than the classrooms and insisted that the interviews should be conducted there.

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<sup>43</sup> Apartheid city model of schools defined by (Davies, 1981) restructured and known since 1994 as ex-Model C.

<sup>44</sup> At the time the research was conducted, the school leaving examination, popularly known as the "matric" was under the control of nine provincial examining boards (one from each of the provinces comprising the South African state). The Independent Examining Board, as its name suggests, was a tenth board responsible for examinations for the independent school sector.

## School C Context

School C is an impoverished co-educational former DET<sup>45</sup> school located in the township of Joza, in Grahamstown East. Learners at the school are predominantly black and working class. Class sizes range from forty to forty five and are an indication of the poorly resourced nature of the school. Theft of school property (including fittings and furniture) is common and needs to be understood within the context of the chronic poverty of the area in which the school is located. All of the thirty eight teachers at the school have some form of a teaching diploma (in contrast to teachers at the other two schools who were graduates) although many were involved in upgrading their qualifications as a result of their enrolment in Rhodes University's Advanced Certification in Education (A.C.E.) programmes. According to the teachers at the school, the chronic lack of resources affected their ability to implement the curriculum in significant ways.

The teaching experience for the eight educators that participated in the project ranged from two to twenty five years. Six of the educators had fewer than ten years experience and two of the educators had twenty or more years of experience in the classroom. Six of the educators claimed that they had not received any training in portfolio implementation and construction within the classroom. One of the educators who had received training had also acted as a moderator, however.

I called the school many times and could not get a response from the headmaster on whether I could conduct the interviews at the school or not. I therefore decided to make contact with one of the assistant head teachers at the school to try to get permission. I was granted permission to come into the school, but was told that teachers would be reluctant to talk to me because they were tired of outsiders coming to observe them. I decided that it would be best if I spent two weeks coming to the school and spending time with the educators so that they could get to know me a little better before asking for an interview. As already noted, several of the educators were working on upgrading their qualifications at Rhodes and I would often see them on campus. I was able to build a relationship with some of the educators in this short period of time and, as a result, five educators volunteered to be interviewed.

When I arrived for the interviews the bell system at the school was not working and this resulted in learners and some educators not returning to class after break time. Most of the

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<sup>45</sup> In South Africa, the phrase 'former DET' denotes schools which were previously run by the Department of Education and Training, the body responsible for Bantu education. In contemporary terms, the term refers to poorly resourced schools mostly attended by black learners and staffed by black teachers.

students stayed outside waiting for the bell to ring, which it did three hours later. During that time, students went home, went looking for their teacher, or were escorted back to class by the educators. One educator stayed in the tea room the entire three hours. When I asked her if she was worried that students may be in her room waiting she replied, "If they all aren't there then why bother?" She was knitting a scarf and was able to finish it by the time I left that afternoon. Many of the Grade 12 female educators were in the kitchen upstairs preparing food for the upcoming dance. When I entered to look for the educators who had volunteered, I found that they were busy cooking. I asked if other teachers were covering their classes and they replied that the students stayed at home when they needed to get ready for an event such as the dance. Two of the volunteers agreed to reschedule interviews, but when I called to reschedule, having abandoned my first attempt to conduct interviews, they were unavailable. I then decided to go to the school and ask for volunteers at tea time. Over the next three weeks I was able to interview three educators using this approach.

In the time that I was attempting to secure interviews with more teachers at the school, I met an assistant head teacher in the Education Department at Rhodes University. The assistant head teacher enquired about the progress of my interviews. I replied that I needed at least two more. The next day when I arrived at the school, seven teachers were ready to allow me to interview them. The assistant head teacher then offered the use of her office for the interviews so that the tape would be free of background noise. I wanted the interviews to take place in the classroom, but I did not want to put demands on the interview space.

After I had interviewed the second teacher, the assistant head teacher entered the room and informed me that two of the educators were refusing to be interviewed even though she had instructed them to make themselves available. I then realised that, in her effort to help me, she was coercing the educators to be interviewed. I then spoke to the two educators who had already been interviewed on this visit but both assured me that they wanted to assist with the research and were happy to be interviewed. Both of them invited me to return the next day to follow up on the initial interviews as an indication of their willingness. I did return to the school and both educators were willing to engage with me in an interview. I therefore included their interview data in my sample.

All but the last two interviews were conducted in an empty room. When I asked if I could see some of the portfolios, I was told that they had been locked in a storage room following a break-in at the school during which some portfolios had been damaged. Three of the educators who were interviewed did agree to fetch examples of portfolios from the storage room however.

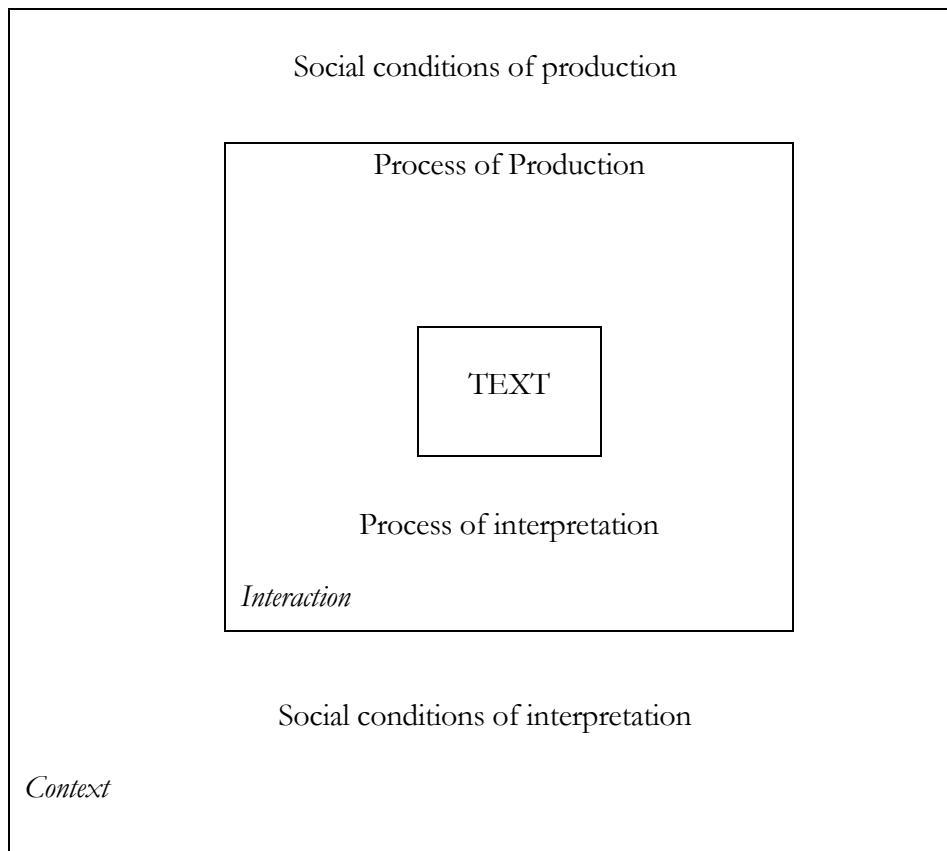
Alvesson and Sköldböck (2002), state that a field journal should be developed to record observations not captured in interviews such as modalities and to also capture the researcher's own understanding of the events as they unfold. Therefore, I also kept a reflective journal to record the journey during all phases of the research and reflected on my role as a researcher.

### **3.3.3 Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis**

Critical theorists argue that, through reflection, one gathers insights into the social world that would be otherwise missed. Critical realists would agree, but would add that one must do more than just reflect, one must compare and contrast the social world of the individuals, the organisations that the individuals are a part of and the researcher's place within the research taking place (Collier 1994, Dobson, 2002, Mannion, 2002, and Verstegen, 2004). In the context of the research reported upon in this thesis, therefore, this meant that I needed to take into account the contexts of the school and the South African educational system and my own views of education constructed as a result of my own social history as a white North American woman.

Patton (1990:59) states that within qualitative inquiry there are not absolute characteristics, but rather "strategic ideals that provide a direction and a framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics". These characteristics state Lincoln and Guba (1985:39) are to be considered "inter connected" and "mutually reinforcing". Therefore the point of this study is to anticipate the future or to highlight a road map or guide, "[g]uides call our attention to aspects of the situation or place we might otherwise miss" (Eisner, 1991:59). Critical realists argue that the data must be examined from as many angles possible if claims of truth within a certain time and place are to be established (Collier 1994, Dobson, 2002, Mannion, 2002, and Verstegen, 2004). The framework of analysis developed by Fairclough (2001, 2003) and Fairclough and Wodak (1997) proved useful in this regard as it allows the researcher to take into account context and my own place in that context.

As Fairclough's (2001) model shows, a text is assumed to be the product of discursive practices and itself prompts further discursive practices related to the way it is distributed and interpreted. All texts are therefore embedded in a complex montage of social practices. In other words: "The meaning of a text derives not just from the words-on-the-page, but also from how those words are used in a particular social context" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2002:46).



**Figure 1 Fairclough's (2001) model of critical discourse analysis**

Fairclough's original three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice are interpreted by Janks (1997:333) to mean:

1. Text analysis (description)
2. Processing analysis (interpretation)
3. Social analysis (explanation)

According to Janks (1997:333), each layer requires a different type of analysis. The main aim of discourse analysis is to explore the links between language use and the social practice. Fairclough's model, argue Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), promotes the theory that texts can never be understood or analysed in isolation; the analysis must show a relationship between text and context. In my research, I therefore used discourse analysis in order to try to understand the processes of production of *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD). The analysis of discourses in the CGD drew on the critical social theory and assessment theory outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis. This analysis forms the basis of Chapter Four. I also used discourse analysis to look at the way in which the *Curriculum Guide Directive* was

interpreted by the educators (i.e. at the processes of interpretation) and how the meanings derived from this interpretation were reproduced in their social context – i.e. how their interpretations of the text related to the use of portfolios as assessment tools and how the social practices related to portfolio assessment reproduced their own discursive constructions of the portfolio. This analysis forms the basis of Chapter Five.

Janks (1997:333) argues that all social practices are tied to a specific historical context and this “produces social relations or variances”. As a result, “[a]nalysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power”. The use of Janks’ interpretation (1997) of Fairclough’s model allowed me to begin to identify the slippages between the document and the educators’ own understandings of the portfolio as an assessment tool. In many respects, therefore, the research reported on in this thesis, provided insights into the implementation of *policy* in relation to assessment.

Janks’ (1997:329) approach to discourse analysis requires the researcher to focus on the “signifiers that make up the text, the selections, their juxtaposition, their sequencing, and the layout”. It also requires the researcher understand the history of the object in order to identify present social associations (Janks, 1997 and 2005). Critical realists believe that the researcher must go beyond description to explain what is really happening.

### **3.4 Validity and Reliability**

Research is conducted in the social world where humans react not only to what affects them, but also to what is happening to others around them; therefore, a researcher cannot be entirely objective. To isolate or to “bracket” subjectivity, some theorists (see, for example, Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2002) suggest keeping a reflective journal to record one’s own thoughts during the research process. However, Bhaskar’s critical realism (1978) requires that the researcher’s subjectivity is acknowledged at the level of the empirical. This level of experience is the only way we can enter the process of coming to know and the socially constructed and, therefore, relative nature of experience is acknowledged. The aim of critical realist research, however, is to go below the level of experience in order to identify the structures and mechanisms which give rise to it. Critical realist research therefore allows the researcher to identify the structures and mechanisms from which her own subjective experiences emerge. The field journal captured my own experience at the level of the empirical and allowed me to understand that experience as well as that of other participants in the research. The validity and reliability of critical realist research ultimately rests in the extent to which rigour is applied in order to identify the structures and mechanisms at work in the research context. In the case of the research reported upon in this thesis where

discourse is identified as a mechanism at the level of the real, then the rigour of the discourse analysis is clearly crucial.

### **3.5 Ethics**

There are many ethical issues to be taken into serious consideration by the researcher. The researcher must be aware of having the responsibility to secure the actual permission of those involved in the study. As noted in Section 3.3.2, the interviewees who had not volunteered on their own accord were not used in this study. It is the responsibility of the researcher to not misuse any of the information discovered, and there should be a certain moral responsibility maintained towards the participants. The words of the interviewees are ultimately their own, therefore they had the right to change or to decline any information given in the interviews. At the end of the interviews, I played back the recording so that the interviewees had an opportunity to add, delete, or modify any of the information given. As a researcher, it is vital that confidentiality be upheld for those who are gracious enough to allow an invasion into their thoughts; therefore, each educator was given an assurance that their names will be kept confidential throughout the study and publication (see the following authors for further information on the ethical research process: Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Cohen and Manion, 1994, Fontana and Frey, 2000, Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Miles and Huberman, 1984, and Patton, 1990). Having discussed the research methodology, I now move on to the data analysis which is discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

## Chapter 4

### The Curriculum Guide Directive

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#### 4.1 Introduction

Historically, governments have used a variety of approaches to educational transformation, especially, after a radical power shift (Black, 1998, Black et al., 2004, Broadfoot and Gipps, 1996, Madaus and Kellaghan, 1993, and Moon, 1999). Kgobe (2001:5-7) outlines three approaches that have dominated policy and implementation: the bottom-up model, the bureaucratic process model, and the conflict and bargaining model. The bottom-up approach is seen as the “street level bureaucrats” model which places importance on the actors at the implementation level. This model tends to over-emphasise the local actors’ ability to drive policy implementation. The bureaucratic process model is driven by the state or government in the change process, in a “pre-specified direction” and policy and implementation are seen as “transmissions of a blueprint to the operating units” that is regulated from above (Kgobe, 2001:5). The bargaining and conflict model tries to marry the bottom-up and the bureaucratic model together in order to recognise local impulses to change while, at the same time, paying attention to the role of the legislative level. This can be “characterized by interdependence between the state and various interests groups” (*ibid*:6).

The models outlined above are overviews of those that have been dominant in education reform. In South African educational reform, however, the bureaucratic process model has been prevalent. In this model there are four key stages to the process. Firstly, policy initiation must take place in which there is an awareness of inadequacies of an existing system. This awareness in South Africa is explained in Chapter One and briefly discussed in the paragraphs below. Secondly, policy formulation must occur to redress the situation and form a legal decision to establish a new programme. South Africa has established a new framework and has looked at outcomes-based education, a process which I elucidate in Chapter Two.

Thirdly, implementation should occur to establish new structures with regulations translated into practice. Chapter Five examines how implementation is interpreted by educators when put into practice. Lastly, there is an evaluation of the implementation to determine the reaction to the new conditions. The last stage of the process gives justification to the research at hand and the reviews done by researchers such as Chisholm (2000, 2003) into policy implementation and practice.

Based on the bureaucratic model, policy intentions and their implementation are considered a matter of “technical ability” and a willingness of the “implementing units, together with adequate resources” to make the changes needed in education (Kgobe, 2001:6). Under this model the assumption is made that all will agree and follow protocol. “Any deviation or resistance to the policy message is seen as irrational and a barrier to successful implementation” (ibid:6). It is here that the construct of discourse comes into play as discourse serves as a vehicle to help legitimise the discipline being placed on the individual by and through institutions such as universities and schools as I discuss in Section 4.3 of this chapter. Thus, by Foucault’s account (1980:3) social institutions such as “schools and universities are comprised by and through discourses”. These discourses help mould the individual into compliance and are often done with heightened surveillance methods as explored within this chapter. Discourses make up a dense fabric of spoken, written and symbolic texts of institutional bureaucracies. Within these institutions human subjects are defined and constructed in generic categories such as learner or educator (*ibid*). These discourse constructions act as institutional “technologies of power” that are implemented and enforced by official authorisations and they act as “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1980:3). Therefore the individual internalises and then self disciplines their actions and practices based on these assumptions (Foucault, 1979), a process discussed in detail in Section 5.2 (Foucault, 1979).

Following the first democratic election, a new South African Government of National Unity was formed in 1994. As already noted in Chapter One of this thesis, given the role of education in apartheid, the need to reform the school system was clearly a priority for the new political order. The South African School Act (SASA) (ACT 84 of 1996) legally recognised two categories of schools; public schools and independent schools. School governing bodies (SGBs) at each public school were formed with a majority of members comprising elected parents, educators, the school principal and, in secondary schools, learners. The purpose of bringing together these stakeholders at the school level was to discuss and resolve educational issues and to develop an environment conducive to learning. In turn, this would decentralise the power in the South African schooling system and give it to the local communities. Christie and Potterton (1997 in Kgobe, 2001:5) have shown in their research that SGBs were slow to form and did not always show the ability to provide the leadership needed due to a lack of capacity and training.

As I discuss in Chapter One of this thesis, South Africa’s biggest challenge in educational reform was to address issues of global economic competitiveness and, given its history of apartheid, to create an educational system that treated all citizens equally. According to

Pretorius (2002:1) “apartheid education failed to invest in the development of a high level of human resources and entrepreneurial skills to drive the national economy and to compete in a global market”. Therefore, South Africa had a sense of urgency in relation to its need to shed the past and develop a single public educational system that would meet economic needs and provide educational opportunities for all citizens. Stakeholders wanted to ensure that educational frameworks would be developed and implemented in ways which would meet the need to produce skilled workers and to balance an unfair education system. “Therefore, it was not only the racially based department of education [under the apartheid government] which had to be changed, but the way people thought of learning” (Pretorius, 2002:1).

South Africa’s need to be competitive economically and develop knowledge to bring about economic growth has promoted government and business partnering in developing educational reform in the South African context. According to Furlong (1992:167), the main objective of “Social Reconstructionism” is political and revolves around the achievement of equality and justice in society at large. Social Reconstructionism promotes the belief that educators are the catalysts to facilitate this change. This idea has had support in educational policies abroad and in South Africa. The role of educators as catalysts of change necessitates educators coming to see themselves as “transformative intellectuals, transforming the consciousness of children and enabling them to develop critical thinking” and therefore recognising the injustices and inequalities within the world around them (Hill 1989 in Furlong, 1992:167). The assumption that educators will perceive themselves in this way requires the educators themselves to have been educated in certain ways. In South Africa, the majority of educators carry the burden of the historical disadvantage of their own education with the result that the assumption that they will subscribe to the ideology of Social Reconstructionism and will be willing and able to act in ways prescribed by the policy is itself problematic. In addition, South African schools vary in respect of the cultural differences and beliefs which underpin the communities they serve so “for many teachers, policy does not simply represent a new approach to pedagogy, it is also a profound challenge to their values and beliefs, and those of their community...” (Mattson and Harley, 2003:288).

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed as a structure intended to contribute to the need for coherence across the South African higher education system in the context of transformation and also to regulate the quality of education given to learners (Pretorius, 2002, Pretorius and Lemmer, 1998). The development of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the new school-based curriculum, developed as a result of the need to engage with

the NQF, and was seen by its originators as “the pedagogical route out of apartheid education” (Chisholm, 2003:3).

The *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD) was developed with the aim of increasing consistency in assessment practices throughout South Africa. Thus, portfolio assessment is deemed as a medium for change in educational philosophy as well as a change in curriculum and assessment practices.

## 4.2 The Discourse of Legitimacy

The CGD document is framed as a policy document that has set and subset sections that are foregrounded by bold headings, capitalisation, bulleting, outlining, numbering, and sub-numbering. This gives the document a legitimate style so that at first glance the reader can see that it is of importance and must be read carefully. Silverstone (1999 cited in Fairclough, 2003:30) states that mediation involves, “movement of meaning”, moving from one social practice to another, from one text to another. Mediation is an important aspect of power in society because it is the vehicle in which the process of discourses, themes and styles flow. Theme chains, or “genre chains” as Fairclough (2003:34) calls them, are important links that carry the text into action in social practices. “Genres are important in sustaining the institutional structure of contemporary society” (*ibid*:36). The layout of the document is indicative of a genre related to officialdom and serves to contribute to the passive positioning of the reader.

All texts according to Luke (1992) can be analysed in terms of their sequenced structures of propositions, the textual macro-structures and the order of these key claims. The result of text structures is that they tend to operate as large scale “grammars of actions and events chained together as expressions of cultural logic” (*ibid*:7). For that reason, all social action is shaped by social structures and language serves as a “medium for all kinds of enactments of power relations” (Sewell, 1992:21).

In addition, agency is formed by a specific range of cultural schemas and resources that are available in a person’s particular social environment. “The form that agency takes varies ... [thus] agency is culturally and historically determined” (*ibid*:21). Agency in the *Curriculum Guide Directive* is that of the government, which is viewed as one of authority over the educators and learners. The CGD for that reason is constructed as a document of importance and legitimacy that “should be” (a phrase taken directly from the CGD) followed.

An example of the dominant voice permeating the CGD can be seen in the repetitive use of the modal “should” which is used in six out of seven lines in the following extract and a total

of twenty two times in the full text. The use of the modal gives the text a tone of authority as exemplified in the following extract:

The Common Task for Assessment is a process and not an event and should therefore be administered over a period of time. The administration of the CTA would thus be infused into the routine schedule of the school. The CTA is designed to include a number of tasks. The following criteria should be used to evaluate each task:

The task should integrate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes

It should be grounded in real world context

It should assess a variety of outcomes

It should be structured such that learners could be helped to succeed

The tasks presented to the learner should be attainable or feasible

The tasks should allow for multiple solutions

The tasks should be clear

### **4.3 The Discourse of OBE as a Disguise for Old Ideologies**

Topicalisation, which can slant a reader's perception and influence what they perceive as important can be viewed in the text extract above. Words such as "integrate", "values", "attitudes", "tasks", "real world", "variety", "outcomes", "context", "grounded", "allow", and "clear" are indicative of an overall discourse of OBE. Also, in the extract are examples of the lexis of positivist<sup>46</sup> educational pedagogy such as "skills", "structured", "assess", and "solutions". As a result, even though the extract exemplifies the discourse of the new pedagogy being adopted, it is very much tied to the positivist discourse. Ball (2004) argues that the new language of OBE is used to disguise the positivist assessment practices that are so entrenched in educational pedagogy because of their construction as commonsense (see Gee, 2004, and Giroux, 1988). In the CGD, OBE is constructed, through discourse, as a new form of pedagogy which is inclusive of all. At the same time, however, the presence of the discourse of positivist assessment means that emphasis is placed on the examinations

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<sup>46</sup> Bloom's Taxonomy is a guide to developing educational objectives with lists of active verbs to be inserted and to focus the educator and learner on the skill being measured. Skinner's behaviourist theory suggests structured tasks that can measure skills and allow for repeating until mastery has been obtained (see Chapter Two).

and rankings which have long been associated with the exclusion of certain social groups (see Chapter Two and Chapter Five).

Another example of the positivist discourse can be seen from the excerpt from Section 3.2 of the CGD which appears below:

#### CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT (CASS)

Continuous Assessment (CASS) is a process of gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner on an on-going basis, against clearly defined criteria, using a variety of methods, tools, techniques and contexts. The CASS is school-based and consists of practical work, written tasks, tests, research and any other task peculiar to that learning area. The form of assessment used in schools should cover a full range of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values (SKAV) in the learning and teaching experience. The evidence of this assessment is collected into a portfolio.

Continuous assessment forms 75% of the total assessment of a learner and consists of various combinations of the above-mentioned forms of assessment. (Refer to Learning Area guidelines for the forms of assessment applicable to that learning area).

Gee (2004) agrees with Ball (2004) in noting that new terminology is often used as a disguise for old ideologies. From the perspective of discourse, power relations can either reproduce, challenge, or restructure through ideologies and can therefore make common sense assumptions of those controlling the discourse and how this affects the individual. In other words, the ideologies of the past can be put forth as new and empowering, but are effectively the old disguised as the new. The extract above exemplifies this.

Lexical cohesion is also used around terms which can be related to a positivist assessment discourse within the text. In contrast, there is also lexical cohesion of words related to an OBE discourse; these two then sit uneasily together. The lexical cohesion in the text above gives the connotation that “evidence collected” is to be constant and housed within the portfolio with terminology such as: “continuous”, “on-going”, “assessment”, “total assessment”, and “various combinations”. Another example of lexical cohesion is found in the use of words such as “methods”, “tools”, “practical work”, “tests”, “research”, “skills”, “valid”, “reliable”, “defined criteria”, “guidelines” and “task peculiar to that learning area” which are used to describe the process of collecting evidence that will be stored in the

portfolio and is the language of positivist assessment. Educators then are given mixed messages about what is deemed important in constructing a portfolio.

Educators are also directed to move away from positivist forms of assessment practices such as the examination, but are instructed in the CGD to collect and provide evidence of positivist forms of assessment within the portfolio. Hence, positivist assessment lexis is being presented alongside the terminology of OBE. Giroux (1988:2) states that “the language of assessment is behaviouristic and scientifically managed as a form of legitimacy and exclusion”. That language gives power to that which is deemed important in society and it can take on a new appearance, but the meaning and interpretation of that language remains the same (Ball, 2004). This is very apparent in the CGD due to the fact that two very different assessment theories are being presented along side each other in one document.

Other illustrations of OBE lexis in the text above include “is a process”, “full range”, “performance”, “techniques and context”, “attitudes and values”, “experience”, and “applicable”.

OBE terminology is relexicalised into examination language as described above, a phenomenon which introduces surveillance into a process which is constructed as being developmental in that the portfolio becomes a place to store evidence. This then increases the individual’s visibility.

#### **4.4 The Discourse of Visibility**

As noted in Section 4.2, an individual’s visibility is increased through surveillance. This surveillance is apparent through the use of tracking systems involving the use of numbers to identify learners and the requirement that educators should sign documents. The physical act of signing the document increases the pressure on the educator to make sure that they have complied with the tasks required of them and, thus, with the surveillance requirements. Foucault (1979:153) argues that power is increasingly being situated at individualised levels. The increased use of this sort of surveillance effectively normalises it as a practice and the individual is so immersed in record keeping and the authentication of choices that they have little time to question why the surveillance is happening at all. An example of what I have termed the discourse of visibility can be seen in the following extract from the CGD specifying information that needs to appear on/in learners’ portfolios:

## Front Cover

The front cover of the learner's portfolio should have the following information:

Name of learner

Learning Area

Phase/Grade

Year

School

LSEN Code/or Description

## Index

The index should have the following information:

Task number

Date

Form of assessment

Topic

Level obtained

Teacher's signature

Indicate the learner's special needs if any

Gee *et al.*, (1996) argue that New Capitalism (outlined in Chapter Two) has placed an increased emphasis on the need to be competitive in global markets. In contrast to Fordist models of production where the competitive edge was achieved through mass production, in New Capitalism being competitive requires ingenuity. In effect, this means that the individual becomes the product and this then increases the need for surveillance at individual levels. The following extract from the CGD demonstrates this:

#### 4.1 The Learner's Portfolio

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of learner's work such as projects, journals and assignments etc. These exhibit to the learner, parent, educators, and others, the progress, growth and achievements of the learner in relation to expected outcomes. A learner's portfolio is not always stored in file folders. It can also be boxes, binders, or any other means of collating learners work can also be used.

In the extract, the discourse of visibility is evident in the use of phrases such as "exhibit" and "expected outcome". These are phrases that are frequently used in relation to OBE (Killen, 2003) and the frequency of their use can mask their purpose in discourse. The term "purposeful collection" is glossed with the phrase "such as projects, journals and assignments etc." as the term itself is unlikely to be meaningful to educators. However, the effect of this is that the "expected outcome" takes on the connotation that collecting evidence in the form of tests and assignments is what is valued and is therefore the "purpose" of the portfolio. Once again, the use of OBE terminology masks positivist forms of assessment. As already noted, the requirement that educators should supervise the provision of evidence and the physical work of collecting and ordering this evidence by guiding the creation of sections, indices and cover sheets has the potential to immerse educators in administrative tasks and leave very little time for questioning the purpose of the documentation in the first place (Ball, 2004:143) or, indeed, for guiding the sort of learning promoted by OBE. In turn, increased visibility and accountability provides the means of promoting compliance. The visibility discourse therefore, helps to legitimise the dominant ideology in the text and uses the educational curriculum as its means of transmission (*ibid*).

#### 4.5 The Discourse of Quality

As already noted, when a discourse becomes dominant, it takes on the status of being commonsense a process which serves to rid the discourse of any ideological or political implications. Fairclough (2001:36) describes how discourses obtain the power to construct the "rules of the possible". Gramsci (1971) asserts that hegemony, the dominance of one social class over others, is achieved by the capacity of the socially dominant group to put forth their way of viewing the world as both correct and indisputable. The individual will discipline themselves into conformity so that they can be seen by those in authority as striving for the fabricated "outcome" (Ball, 2004, and Killen, 2003).

In South Africa, as in many other countries across the world, a discourse related to the need to assure and enhance quality has been introduced into the educational arena. In a paper

related to higher education, Harvey and Green (1993) problematise meanings attached to the term quality noting that, because the term is value-laden and elusive, “linking an activity to quality may serve to validate or justify it irrespective of what the notion of quality might mean” (*ibid*:10). In the CGD, no attempt is made to discuss possible meanings of the term before it is introduced in the phrase “quality indicators” in a “Teacher’s checklist”:

<b>PORTFOLIO: QUALITY INDICATORS TEACHER’S CHECKLIST</b>	Y/N
Is the context from which the evidence emerged clear?	
Have the task descriptions and applicable criteria regarding the collection been included?	
Is it evident which outcomes are demonstrated by the collection?	
Does the evidence show progress over time?	
Does the evidence communicate learner growth through a variety of processes?	
Does the evidence reveal any other information?	
Does the evidence reveal any new needs for the learner?	
Have the steps been formulated to address the needs of the learner?	
Should any of the items be replaced by something that shows further progress?	

The effect of this discourse, and the practice of requiring teachers to mark “Y/N” against a list of “quality indicators” associated with it, without offering any opportunity for the indicators or the meaning of the term to be questioned is clearly problematic particularly in a country where the majority of educators marking the checklist will have had few opportunities for critical engagement with the tasks they are asked to perform.

As Ball (2004:144) notes, quality control tasks are “structures of surveillance”. The requirement that educators should mark the checklist with “Y/N” involves the educators in this surveillance and disciplines them into compliance without offering any opportunities for opposition or engagement.

#### **4.6 The Discourse of Inclusivity**

Gramsci (1979) argues that, to retain power, the dominant class needs consent from subordinate groups through negotiation of political ideologies which incorporate the dominant group’s agenda. In the context of New Capitalism, Gee *et al.*, (1996) note that individuals and social groups need to strive for fabricated constructions of excellence if they are to flourish in competitive global societies. This sort of ideology, argues Popkewitz (1984), socialises the individual into placing the blame on themselves, rather than on the political system, if economic and social prosperity is not achieved. Therefore, any educational reform

must include “the discourse of inclusiveness; making all feel that they are a part of the whole” (Ball, 2004:32).

The extract from the CGD below exemplifies what I have chosen to term a discourse of inclusivity and which works to construct the illusion that everyone has equal power and responsibility but, in actuality, it is used to discipline the individual into reproducing the dominant ideology and making it common sense practice (Ball, 2004).

Contents of the Learner’s portfolio

Ongoing feedback (from educators, peers, self, parents) such as comments or notes that demonstrates constructive communication, the learning process and growth of the learner.

The extract above is an example of how inclusive nouns such as “educators”, “peers”, “self”, and “parents” are used to suggest that all have equal entrance into the process of constructing the portfolio. The phrase “constructive communication” on the surface seems inclusive and inviting. However, the fact that communication is specified as “constructive” means that other forms of communication (for example, communication which is negative towards the portfolio) are excluded. While feedback from various groups is invited, limitations are placed on that feedback.

In a context such as South Africa, the idea that *all* parents will be in a position to provide feedback on their children’s work is also problematic. While the discourse identified in this Section is ostensibly inclusive, in practice it is inclusive only of some social groups with the black working class parents who bore and continue to bear the legacy of apartheid excluded.

Another example of what I have termed the discourse of inclusivity can be seen in the following extract from the CGE:

These exhibit to the learner, parent, educators and others, the progress, growth and achievements of the learner in relation to expected outcomes.

Again the appearance of inclusivity can be seen in the extract above in the use of lexis such as “learner”, “parent”, “educators” with the final term “others” indicating even greater inclusivity given the connotation of including all the stakeholders. ,

In the extract above, it is also interesting to identify relexicalisation in the use of terms such as “progress” (for “increase in marks”), “growth” (for “increase in rank”) and “achievement”

(for measurable achievement). Once again the use of the OBE discourse to mask positivist assessment practices can be discerned.

#### **4.7 The Discourse of Management**

A discourse of management is also apparent in the CGD. This discourse constructs the educator as someone immersed in “selecting evidence”, completing “tables”, completing “checklists” and making decisions based on set “criteria” such that they have little time to reflect on their practice where such reflection would allow an element of criticality.

The discourse of management is also apparent in the following extract from the CGD. Interestingly, in this extract both learners and teachers are involved in managing the portfolio by selecting the evidence it needs to contain. Examination of the items in the checklist, however, shows that very little higher order thinking is required for the processes of selection since learners and teachers are merely required to check that they have included the items specified necessary for inclusion. Management, therefore, involves little evaluation (Bloom, 1954) but rather a training in compliance.

## Managing the Learner's Portfolio

Learners and teachers should both be involved in selecting evidence for a learner's portfolio. The learner may use the following table as a checklist to establish whether the portfolio has been kept according to the given criteria.

PORTFOLIO: ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE LEARNER'S CHECKLIST	Y/N
Is my name and grade indicated in the portfolio?	
Are the items in the portfolio dated?	
Is a main title page included?	
Does the portfolio have a broad index?	
Is the sequence of the collection evident and purposeful?	
Are the task descriptions and applicable criteria regarding the collection in the portfolio included?	
Are the applicable rating scales according to criteria included?	
Did I include a statement of personal goals?	
Should any of the items be replaced by something that shows Further progress?	

***In consultation with the teachers, learners should be allowed to redo tasks and resubmit their work for assessment by the teacher. The portfolio will then contain evidence of the latest attempt at a task.***

On the surface, moreover, the text seems to construct power as shared between learner and educator. This is seen in the use of phrases such as: "both be involved", "in consultation with the teachers, learners . . .", and "may use the following". However, the "checklist" also uses modals such as: "is", "are" does", did", "should" and "will" which gives the text a tone of authority over the learners and educators. The use of modals in this way is an indication of where the power does lie.

Once again, positivist assessment practice is topicalised in lexis such as: "evidence", "criteria", "work", "grade", and "items" which reinforce the dominance of this ideology.

Another example of the discourse of management can also be seen in the practices it requires. Learners need to note their name and grade, date their work, provide a "main title page", insert a "broad index", "sequence" evidence, include "task descriptions and applicable

criteria” and “applicable rating scales” and so on. All of these tasks are indicative of a level of management at a secretarial level and not at a level on which decisions are taken.

Another example of the construction of assessment practice as a low level management activity is seen in the extract below:

#### **FEATURES OF THE COMMON TASKS FOR ASSESSMENT (CTA)**

1. Twelve hours will be allocated for the CTA
2. The CTA will have two sections
3. Section A makes up 60% of the mark for the CTA and Section B makes up 40%
4. Section B is controlled and should not be more than two hours

As noted in Chapter Two, the use of percentages and numbers is associated with behaviourist theory and assessment practice. This type of testing is aimed at evaluating “one-skill-at-a-time” and instruction practices are also time bound. In this extract from the CGD, assessment tasks are constructed as having “features”. Scrutiny of these features shows how assessment tasks are “broken down” into elements reminiscent of behaviourist pedagogy and testing.

Much like positivists assessment practices, time is allocated: “twelve hours”, and “two hours” to indicate the boundaries of time placed on the learner that must not be exceeded. Thus, the discourse is directing the educator to “manage” assessment in controlled settings and on the learner to provide evidence of their learning in the same settings. This is very different to the authenticity discursively associated with OBE elsewhere (see Spady, 1994).

## **4.8 The Discourse of Globalisation**

As already noted, in *Discipline and Punishment* (Foucault, 1979:137) argues that disciplining the individual within an institution is not a new concept but was originally introduced through churches and armies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He goes on to explain how “the school building was to be a mechanism for training, it was a pedagogical machine”, set up to provide a skilled workforce and select the elite for positions of power. Thus, for Foucault, the key function of schools is to “train in order to enforce and select”. John Dewey (1961) considers even the arrangement of the furniture in the classroom as a form of disciplining which is designed to simulate a factory. Desks are placed in rows with the educator at the head to replicate an assembly line where workers would stand or sit in a

line to assemble a product, while the supervisor oversaw the line and provided quality control and directives as needed to meet the demand. The involvement of individuals in their own surveillance means that discipline becomes the specific technique of power that regards individuals as both “object and instrument of its exercise” (Foucault, 1979:138).

In New Capitalism, individual performance serves as a measure of productivity or output, as a display of quality, and as an object which is inspected and used for promotion.

Performance or, in this instance, the construction of the portfolio, represents the “worth quality or value of an individual” (Ball, 2004:143). To get full commitment from the individual Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996:32) state that the individual must take on the vision of the dominant class and internalise it as a “core value that induces, (socialises) everyone into such values”.

The focus on outcomes as incorporating knowledge, skills and values is associated with the ideology of New Capitalism and, thus, with globalisation. A discourse which constructs individuals as needing to take on the values and attitudes of dominant social groups is evident in the CGD. Section 3.1 of the CGD notes, for example, that:

The task should integrate knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

As already indicated in Chapter Two of this thesis, outcomes-based education has received great criticism in the United States and Great Britain as an educational system that is infringing individual cultural norms (see, for example, Ecclestone, 2004, Manno, 1994, and Sizer, 1992). Similar processes were also evident in the apartheid era in South Africa when education was used to instil the values, beliefs and attitudes that the regime deemed appropriate for each social group, (Prinsloo, 2005). Although outcomes-based approaches have been constructed as a radical departure to apartheid education, the risk is that they are equally manipulative of learners.

The context for this manipulation is, however, globalisation and the need for a workforce which is innovative and flexible to the extent that it can constantly reconfigure (reinvent) itself in order to produce new products. Analyses of new modes of production associated with globalisation identify the need for workers to form groups with workgroups then being subject to ongoing evaluation of their performance—processes which are reminiscent of the following extract from the CGD:

### 3.1 Section A

The activities in this section should lend themselves to both group assessment and the individual assessment

The individual assessment in this section could be in the form of a presentation

Traditional education focused on getting learners to remember and reproduce facts in tests. In its desire to contribute to global competitiveness, new educational pedagogy “pays less attention to what is in the learner’s heads, and more to the ways in which they can produce results, especially in collaboration with others” (Gee *et al.*, 1996:160). So, being able to engage in “group activities” is important to achieving this goal. The individual is then assessed not only on how well they perform alone, but will be assessed as a group.

However, as discussed earlier in this Chapter, the individual is being asked to produce evidence in traditional assessment practices such as tests and practicals, alongside being judged or ranked based on how well they work at achieving an outcome as a group. The hybridising of the old pedagogy within the new has the potential to cause confusion – as Chapter Five will show.

The language of globalisation or what Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996:31) term “fast capitalism<sup>47</sup>” can be also be seen in the next excerpt in phrases such as: “integrated knowledge”, “values and attitudes”, “grounded in real world context”, “variety of outcomes”, and “multiple solutions” all of which are associated with the practices of the new modes of production characteristic of globalisation.

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<sup>47</sup> Gee *et al.* (1996:49) states that new capitalism is promoting reform in schools and “... there is a growing alignment between the business world in the new capitalism and various non-business spheres of interest, including schools and academic [departments] promoting school reform efforts”. Because of this partnership, curriculum and assessment takes on the language of business.

### 3.1 Section B

The task should integrate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes

It should be grounded in real world context

It should have a variety of outcomes

The tasks presented to the learner should be attainable or feasible

The tasks should allow for multiple solutions

The tasks should be clear

Arguably, the discourse of globalisation identified in the CGD makes the transition from classroom to work place cost effective for businesses which have to train less and, most significantly, work less with individuals at an ideological level (Gee *et al.*, 1996).

As noted in Chapter One of this thesis, one of the key drivers of educational reform in South Africa following the shift to democracy related to the need for the country to become globally competitive following the years of exclusion associated with sanctions. Carnoy and Castells (2001) argue that globalisation works not across nations but globally. “[G]lobal markets, not national markets and moral values, determine the knowledge transmitted in the nation state’s educational system. The nation state increasingly uses its remaining control over knowledge production and transmission to develop a global ideology rooted in the singular value of productive skills” (*ibid*:11). As Castells (2001) also notes, however, within nations globalisation works in pockets rather than across all levels of society. In the context of this observation, the identification of a discourse of globalisation in the CGD is indicative of the tendency of the portfolio to exclude some groups from social status and economic gain in much the same way that traditional assessment practices did in the past. Arguably, therefore, educational reform is creating the same divide, but under the guise of inclusion.

## 4.9 Conclusion

Competing discourses within the *Curriculum Guide Directive* construct assessment in myriad ways. Traditional assessment pedagogy has a long historical record of being implicated in the reproduction of the social *status quo*. The existence of discourses related to traditional assessment is suggestive of a tension between the alleged purpose of the new curriculum and its political intent. In introducing educational reform, South Africa aimed to transform schooling and empower new generations to take control of their own learning. As Brindley

(2001:393) notes however, “these pressures have led to the widespread adoption of systems that use pre-specified descriptions of learning outcomes”. The analysis of discourses in this chapter shows that the result is a risk that the ideologies of the past may actually be perpetuated.

The dominant rationale of traditional curricula is rooted in concerns for effectiveness, behavioural objectives and the consumption of knowledge by those for whom such consumption is deemed necessary. According to Giroux (1988:6) “schools are structural sites designed to pass the dominant culture ideology and skills to be considered effective in a wider society onto the individual”. Such processes are also associated with discourses related to traditional assessment. However, the identification of discourses related to globalisation in the CGD alongside discourses of traditional assessment provide insights into new ways of positioning the individual as a worker serving the needs of New Capitalism.

Most constructivist theories declare that the learner must “construct and reconstruct their understanding of the world as they interact with it” (Svinicki, 2006:2). Schemata are modified and changed as learners interact with new knowledge and incorporate it into previous categories. As discussed in Chapter Two, active learning involves interaction between the educator and the learners in order to focus on learning while doing. This type of pedagogical approach is “driven by the belief that educators must provide opportunities for the learner to take risks and engage in complex analysis” (Svinicki, 2006:1). Given the analysis of discourses in this chapter, questions regarding the way such pedagogical approaches can be implemented given the need for educators to provide ongoing evidence of testing must arise. The focus on the ongoing provision of evidence is moreover, hardly conducive to the notion of shared power constructed in alternative progressive discourses.

The overall effect of the presence of such competing discourses in the CGD is, I would argue, to nullify the expressed aims of the new curriculum to bring about transformation. This claim will be explored further in Chapter Five as educators’ constructions of portfolio assessment are analysed.

## Chapter 5

### Educator Discourses

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#### 5.1 Introduction

Portfolio assessment is one of several assessments that can be administered in the classroom. As I have attempted to show in Chapter Four of this thesis, although South African policy documentation constructs portfolio assessment as holding a particularly empowering, liberating position, other discourses in the *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD) offer opposing positions.

As already noted in Chapters One and Two, portfolio assessment was introduced within the overall umbrella of the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE). Learners are expected to learn in very particular ways in the outcome-based paradigm, ways in which may be foreign both to the learners and educators as explained in Chapter Two. If the learners, their home, and school do not find value in the ability to demonstrate their learning in an alternative way, it is quite probable that educators will not teach and assess in the new paradigm. Similarly, if educators and society value examination scores and behaviourist testing methods, it is quite conceivable that these educators will have great difficulties taking on the new paradigms theory of learning and assessing in which the educator and the learner are considered co-partners in the learning process. These observations offer the significant implications for the analysis of educator discourses and the practices associated with them.

A number of discourses emerged in the interviews. However, a group of discourses relating to the Foucauldian notion of discipline (Foucault, 1979) were of interest to me given that the intent of the new curriculum to empower learners to become active in the learning process. The two discourses that were ubiquitous in the interviews were those relating to discipline and surveillance. I originally coded instances of these discourses separately. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, I now see the discipline discourse as predominant and as subsuming the surveillance discourse in what Fairclough (2001) terms an order of discourse. Interrogation of the discipline order of discourse then allows for an evaluation of the potential of portfolio assessment as a tool for facilitating a paradigm shift in educators, teaching, and assessment practices within the classroom.

Other discourses subsumed in this overall order of discourse are represented in the educators' interviews. They are identified as separate but, in practice, overlap and entwine with each other. The significance of the discipline order of discourse to a doctoral thesis on

how learning is constructed in portfolio assessment needs discussion. If we agree that assessment practices impact on learning and that practice is discursively constructed, an argument that I have built over the previous chapters, then we need to explore how educators take on or resist these ways of assessing within the classroom.

The construction of a portfolio is based on a diverse array of learning theory and assessment practices as indicated in Chapter Two. The way a portfolio is constructed not only gives insights in to how a learner learns, but it is a showcase of what the educator deems important as a form of assessment and their pedagogic underpinnings in curriculum implementation. That I find myself contemplating the linkage between portfolio construction as a form of discipline and the discourses of assessment implementation and learning would have been expected by many theorists in the field of teaching and learning. Black and Wiliam (1998a, 19998b), Broadfoot (1979, 1995), Klenowski (2002), and Shepard (2000), and many others have already studied the association between portfolio development and educational pedagogy. Shulman (1998, 1999) points out that the purposeful process of creating a portfolio helps educators articulate their teaching philosophy as well as develop their teaching techniques. However, while the portfolio itself may have been introduced partly as a result of what might be termed emancipatory discourses, educators' articulation of teaching philosophies through the practices used to construct the portfolio might be somewhat different.

Taking on an assessment theory, constructed by a range of discourses, is about taking on a teaching philosophy. Educators' teaching practices are discursively constructed, that is, educators will teach in ways constrained and defined by the discourses to which they subscribe (Giroux, 1988, Bourdieu, 1993). Therefore, assessment practices have the potential to become sites of struggle when new assessment practices are being implemented in classrooms.

Educators exercise their agency to take on these new practices or resist them. This chapter explores how educators construct portfolio assessment. As already noted, the intent of this study is to examine the implementation of portfolio construction as an assessment tool in outcomes-based education. The use of discourse analysis as a research methodology has been justified and described in Chapter Three and it has been argued that the discursive construction of portfolio assessment will determine practices related to it. This chapter provides a critical analysis of the discourses identified in the interview data.

## 5.2 The Order of Discourse of the Portfolio as a Tool for Discipline

The identification of this discourse is derived from Foucault (1979), who believes that assessment is one of the chief methods of discipline used in society. As already noted, he argues that the introduction of the examination was the beginning of a “pedagogy that functions as a science” (*ibid*:187), and that assessment disciplines the learner to reveal how their learning is progressing as they are disciplined into dominant ideologies at periodic intervals. In addition, he argues that, for one to be truly disciplined, they must become a part of their own domination. For the disciplining to be successful, the individual becomes both “objects and instrument of its exercise” (*ibid*:171). The educators’ and learners’ role then becomes a part of the processes of production necessary to maintain dominant social structures. Surveillance becomes an important part of disciplining because it allows the power to adjust and modify, and to get the social individual to conform.

In educational literature, the portfolio is described as a showcase of learning that is created for two distinct forms of assessment practices; formative and summative (see Broadfoot and Black, 2004, Brooks, 2002, Conca et al., 2004, Gultig, 2003, and Klenowski, 2004). As Chapter Two explains in more detail, formative and summative forms of assessment are different in their construction and execution.

Formative assessment is the practice whereby information on learners is gathered with the sole function of evaluating strengths and weaknesses so that future learning needs can be identified and organised well (Benze, 2004, Hein, 1991, and Klenowski, 2002). Formative assessment normally happens within the classroom, between the educator, learner and, sometimes, parents (Devlin, 2000, Morgan and Wyatt-Smith, 2000, and Schunk, 1996). This type of portfolio relies on the writing process<sup>48</sup> to assist in gathering a deeper understanding (White, 1995) of the ways in which learning is progressing. The use of the portfolio in formative assessment is constructed as having the potential to provide educators with a representation of the learner’s accomplishment across the varying activities and goals associated with the curriculum (Wiliam et al., 2004).

When used for summative assessment purposes, the portfolio will comprise a compilation of the learner’s work drawn from a larger collection and will include a reflection piece written by the learner to defend their selection (Klenowski, 2004, and McCullum *et al.*, 1995).

Summative assessment is thought to provide stakeholders with the evidence needed to support the educator’s judgements since it is educators who make decisions about the

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<sup>48</sup> The writing process is advocated in the new paradigm as rewriting over and over until the learner meets the criteria and has shown that they have met the outcome (Klenowski , 2002).

quality of the portfolio and, in outcomes-based education, classify students into those who have met the outcomes and those who have not. Summative assessment is the most common form of portfolio construction and ideally power is shared between the learner and the educator. It is a process involving the educator setting the boundaries and the learner producing and choosing the medium through which learning will be demonstrated (see Black, 1998a, 1998b, Brooks, 2002, Gipps, 1994, Gultig, Harlen, 2007, and Nitko, 1995). The criteria for assessment are designed holistically or analytically in the form of a rubric which is created by this co-facilitation between the learner and the educator (Black and Wiliam, 1998b, and Klenowski, 2002).

Sentences can convey power as I describe in Chapter Two and the discourses at play can give insights into societal practices and who is being socially controlled. According to Janks (1997:330), CDA involves the analysis of linguistic devices which reveal the patterns of discourse which “lie beneath the surface”. Fairclough (2003:38) calls these patterns “interdiscursive”. The interdiscursivity makes the link between the text and the elements of the social, between the internal and the external relationship of the text. Therefore, the analysis of the interviews uses Fairclough’s three dimensional framework method which I discuss in Chapter Three and which allows movement between analysis of spoken language, the processes of production and interpretation in which the context in which the portfolio is located as well as an analysis of the social constraining and defining processes of production and interpretation in the wider social context. The language analysis in this chapter is not linguistic in a narrow sense but is rather used as a means of identifying patterns that emerge “across linguistic functions, which confirm or contradict one another” (Janks, 1997:330). It is these patterns which allow the presence of discourse to be identified and confirmed.

In the interviews, an order of discourse, which I term the discourse of discipline emerged very clearly. The effects of this order of discourse were to produce the effects identified by Foucault and outlined at the beginning of this section. Within this overall order of discourse, a number of other discourses were subsumed. It is to the task of analysing these that this chapter will now turn with the aim of exploring the overall order of discourse in more depth.

### **5.3 The Discourse of Management**

The idea that learners should be involved in the management<sup>49</sup> of portfolios as they are constructed dominates the literature on portfolio assessment (see Black and Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b, and Klenowski, 2002, 2004). This management is constructed as an essential part of

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<sup>49</sup> Management in this context means ownership, not just secretarial overseeing.

learning underpinning the use of portfolios as an assessment tool. The act of managing is constructed as giving ownership to the learner and thereby empowering them to make choices as they select the pieces of work to include in the portfolio. This process of selection is then constructed as promoting the reflection needed to allow learning to proceed more effectively. The educator's role is then constructed as that of guide and moderator. The educators interviewed in this study, however, defined management in two distinctive ways; in relation to their own roles as record keepers and in relation to the need for learners to be managers at what I have termed a secretarial level.

In the interviews, overwhelmingly, the portfolio was seen to be too valuable to be given to the learners other than under the watchful eye of the educator, whose role was constructed in relation to the need to distribute portfolios for learners to work on them and to the need to lock them up for safekeeping after the lesson had finished.

The act of locking up the portfolio has a twofold implication in the disciplining process. First, it shows a lack of trust in the learner's ability to provide the educator with the documentation that they need for moderation. Secondly, the portfolio is seen as a means of teach the learners secretarial skills only. Darling-Hammond (1989:64) identifies what she terms "egg-crate classrooms" where the educator, acting as supervisor, has assumed the role of the keeper of the keys that locks and unlocks the cupboard that houses the portfolios. The educators decide when the learners will need the portfolios and unlock the cupboard and give the learners access to the portfolios as deemed necessary. A set of practices related to the construction of the educator's role as keeper of the keys and as manager of the portfolios emerged clearly in the interview data:

Barbara- Who keeps the portfolio?

Educator – B/S-A: For the most part we keep them in the classroom and I find they feel more secure.

The phrase, "for the most part" is followed by the inclusive pronoun "we" which indicates an understanding, on the part of this educator, that keeping the portfolios in the school is dominant (and therefore condoned) practice. The educator in the extract above uses authority with the pronoun "I" to indicate that she assumes that the exclusive "they" meaning learners, "feel more secure" with the portfolio being kept in the classroom. In this example at least, the discourse of management would appear to draw on an understanding of benevolence on the part of the educators and of the need for educators to exercise a pastoral role in relation to learners.

The following extract from the interview data also indicates a discourse of management and the existence of practices associated with it:

Educator – B/A-B: I keep them in my cupboard, but if you don't have big cupboards, you have a major problem.

The transitive verb, “keep” indicates the educator assuming ownership of the portfolios. The tone in this passage is one of authority, not just with regards to the portfolio and ownership, but in relation to the authority of the government and the expectation placed on educators to bring portfolios to moderation. A failure to comply with this authority will result in a “major problem” and the concern of the educator is reduced to one of having storage space – a concern which is distanced from the roles constructed for educators in the literature on portfolio assessment.

The following response to a question about managing<sup>50</sup> the portfolio in another interview extends the construction of what it means to have to manage a portfolio further:

Barbara- Who manages the portfolio?

Educator- C/A-C: I cannot go and I don't want to, because I don't think it's my, my problem, to file everybody's piece in their file, so it teaches them to be responsible for what they are doing, to keep it in good order at all times, to be at hand at all times, and I think there are, sort of, small things, but it teaches them the sort of skills of managing things.

In this extract, the presuppositional phrases and words such as “file”, “teaches”, “responsible”, “good order”, “be at hand”, “skills of managing”, imply that the educator defines the learners' need to manage their portfolios not as the empowering set of practices identified in the literature on assessment but, rather, as involving the teaching of secretarial level duties. Relexicalisation of the portfolio is again apparent in the text. An example of this is the renaming of the portfolio to “file” which indicates that the portfolio is viewed as a record and organizational tool. The “skills” that the educator above believes is taught in “managing” the portfolio by the learners, are those that would be used in an office and are also exemplified in the following extracts from other educator interviews:

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<sup>50</sup> Managing in this context is used as creating the portfolio.

Educator- R/A-A: Yes, they've each a file and everything they do for their portfolio work is put into their file.

Educator- B/C-B: They write an exam...so they file the relevant place...it can benefit them...gives them some sort of structure.

Exclusive pronouns are used by the educators to convey how the individual learner becomes a collective “they” or “them” in the texts. The text above is a declarative statement that indicates the passiveness and lack of agency given to the learners. The lack of acknowledgement of the learners identifies how the learners become faceless and powerless in the portfolio process. The exercise of this sort of power in relation to the learners is particularly evident in the following example:

Barbara: Who manages the portfolio?

Educator- G/A-A: The portfolio goes straight into my cupboard and we keep it there.

The transitive verb “goes” is suggesting ownership and therefore power over the management of the portfolio. The use of the pronoun “we” is not used inclusively to represent the partnership between the educator and the student, but in a way that excludes the learner other than to file papers and produce evidence. The act of “locking up” the portfolio is constructed as an appropriate form of management and learners are constructed beings willing participants in the practices associated with it.

Agency can remain at a subconscious level unless made visible by analysis. As the example above suggests, the educator can exercise power over the learners in the classroom. The extract above provides an indication of the overall order of discourse of discipline identified at the beginning of this section. Learners are absent from this text and are powerless in the context of the practices it promotes; portfolio construction is something which is done to learners, and is not the collaborative and empowering process constructed in the literature on portfolio assessment.

## **5.4 The Bureaucratic Discourse**

What I term the bureaucratic discourse is also part of the overall order of discourse of discipline. The bureaucratic discourse has been identified in education by Burton and Carlen (1979), Darling-Hammond (1989), and Radtke (2006). These authors draw on Foucault (1979:153) in arguing that this discourse perpetuates social inequalities as it assigns “paper pushing” and activities related to the recording of evidence to subordinate groups. By

engaging in such activity, the individual becomes a part of their own domination. The following extract from the educator interviews provides an interesting example of this process as the educator describes her involvement in bureaucratic activity even when she believes it is contrary to good teaching practice.

Barbara: What is the main function of the portfolio, in your opinion?

Educator- R/A –A: They do irritate me a bit because you know, you are doing that kind of work anyway, but the bureaucracy that is now entailed by putting it into a portfolio, therefore having to have everything documented and to have the whole bureaucratic marks subscribed to it etc. and the whole rather tenuous...Um, and getting the kids to organise their portfolios by certain dates and etc, and this all distracting you from spending time on what you should be doing, which is teaching the kids

Darling-Hammond (1989:63) states that “in the bureaucratic model<sup>51</sup> teachers are viewed as functionaries rather than well-trained highly skilled professionals”. In South Africa, for a number of reasons including a general lack of capacity, little time and money is spent on the provision of professional development for educators and on affording them the time and opportunity to collaborate and plan together. The assumption of the bureaucratic role evident in the extract above needs to be seen in this context. Manno, Finn, and Vanourek (2000), add that accountability has traditionally followed compliance approaches, where bureaucrats create rules and regulations that must be followed by micro-managers within the schools at all levels of administration. Therefore the bureaucratic model is a form of continuous and functional surveillance:

By means of such surveillance, disciplinary power became an integrated system... for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from the top to bottom and from bottom to top... the power in the hierarchalized surveillance of the discipline is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery...[T]he very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely discreet, for its functions permanently and largely act in silence (Darling-Hammond, 1989:64).

The need to be involved in bureaucratic activity also appears to impact on educators' time outside the classroom:

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<sup>51</sup> Foucault (1979) would call this a hierarchical model.

Barbara: What is involved in preparing for moderation?

Educator P/C: It's difficult. It takes a lot of time. You even have to work at home after school.

The tone in the extract above is one of being overwhelmed with having to provide portfolios at moderation. She uses modality phrases such as "it's difficult", "it takes a lot" "even have to", when speaking about taking portfolios to moderation. The educator refers to herself in the second person, "you" and uses the presuppositional phrase, "have to work at home and after school" which indicates the self disciplining discourse at work to make sure that she has the documentation needed for moderation.

It would appear, however, that the discourse of bureaucracy and the practices it gives rise to impacts on teachers' time in significant ways and the effect this has on their capacity to take up the role of empowered and empowering teachers constructed in other documents promoting portfolio assessment has to be questioned.

## 5.5 The Portfolio as a Collection of Evidence

Most of the educators' responses to the questions around the "job of the portfolio" revolved around tests, essays and quizzes, rather than about the process of learning and the portfolio as a form of assessment in itself. It would appear that positivist assessment practices are so entrenched in the educational system that other forms of assessment are stifled or hegemonised into them (see also, Gee, 2004 on this point). Thus, the common sense way of doing things is to test more and gather evidence in the portfolio as a record that the syllabus has been covered and the learner is prepared to take the final examination (Giroux, 1988). This is exemplified in the following extract:

Barbara: What is the job of the portfolio-what does it do?

Educator- B/B: A portfolio is where they keep their work and you keep a record of how the child is doing or is doing throughout the year and those sorts of things and you keep all his projects and all class work, test and things, in a whole little, for each child. The job of the portfolio in grade Twelve, ja, is to see that each one has covered the whole syllabus.

Again topicalised words and phrases such as: "record", "projects", "class work", "test and things", "covered the syllabus", are indicative of what is considered the purpose of the portfolio. The educator above legitimises the "job of the portfolio" as "covering the syllabus".

The following extract adds to our understanding of the discourse which constructs the portfolio as a collection of evidence:

Educator- C/A-B: If they have to present a portfolio at the end of the year, they are more inclined to prepare well for a test.
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The extract above is a clear example of how the portfolio is considered a tool to discipline the learners into learning and to provide evidence of that learning. The phrases “have to” and “are more inclined” are illuminating of the way coercion can impact on ultimate disposition.

The construction of the portfolio as a collection of evidence impacts on its capacity to work as a tool to enhance learning. Instead, it is seen as a means of preparing learners for an examination, the new National Senior Certificate, which, ultimately, ranks and distinguishes between those who pass and those who fail. Given disparities in success rates between black and white students on school leaving examinations and the goal of using the new curriculum to enhance learning and, thus, enhance success rates for black students, the construction of the portfolio as a collection of evidence which prepares learners for examination has the potential to impact on this goal.

Outcomes-based assessment as advocated in the literature (see Chapter Two), is a form of assessment that allows the learner to repeat a skill in different ways until it has been mastered and can be performed in a real world setting. As the following extract shows, however, in this context, continuous assessment is constructed as simply collecting evidence rather than of using assessment as a means of developing learning. Performing the skill itself is secondary to the act of producing evidence that the material has been covered. There is no evidence in this extract of the construction of assessment as formative. The entire construction is on its use summatively to measure learning.

Educator- M/C: the whole idea is it's a continuous assessment. There was an issue that learners are assessed only on the final examination mark and that makes it its only formal tests and other things and the final exam, you see. Now, they wanted to include the informal work, the class work, the homework, other types of items also and why I want to call and why I want to call it a continuous assessment of the learners toward a process. So actually what they introduced is a continuous assessment strategy and documentary evidence, you put in a file, and some people call it a portfolio. I don't think that that is the whole idea of a portfolio.

In the text above, phrases such as; "include the informal work", "class work", "the homework", "and other types of items" are the lexis of portfolio assessment. The educator appropriates these phrases into an overall understanding of assessment as summative.

In the text above the educator questions the way the portfolio is being used, but complies with collecting continuous assessment like "some people". The referent "they" ("Now, they wanted to include . . .", "So actually what they introduced . . .") can be taken to refer both to the Department of Education and other educators. Although the educator questions the way portfolios are being used, he conforms to dominant practice and what he assumes to be the dominant discourse. This is an indication of the hegemonising power of discourse itself.

The following extract provides an insight into the way the portfolio is viewed as a disciplining tool"

T/C-B: I think it's good in that keeps the kids aware that they need to be working continuously, um and their work filed whereas often they would lose the thing.

The educator states that the act of producing work for the portfolio is "good" for the learners and that it "keeps the kids aware that they need to be working continuously". Also evident in this extract are discourses constructing the portfolio as a means of introducing learners to secretarial, rather than other, more empowering, work. The portfolio is constructed as a file which contains work which otherwise would be lost. Associated with this is the construction of learners as lackadaisical and careless. The portfolio therefore functions as a tool of disciplining careless learners into more acceptable practices which include working harder (possibly on menial tasks) and being neater and more subservient to the need to collect evidence.

In my study, I found no evidence that the educators saw the portfolio as a form of learning based on the new paradigm, but rather as a collection of varied documents to exhibit and provide proof of curriculum coverage and preparation for the school leaving examination.

Therefore, “the assessment practices that place individuals in the realm of surveillance also places them in a system of writing; it connects them in a whole gathering of documents that confines and fastens them” (Foucault, 1979:189). The portfolio is seen by the educators that I interviewed as a collection of evidence that is closely monitored by the government to discipline them into preparing the learners for the school leaving examination – a high-stakes indicator of performance in society at large.

As indicated previously, some educators welcome this form of assessment because it does a wonderful job of disciplining the learners into examination preparation as indicated in the following extract:

Educator- A/A: I like them, I think particularly in my subject, I like them, I mean as I said right at the beginning, computing is about breaking the boundaries, you don't want to be confined and it's too easy for me, for the programming exam which they write now on Thursday in fact, know your data files well, make sure you can do a binary search, make sure you can do this that and the other, whereas the portfolio opens all of that up.

Educator A/A clearly constructs portfolio assessment as a means of preparing learners for the school leaving examination (“which they write now on Thursday in fact”). Essentially then, the portfolio serves to discipline the learners into becoming better test takers, while the educator views the processes as empowering the learners to better their examination and test score.

As noted in Chapter Two, ranking and scores have long functioned as a currency that helps elevate the individual in society and gives access to the privileged class. In Gee's (1996) *New Work Order* performance in assessment becomes the means of creating a workforce which can contribute to the global economy. In this context, the portfolio also becomes a form of currency which is counted in the moderation process. The focus on the examination in the extract above shows how the portfolio is being subject to the same processes which have sustained past economic systems and which continue to serve New Capitalism.

“Knowledge itself becomes a medium for sustaining power” and reproducing the ideology of the dominant class (Preece, 1998:81). The use of the portfolio to discipline the learners into becoming good test takers can thus be seen to serve this purpose. Those who do not do well, will self discipline themselves to believe that they did not “train” well and will correct themselves to strive for the fabricated excellence in future performances (Ball 2004, and

Giroux 1988). This idea is evident in the following extract from an interview with another educator:

Educator - S/B: Now it's not a question of writing their essay in an exam every time and they can go back and say okay this was a mistake that I made and I'm aware of it now and therefore when I write an essay in the future I can remember that.

## 5.6 The Discourse of Moderation as Surveillance

In all the interviews the educators spoke of moderation as a method of surveillance on the part of the Department of Education which required them to provide proof that they had indeed prepared the learners for the school leaving examination of which the portfolio formed a part. The portfolio was thus constructed as a means of checking on educators and not as the emancipatory teaching tool advocated in the literature.

In the following extract, the educator talks about “doing blind compliance”, a phrase which is indicative of his perceptions of the Department of Education's power. The requirement for moderation is such that “communication doesn't even count” and educators are left in a state of confusion regarding how much the portfolio will contribute to the summative assessment of the school leaving examination. The discourse of moderation thus constructs portfolios and educators in very different ways to those claimed in discourses that are evident in the literature.

Barbara: Can you explain the process of Moderation?

Educator-N/A-A: It's really about being able to. I mean we're really in a stage where we're doing blind compliance and um, I mean I do know that there are serious problems with regards to how much they count. The work that goes into preparing them and how much they will at the end is an area of great debate and confusion to the extent that communication doesn't even count.

Darling-Hammond (1989) declares that the bureaucratic role in education is to make sure that violators of the rules will be caught and penalties will be administered for non-compliance as noted above. She also notes that the bureaucratic conception of teaching is that educators do not need to be highly knowledgeable about learning theory and pedagogy, curriculum and assessment because they are not the ones making key decisions on what is being taught in the classrooms. Thus, accountability is achieved by inspectors and reporting systems intended to ensure that the rules and procedures are being followed, “the standard for accountability is compliance rather than effectiveness” (*ibid*:64). The construction of

educators as bureaucrats rather than as empowered professionals along with the role of the portfolio in contributing to this construction is evident in the extract below:

Barbara- What is the purpose of a portfolio?

Educator – T/A-A: A lot of it seems as though it's to keep you in your place, you know to keep you busy, ticking work, that's where I find assessment criteria. Feeling like a factory worker on a (inaudible) you know, ticking off your lists... You know, we're getting together at the end of the year, in our cluster groups, with our portfolios, and we're supposed to check on one another's and decide whether we think the standard is appropriate.

Since the moderation process involves educators meeting in "cluster groups" the process of checking is devolved to peers who "check on one another's [portfolios] and decide whether we think the standard is appropriate". For this educator, then, the process of moderation involves devolved surveillance which. In addition, his articulation of his role as factory worker attests to the way portfolio assessment works to disempower rather than empower.

The theory behind performance assessment argues that the process of producing a product becomes tied to the quality of the product which in turn enhances learning. However, in the interviews conducted, the purpose of moderation was not constructed as that of ensuring quality of the product and, thus, quality of the learning, but rather of simply demonstrating to moderators and other stakeholders that the curriculum had been covered and that the learners were prepared for the final examination.

In the following extract, the educator notes how learners were called upon to collect together all their tests and "organise" them in the portfolio for moderation.

Educator- T/C-C: Our moderation was in October, so I called upon the learners to bring all their tests, then we take portfolios from the cupboard and we give it to them to organise.

In this extract, the educator assumes agency ("I called upon the learners", "we take portfolios from the cupboard", "we give it to *them* to organise"). The role of the learner is that of a performer of menial tasks.

In the following extract, the educator refers to the portfolios educators themselves have to produce which are then checked against learners' portfolios in the moderation process. The lack of a referent for the pronoun "they" ("they check", "they want to confirm") is indicative of

the educator's perception of power at work operationalised in the phrase "you have to produce". The idea that the educator's own portfolio should be a tool for her own professional development is not evident. Rather, both educator and learner portfolios are constructed as means of surveillance:

Educator- T/C-C: Yes, yes. You have to produce your portfolio for moderation and then they check that against the learner's portfolio so they want to confirm that you have indeed done what is in your portfolio ...

## 5.7 The Discourse of the Portfolio as Taskmaster

Foucault, in *Discipline and Punishment* (1979), and Gee, Hull, and Lankshear in *The New Work Order* (1996), argue that schools function like factories, training the individual and disciplining them in order to fulfil the needs of dominant class. In factories, supervisors and foremen function as taskmasters ensuring that menial work is completed and that the factory hands are kept so occupied that they cannot reflect on their position in society. In the educator interviews, evidence of a construction of portfolio assessment as a taskmaster draws on this sort of theoretical understanding of education. In the following extract from an interview with one educator, the demands of portfolio assessment and, in particular of the practice of taking portfolios to moderation, on both learners and educators is apparent:

Educator- E/C-B: You know when you go and you have to, it's a lot of work to it that you know we actually have to stand on the children, let them know that this is there and everything must be there and how it must be filed and so on.

The metaphor of "stand[ing] on the children" is particularly illuminating. In this extract, the educator becomes a supervisor or overseer who exercises the limited authority which has been devolved to her in order to regiment the learners into compiling and ordering their portfolios in the prescribed manner much as a product must be assembled in a factory.

The following extract below adds to our understanding of the discourse of the taskmaster:

Educator- T/C: It is too much work. It is too much work, we are required to give at least four tests, class tests, six, exams, June exam. It's too much work... I'm for every test that I give them, I'm not going to give them their scripts, I will simply show them and then take them back and I will organise them myself.

The repetition of the nouns: "test" and "exam" bring to the forefront what is considered important as pieces of evidence. The educator notes "[w]e are required to give at least four

tests . . .” and in doing so constructs herself as the object of authority an authority which has not moved beyond more traditional types of assessment. The result of this is that the portfolio becomes a receptacle for completed tasks which are no different to those used in more traditional approaches. What is different, however, is the requirement that the educator should produce the evidence of assessment in the portfolio, something which does not appear to have happened before, and the work demand this then places on her.

In this extract, also significant are the phrases “I will simply show them”, “take them back” and “I will organise them”. The connotation here is that the educator does not consider the learners to be sufficiently trustworthy to complete even the secretarial tasks required for the compilation of a portfolio. Even though the educator believes that the portfolios are “too much work” for her to manage, the fear of the portfolio not being organised correctly and ready to show at moderation takes precedence over her own needs and the work is completed. The taskmaster of portfolio assessment thus requires the educator/overseer to take on the work of the hands.

## **5.8 The Discourse of Dysfunction**

As noted in Chapter One, before 1994 the South African education system was fractured along a number of lines. Since the democratic election, enormous efforts have been made to transform this fractured system into a coherent whole which will provide an education of quality for all. In spite of these efforts, the system continues to be plagued by levels of dysfunction (Chisholm, 2003), which means that the goals of transformation is far from being achieved. In South African society, evidence of discourses constructing the new single education system as dysfunctional abound. In many respects, some of these discourses are racist in that they are tinged with the idea that the dysfunction is related to the assumption of power by black educationalists. In the following extract, the educator refers to “state” workshops intended to prepare educators for portfolio assessment. By implication, these are to be compared to the training offered by bodies such as the Independent Examining Board referred to in Chapter One of this thesis.

Barbara: Were the trainings helpful?

Educator-T/A: I found the workshops irritating in the extreme. They were the state ones were autocratic and insulting, often, and they would have so-called experts in the various learning areas who would come and read to you from the booklets that you'd already received, offered no guidance as to implementation. At times, you would learn from your peers, you know, good ideas would come up and you'd realise that at such-and-such a school they were doing this, that was the only value. But the irritation levels were so high that you were often frustrated and didn't really get the full benefit.

Topicalised phrases such as "irritating in the extreme" "autocratic", "insulting", "offered no guidance", "irritation levels were so high", "often frustrated" are indicative of this educator's construction of the training offered by the Department of Education which, as Chisholm (2003) explains, was not particularly well conceptualised and was often offered by trainers who themselves were not always experienced in or particularly well theoretically informed on portfolio assessment. For this educator, then, the only "value" gleaned from the training was from the colleagues at other schools. The discourse of dysfunction evident in constructing South African education more generally since 1994 is therefore also evident in the way this educator constructs her experience of being required to work with portfolio assessment.

The following extract from an interview with another educator attests to a similar experience and is evidence of the same discursive construction of that experience:

Educator-T/B: I get very little training, but the bit I've been to have not, I've worked it out for myself...Sitting reading for hours, poring over, seeing what was required, um and often when I ask questions an ordinary educator like the rest of us, they've had more training than us, and they often can not answer the questions, so um, a couple of times I've phoned the regional office to speak to someone to bring it to their attention and they've put me on to someone else and...

The pronoun "us" is used inclusively and exclusively in the text. When the educator is speaking of colleagues within her own (private) school she is speaking in an inclusive manner. However, when she speaks of others, who she feels has had more opportunity for training, she refers to them in an exclusionary manner. The effect of the portfolio on this educator has been to destabilise her and her colleagues as professionals and to locate them in spaces with no possibility of finding direction.

As already noted in Chapters Two and Four, the Department Of Education (DoE) established a review committee to examine the new outcomes-based curriculum, C2005 (Chisholm, 2000). The committee found that C2005 was cumbersome for educators and lacked clarity, that the curriculum itself was described using such complex and confusing language that teachers could not engage with it and that instructions to teachers were often ambiguous or unclear (Chisholm, 2003). As also noted, the result of this inquiry into C2005 was a recommendation that the curriculum should be simplified. In spite of this, educators continue to be unhappy with the shift to outcomes-based approaches.

In the following extract, an educator responds to a question regarding the documents related to the introduction of portfolio assessment in the following way:

Educator - K/T: We have no input into them. They are somebody else's creation, in somebody else's terminology, in somebody else's topic and I find it difficult reading my way into that.

Differentiation between the educators and the government is apparent in this extract from the interviews. The use of the inclusive pronoun "we" and the exclusive pronoun phrase, "somebody else's" which is representing the government is an example of how the educator above considers himself powerless in the process. Agency in this passage is assigned to the Department of Education which is viewed as exercising power over the educators.

Nominalisation is present also in phrases such as "somebody else's creation", "somebody else's terminology", "somebody else's topic". For some educators in the study, therefore, the introduction of portfolio assessment was constructed as part of the general dysfunction characterising the entire system since the shift to democracy.

## **5.9 The Discourse of Resistance**

Given the confusion related to the introduction of C2005 identified by Chisholm (2003) it is not surprising that a discourse of resistance to the introduction of portfolio was evident in the educator interviews. In the following extract, the discourse of dysfunction and the discourse of surveillance, noted earlier in this chapter, are both present. The discourse of dysfunction is evident in the claim that "sometimes we are not told about the date earlier so that we can arrange everything". The discourse of surveillance is evident in the educator's understanding that the purpose of moderation is to "see if the work balances with mine". Also present, however, is a discourse of resistance to the demands placed on educators evident in the phrases "I think that's too much . . ." and "at least if they ask me to bring two, two, two of each, I think twelve is too much".

Educator – N/C: The only problem is that sometimes we are not told about the date earlier so that we can arrange everything. Secondly, I think when they say you must bring ten percent of the learners portfolios, for me I think that's too much, because we have a hundred learners which means I have to bring twelve, because I have to balance the number because if I have four files of the highest, then I need to bring four of the middle learner and of the low learners. If they want to see if the learners work balances with mine at least if they ask me to bring two, two, two of each, I think twelve is too much.

Another example of resistance is apparent in the extract below:

Barbara: What are your thoughts about the portfolio?

Educator T/C-C: Portfolios, I don't think there's a need for learner's portfolio, as well as there is one for the teacher, because I record all the class tests I have, I file them in the my portfolio, the marks are in my portfolio. I don't think there is a need really for the learner's portfolio. They can simply look at my portfolio and the things that I have covered for the year. Because I won't cheat, I won't cheat, I won't say I've given them this test if I haven't.

Foucault (1979:187) explained that the “disciplinary power operates through invisibility; while at the same time it inflicts required visibility on the individual”.

In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that exercised over them as explained in Chapter Four. “It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection...In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects” (*ibid*). Thus, the act of creating portfolios and presenting them at moderation is a form of heavy handed surveillance that enforces the domination.

However, the educator above resists the construction of the portfolio. Declarative statements like “I won't cheat”, “I won't say I've given them this test if I haven't”, “they can simply look at my portfolio and see the things I've covered” are indicative of a form of resistance. The educator is not resisting the need for ongoing continuous assessment but to the need for her to make her conformity to the requirement for this form of assessment visible.

Although the educator in the extract above expressed her resistance in individual terms, other interviews provided evidence of communal resistance to the power exercised on educators and to the undermining of their status as professionals. In the following extract,

the educator uses the communal “we” to indicate kinship with other educators in their struggle to cope with the new requirements. Significantly, however, this kinship is only with like schools – in this case, historically white privileged institutions. The resistance is seen in the claim that (“we take a lot of time and effort to make sure that we, that the standards that we feel are correct [are upheld].) “

Educator- A/C-A: We then go to cluster moderation, which, where we have a number of other schools come in and we moderate each other’s portfolios... So we’ll go through that very comprehensively, we really take a lot of time and effort to make sure that we, that the standards that we feel are correct.

Although there is a kinship between the educators, there is also a form of segregation present in the text and a hierarchialised view of the schools that meet in the clusters; this is apparent in the phrase “number of other schools”.

In another interview, an educator (B/C-B) claimed that “moderation is a marvellous way for the department to check up on its teachers, if the department would use this properly.” When asked whether she felt that the department should have more cluster meetings, the same educator claimed “no, we, at our school, do it properly, but not all teachers do you see.” While some educators did indicate a discourse of resistance, the right to resist moderation and surveillance was also arguably limited to some schools, to some educators and not to all.

## **5.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter a number of discourses constructing portfolio assessment have been identified and analysed. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the net effect of the discursive construction of portfolio assessment is not one of empowerment for educators or learners. Educators construct portfolio assessment as a form of surveillance, as requiring them to involve themselves in management rather than in teaching and as overwhelmingly demanding of their time. Portfolio assessment is then grouped within the overall construction of education as dysfunctional, although, as what I have identified as the discourse of resistance shows, there is evidence that the construction of dysfunctionality does not extend across the entire education system.

In relation to the learners, educators constructed portfolio assessment as a means of disciplining them into desirable behaviours. Much of the practice associated with portfolio assessment was constructed as secretarial involving mundane tasks such as filing and organising. Learners themselves were constructed as not being sufficiently responsible to be

trusted with the safe care of portfolios which, as a result, tended to be locked away and only handed out when learners were required to file work in them. Overwhelmingly, the dominant discourse associated with portfolios was positivist and there was no evidence in the interviews of portfolios being used in dynamic ways to develop learners own understandings of what it means to learn as well as the learning itself. As a result, portfolios were constructed as collections of evidence that traditional summative forms of assessment had been administered.

As the analysis of the educators' interviews shows, therefore, there is little evidence, at least in the schools which participated in this study, of the potential of portfolio assessment to bring about the shifts in learning constructed in the literature.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

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### 6.1 Summary

Across the globe, the use of the portfolio in assessment is increasingly being promoted as a form of progressive pedagogy. In the reforms which followed the 1994 election, this was also the case in South Africa. This study considers portfolio assessment implementation and how it is constructed and resisted in the discourses that emerged in the *Curriculum Guide Directive* and the twenty-one interviews conducted in the Eastern Cape Province.

Understanding how portfolio assessment is constructed in the CGD and by educators and identifying the practices associated with educators' discourses allows us to begin to understand why shifts in pedagogy has not been achieved to the extent envisaged in reform documents.

Chapter Two of this thesis provided a historical account of assessment drawing on a wide range of literature. This account began with the introduction of the first examination in China and moved towards the thinking surrounding the implementation of portfolio assessment in South Africa. Significantly, the chapter explored the links between assessment economic conditions and, thus, the role of assessment in maintaining or challenging existing social structures. This chapter also discussed the impact of assessment on the individual and more, specifically, how it can be used to mould the individual into roles deemed appropriate by dominant social groups.

Chapter Four identified discourses evident in the *Curriculum Guide Directive* (CGD), the document provided to teachers by the South African Department of Education, in order to guide their practice as they introduced portfolio assessment. In spite of the emancipatory discourses associated with the introduction of outcomes-based assessment more generally in South Africa, my analysis of the CGD reveals the entrenchment of dominant ideologies associated with traditional forms of assessment. In the CGD, for example, I identify the way outcomes-based discourses are used to disguise traditional assessment methods and how the introduction of portfolio assessment serves to make teachers and learners more visible in an overall process of surveillance. In spite of dominant discourses which construct portfolio assessment as empowering for learners as they work with educators to develop their learning, my analysis of the CGD shows how learners are excluded from this sort of emancipatory involvement and are reduced to performing menial secretarial functions. The learner is constructed as needing to provide the evidence which will show that the educator

has covered the curriculum. This evidence is then taken to moderation to prove that the curriculum has been covered.

Chapter Five explored the discourses used by educators to construct portfolio assessment and their significance for pedagogical practice. This analysis shows that, far from being involved in the assessment of their learning, learners were excluded as portfolios were locked away in cupboards and only provided to learners in order to perform the filing and organising tasks I identify as secretarial. The potential of the portfolio to act as a tool for learning in a dynamic process involving both learners and educators therefore does not appear to be fulfilled in the schools in my study. In addition, Chapter Five gives insights into the way educators understand the role of portfolio assessment in subjecting them to surveillance and ensuring that their practice covers the prescribed curriculum. I identify this as a process of deprofessionalising educators in spite of the rhetoric of empowerment that characterises the literature on portfolio assessment especially given the existence of another discourse constructing portfolio assessment as a taskmaster which kept teachers busy with menial tasks. Also significant in Chapter Five is my identification of discourses of resistance on the part of some educators. These discourses were not apparent in all educator interviews however with the result that historical advantage was being called into play in a system which had been subject to reform intended to make a single coherent system. Sadly, these discourses of resistance were associated with the splits in South African society which characterised apartheid.

Also significant in the educator interviews was the construction of the school leaving examination as common sense practice and the concomitant construction of the portfolio as a means of preparing learners for this high-stakes act of performance.

## **6.2 The Way Forward**

The discourses identified in this study arguably position the transformation of assessment practices as stagnant. In implementing the new curriculum, South Africa appears to have fallen into the trap of perpetuating dominant pedagogy rather than promoting the emancipatory pedagogy explored by People's Education for People's Power movement (see Chapter One) and in the literature on assessment. The need for a qualified, well-trained workforce as South Africa engages with globalised markets and for access to all kinds of work to be open to all social groups is imperative in a country with pressing socio-economic problems. Given these observations, what are the possibilities for a way forward?

### 6.2.1 Increasing Resources?

A major discourse in South African commentaries on education revolves around the need for additional resources. Research by the DoE's Ministerial Committee (DoE, 2000) identified a lack of monetary resources as key to the way C2005 was being implemented. Chisholm, in her review of C2005, also identified a lack of monetary resources as a major reason why the implementation of the new curriculum was not effecting the envisaged changes at a systemic level. Hence, both studies indicated that monetary resources needed to be increased.

In comparison to many other countries, South Africa spends a large part of its annual budget on education (SAI, 2009). In the 2006 budget, 17.8% of total spending was allocated to education. In his 2009 budget speech, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel (Manuel, 2009) noted that education spending had grown by 14 per cent a year for the past three years and had accounted for R140.4 billion worth of spending in the 2008/9 financial year. To all intents and purposes, then, additional spending on education in a country where the annual spend is already high has been achieved.

The analysis in Chapter Five of this thesis, however, that even in a school with substantial monetary resources and historical privilege, educators subscribed to discourses which were not productive in the way they engaged with portfolio assessment. Even at this school, where training had been provided by the Independent Examining Board, the portfolio was constructed as a file holding evidence of examination preparation. It would therefore appear that the availability of monetary resources and the existence of historical privilege had not impacted on the way educators were constructing portfolio assessment. A more useful indicator of the lack of success in implementing portfolio assessment is arguably educators' construction of portfolio assessment as a taskmaster which requires them to spend much of their time on menial tasks. Simplification of the bureaucratic demands made in relation to portfolio assessment could, therefore, provide an impetus for improvement which the allocation of additional financial resources has not.

In South Africa there is also evidence of an increasing number of educators leaving the profession (see, for example, Peltzer et al., 2005). In the South African Parliament, Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament, Mr. Boinama, argued for the need to train and retain teachers and proposed a new initiative to try to do this (Parliamentary Monitoring Minutes, 12 February, 2008). In addition to the provision of financial resources, then, there would appear to be another argument developing around the need for more resources in the form of educators (see also Vinjevold, 2009).

Darling-Hammond (1996) suggests that the decision on the part of educators to leave the profession is not an isolated problem but rather a global trend. Darling-Hammond go on to argue that educators choose to leave teaching because of a perceived lack of support and because of feeling both isolated and silenced phenomena which were all apparent in the discourses identified in Chapter Five of this thesis. Several of the educators interviewed noted that, although they had sought help from the regional offices of the Department of Education, their requests had either not found a response or the response offered had been inadequate.

In Chapter Five, the issue of the deprofessionalisation of educators is identified. Mattson and Harley (2003) also identified this in their research noting that educators as professionals are often closed off from decisions made in the education system and instead are instructed to take the role of administrator within the classroom. As Chapter Five has also shown, educators become immersed in providing evidence to take to moderation and their teaching is reduced to managerial and bureaucratic work. According to Mattson and Harley (2003), the Introduction of outcomes-based education is not simply a new approach to pedagogy but rather a challenge to the beliefs of educators and communities at a profound level; something which is also indicated in the analysis of interviews with educators and also, I would argue, in the analysis of the CGD itself since it is evident that the writers of the Guide themselves have not entirely taken on the shifts in thinking and believing necessary for the successful implementation of portfolio assessment.

As a result of their research in South African schools, Pryor and Lubisi (2002) note that educators who were initially keen to embrace new progressive forms of assessment lost enthusiasm as the training and support they needed to put the principles and ideas into practice failed to materialise. This perceived lack of support was also apparent in my data, with educators noting that they wanted to do what was asked of them, but felt frustrated with the lack of help and understanding in what was being asked of them to do. Most indicated that they relied solely on other educators to help them interpret the CGD and implement what it required them to do. The data also indicated that the educators felt that they could not practice their craft of teaching because they had too many demands placed on them to provide evidence that they have done their job well. As already noted, one educator stated that what was asked of her was “too much” (see Chapter Five).

Given these conditions, it is hardly surprising that educators should choose to leave the field. In my data, however, the need for resources in the form of additional educators was never mentioned as a factor hindering the implementation of portfolio assessment. Rather, the main issues appeared to be the lack of support for implementation and the quality of the

support that was made available. In interviews educators indicated that the experts sent to train them, often lacked expertise in the very tools they were supposed to be supporting. In addition, training was offered in a haphazard fashion.

Rather than calling for additional resources, both financial and human, in order to improve the implementation of C2005, the research on which this thesis is based identifies the development of existing resources as key if portfolio assessment is to be introduced and implemented in ways which are meaningful and which make good on the claims made for it in the literature. The need for work valuing educators as professionals would also appear to be crucial. In interviews, educators constructed portfolio assessment as involving a series of arduous and menial tasks, all of which kept them away from actual teaching. This coupled with the sense of being subject to ongoing surveillance is hardly conducive to the successful implementation of a form of assessment intended to be empowering and emancipating for both educators and learners.

South African learners write the school leaving examinations in October and November of each year. The release of results in late December or early January of the following year is inevitably accompanied by high profile press coverage most of which is negative. If pass rates on the school leaving examination increase, then claims of lowered standards inevitably result as they did in 2009. If pass rates fall, then claims of poor performance on the part of educators, teachers and the national system result. The focus in popular discourse on the final school leaving examination means that it achieves such high stakes status that there is little space for interrogation of what it can actually mean as an indicator of meaningful learning by learners who now need to be ready to contribute to a global economy or enter higher education to develop the skills it seeks in its workers. The effect of these popular discourses in educators' practices was evident in the Chapter Five. In addition to a focus on the provision of support and development for educators, therefore, perhaps what is needed is for challenges to dominant understandings of assessment, learning and, indeed, schooling, to be inserted into popular discourse. Given the appropriation of a form of assessment practice intended to enhance the quality of learning by traditional discourses identified in the research reported upon in this thesis, then such challenges would appear to be crucial if change is to be achieved.

### **6.2.2 Increasing Monitoring?**

In 2008, the Department of Education initiated a pilot of a system intended to track all learners as they move through the school system (Vinjevoold, 2009). The system, the Learner Unit Tracking Information System (LURTIS) has been developed at a cost of R166 million

and will involve allocating a unique tracking number to each learner which will allow progress to be monitored and which will also allow changes in school to be identified. The system is expected to be fully operational by 2010.

In this thesis, the role of assessment in the surveillance of the individual has been noted repeatedly as have educators' construction of portfolio assessment as a means of monitoring their own performance as teachers. The implementation of a new tracking system has profound implications for the construct of surveillance given the likelihood of educators being required to collect further evidence on their learners' performance and, thus, to engage with their own surveillance. The extent to which the new tracking system, constructed as a means of enhancing teaching and learning, will actually achieve these ends is questionable given the dominance of traditional assessment in South African education identified in this thesis.

Empowering learners to take control of their own learning is central to the educational reform which has been introduced in South Africa since 1994. As Darling-Hammond (1988), McNeil (1988), Shepard (2000) and others have all pointed out, however, external accountability testing leads to the de-skilling and de-professionalisation of educators and "high-stakes accountability" teaches learners that effort in school should be in response to "externally administered rewards and punishment rather than the excitement of ideas" (Shepard, 2000:9). Once again, then, a way forward developed by the national Department of Education has to be brought into question.

Jansen (see, for example, 1998:3) has long argued that the introduction of outcomes-based education in South Africa would fail because the "emphasis is not on learning, but political". If this thesis manages to demonstrate anything, it is the need for learning of both educators and learners to be supported. The introduction of the new tracking system could well be yet another political move which will detract from learning even more.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

Given the position taken on discourse in this thesis, the introduction of any educational reform is bound to be contentious given its discursive nature and its need to engage with dominant discourses which may construct educators, learners, teaching and learning in ways different to those supporting the reform. That this has been the case in South Africa is indisputable. While this thesis may have opened up the way for more questions than it has offered solutions, I would argue that engagement with the way meanings are made in the introduction of any reform is critical. It is to this process that this thesis aims to make a contribution.

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## Appendix A - Curriculum Guide Directive

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### 3.2 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT (CASS)

The Continuous Assessment (CASS) is a process of gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner on an on-going basis, against clearly defined criteria, using a variety of methods, tools, techniques and contexts. The CASS is a school-based and consists of practical work, written tasks, tests, research and any other task peculiar to that learning area. The form of assessment used in the schools should cover a full range of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values (SKAV) in the learning and teaching experience. The evidence of this assessment is collected into a portfolio.

- Continuous assessment forms 75% of the total assessment of a learner and consists of various combinations of the above-mentioned forms of assessment. (Refer to Learning Area guidelines for the forms of assessment applicable to that learning area).

### 4. PORTFOLIOS

The evidence of learner achievement for CASS should be stored in a portfolio. In this section, the contents and the organisation of both the learners' and the educators' portfolios are described.

#### 4.1 The Learner's Portfolio

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of learner's work such as projects, journals and assignments etc. These exhibit to the learner, parent, educators and others, the progress, growth and achievements of the learner in relation to expected outcomes. A learner's portfolio is not necessarily always stored in file folders. It can also be boxes, binders, or any other means of collating learner's work can also be used.

#### Requirements for the Learner's Portfolio

Each learner should have one product portfolio per learning area.

Each portfolio should have a front cover; index/table of contents and the content should include at least 5 ways of assessment as required per learning area.

#### Front Cover

The front cover of the learner's portfolio should have the following information:

- Name of learner
- Learning Area
- Phase/Grade
- Year
- School
- LSEN Code/ or Description

## Index

The index should have the following information:

- Task number
- Date
- Form of assessment
- Topic
- Level obtained
- Teacher's signature
- Indicate the learner's special needs if any

## Contents of the Learner's portfolio

The contents of the learner's portfolio should show evidence of:

- A minimum of **5 forms/types of assessment** as stipulated in the various learning areas. For items such as models, practical demonstrations, presentations etc. written comments, scores, criteria, level descriptors, comments by peers and educator, cassettes, photographs, etc. should be kept as evidence in the portfolio.
- Ongoing feedback (from educators, peers, self, parents) such as comments or notes that demonstrate constructive communication, the learning process and growth of the learner.

## Managing the Learner's Portfolio

Learners and teachers should both be involved in selecting evidence for a learner's portfolio. The learner may use the following table as a checklist to establish whether the portfolio has been kept according to the given criteria.

### **PORTFOLIO: ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE LEARNER'S CHECKLIST Y/N**

Is my name and grade indicated in the portfolio?

Are the items in the portfolio dated?

Is a main title page included?

Does the portfolio have a broad index?

Is the sequence of the collection evident and purposeful?

Are the task descriptions and applicable criteria regarding the collection in the Portfolio included?

Are the applicable rating scales according to criteria included?

Did I include a statement of personal goals?

Should any of the items be replaced by something that shows further Progress?

In consultation with the teachers, learners should be allowed to redo tasks and resubmit their work for assessment by the teacher. The portfolio will then contain evidence of the latest attempt at task.

The teacher may use the following table as a checklist to establish, whether the

portfolio has been kept according to the given criteria.

**PORTFOLIO: QUALITY INDICATORS  
TEACHER'S CHECKLIST  
Y/N**

Is the context from which the evidence emerged clear?

Have the task descriptions and applicable criteria regarding the collection  
Been included?

Is it evident which outcomes are demonstrated by the collection?

Does the evidence show progress over time?

Does the evidence communicate learner growth through a variety of processes?

Does the evidence reveal any other information?

Does the evidence reveal any new needs for the learner?

Have steps been formulated to address the needs of the learner?

Should any of the items be replaced by something that shows further progress?

**Accessibility of a Learner's Portfolio**

A learner's portfolio needs to be accessible so that relevant stakeholders:

- can understand the thinking behind the decision to place particular evidence into the portfolio.
- Know how to interpret the evidence in the portfolio.
- Know what the evidence demonstrates about the individual learner achievement.
- Can monitor the progress of the learner.

***The document was retyped using the same spelling, grammar, fonts, spacing, and tables. If a word is not capitalised, then it was not in the original document.***

## Appendix B - Interview with Teacher C

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BARBARA: Well, thanks for letting me interview you, TEACHER C. Okay, um, so you teach Grade Ten through Twelve, Afrikaans and Geography.

TEACHER C: Yes.

BARBARA: Okay, um, what is a portfolio?

TEACHER C: A portfolio, in other words it's their work that forms their CASS, their year mark, eventually at the end of the year, that counts for their, in other words, depends on which subject you have, where you have languages, you have creative writing, test, exams plus oral, plus their final exam.

BARBARA: And when was the first time that this word, portfolio, entered your vocabulary?

TEACHER C: Okay, that was about three years ago that we really started with it.

BARBARA: Okay and what type of training did you receive for portfolios?

TEACHER C: I didn't receive any training although I know what it is all about. Being, doing work as an ordinary teacher, as a subject advisor I had to train other people regarding this. I am a co, I was a co-ordinator for CASS and for oral moderation as well so, I know what it's all about.

BARBARA: Okay so where did you receive the training then?

TEACHER C: Beginning of this year I went to a training course just so that I am able to help teachers this year. That was just before the school started for two days that we went for our course.

BARBARA: So you say you used to moderate for CASS, is that correct?

TEACHER C: CASS and orals, yes.

BARBARA: Okay, so when you did that did you receive any training from them for that or was it because of?

TEACHER C: No, my experience.

BARBARA: Okay, your experience. So did you look at portfolios then?

TEACHER C: Um, we looked basically we have moderation throughout the year, so that you don't have to sit on Monday the whole day doing it. As we complete work we moderate it, we get together the whole cluster gets together and we moderate the work of the teachers to see if it's up to standard or not.

BARBARA: And with the portfolios, what is the standard for the portfolio?

TEACHER C: Well basically, it differs from subject to subject, but we like in Afrikaans languages you have your list of, in other words, pupils information and what is counting for that pupil and then it is basically set up, your creative work, your long pieces, composition, and then your letters that are counting for them then you have your control tests and you have your examinations, your September exam, your oral marks are supposed to be included into your portfolio so that they can see what has been done and what not and then, that's a pupils portfolio. Teachers portfolio you have everything you've done through the year that they, that counts: your memos, as well as your papers, as well as topics that you've set down for them.

BARBARA: Okay, and how do you find the portfolios?

TEACHER C: I don't have a problem with them, because to me, there's nothing new, because even the olden days, we didn't have a portfolio, but I worked the same way, keeping everything throughout the year, continuous evaluation was done, I mean that way, so it wasn't difficult for me to adapt to this portfolio. The only struggle is to get the kids to bring the file, that's the only thing.

BARBARA: Okay now with this you said it was very similar to the way you did things before, what is the main difference that you see between the way you did it before and now?

TEACHER C: Um, previous years in Grade Twelve, the year mark didn't count. For a number of years they took the year mark away, it didn't count. Now it counts. And the difference is the compositions and letters were part of the exam in the past, no they don't write compositions and letters in exam time anymore. It's done throughout the year in continuous evaluation. So you save on that as such, so you don't have three four papers written, only two.

BARBARA: Okay, um, how do you find the management of the portfolios?

TEACHER C: I don't have a difficulty with it because I get them to bring me their files and the work that counts for them, that gets put in their portfolios and is kept by me. I don't give a portfolio out to a child because you'll never get it back. So I manage to, I've got a cupboard and I keep it there.

BARBARA: Okay, now with the portfolio, what do the students do with the portfolios? You say they bring in their files and they give you the work.

TEACHER C: They work on their tests or they write a letter or a composition that counts for them, then as soon as I've marked it, they get it back. We go through tests, we go through the memoranda and then I take the tests back, so that's why they don't write the answers not on the tests itself the answer sheet, they write it so that they have that to study and they don't need their portfolio to study from.

BARBARA: Now if you had to list pros and cons for the portfolio, what would be the pro and what would be the cons?

TEACHER C: Well it's the continuous evaluation is all various things together, so it's easier for them to choose, it's not everything that counts, it's their best that they've done that counts. So it's easy to get out what counts, you put that together, the other you take out and it's easy to calculate a year mark.

BARBARA: Okay and what would be the con?

TEACHER C: Kids are still under the impressions that CASS work or portfolios mean nothing and are wrong there. They are slowly, surely getting into it, they are realising that if they don't do the work, they are the ones who lose out.

BARBARA: Now what do you think about in the Twelfth Grade, with, after the moderation, if a student for example has a sixty-five for matric<sup>52</sup>, overall for the school and the overall for the portfolio is an eighty percent, that's brought down, what do you think of that?

TEACHER C: I agree, because it could mean that the standard was not well at that school. Although I do say that your portfolio mark should be higher than your final exam, because it's more relaxed circumstances under which a lot of that work is done, especially if you think of a subject like Geography. It's more

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<sup>52</sup> The term 'matric' continues to be used to refer to the school leaving examination which takes place towards the end of Grade 12.

relaxed, so they have books, textbooks that they can go to and find information, whereas in an exam, it's up in the mind and nothing else, but I don't believe that there should be a bigger difference than fifteen percent between the final exam and your CASS mark.

BARBARA: So, for example, you were talking about moderation, um, if, let's use the sixty-five/A, what do you think what do you think about that? That then it is a sixty five and eighty percent it comes down to within five percent, so it becomes a seventy, so it drops ten percent, what do you think about that? Do you think that's fair, or do you think that?

TEACHER C: If there is a drop, I think it is fair enough, because on the other hand if the CASS marks or the portfolio marks are much lower than the exam marks, then those portfolio marks are put up. So it works to both sides, but usually what we do with moderation is, we determine beforehand is whether marks in the portfolio are too high or not, so that before the final mark is sent through to the Department it is changed already to a much lower mark because we do compare the September because that is also an indication with the other work that was done, if that discrepancy is too big between the exam mark and the ordinary class work that was done.

BARBARA: Okay, so how do you determine what grade to put on it in September?

TEACHER C: Well, basically, September is a fully-fledged exam, so it's similar to the end of year exam. It's just a preparation, so everything is covered and you can, and we do pick up, okay especially languages, when it comes to tests, the test is not up to standard, the mark is too high so you have to bring it down. Because we do know what is the standard that is required in the end of Grade Twelve

BARBARA: But when you talk about bringing it down, how do you know what to bring it down to?

TEACHER C: It depends what the difference is, in other, say for instance the difference is twenty-five percent. As I said, I believe up to fifteen, so you can bring it down ten percent to fit in with the examination as such.

BARBARA: Now does everyone use the fifteen percent formula or does everyone use something different?

TEACHER C: We use it here in Grahamstown, uh, that's actually especially in Afrikaans we don't have problems, you see, we work together as a team, so, teachers accept that and being, we are more than one, being in the education system for more than twenty years already so, they about knowledge about this as such. And it is verified provincially, by the Department as well.

BARBARA: I'm just curious to know how fifteen percent was chosen.

TEACHER C: The Department spoke of ten percent, but we felt that you can go up to fifteen percent, that is more or less, because of the fact as I said just now, they can consult books, they can get into Internet and get information, so they can do that difference to an exam where there are no books used where it is all in the head what they've studied.

BARBARA: All right, what about you said you went for training, at the beginning of the year, I think you said, a two day workshop, how did you find that? Did you find that helpful?

TEACHER C: I knew what they wanted to tell us, I knew that. It was just the new changes that came in that were different.

BARBARA: Okay and what were those?

TEACHER C: The real change was that in the past they used the June exam as the exam mark on the portfolio, but they found that by June, not everyone has completed the syllabus, so September, now they've changed from this year to September. By September you have covered the whole syllabus so it's a more representative exam than the June exam.

BARBARA: Okay, what do you see as the downside to the portfolio?

TEACHER C: A lot of administration, that's the down side to me.

BARBARA: Okay, can you talk about that a little bit, like what are the things that you have to do that you feel?

TEACHER C: Okay, you have to do, okay marking is part of your work, administration denotes it's extra work, but if you plan your things correctly and, unfortunately it happens that at schools at this stage, the matric year, everyone wants continuous evaluation to be done, so the kids are overloaded and administration-wise now you've got to find out are you doing this this week or

you do that that week, so that you don't overload the kids and I feel you can already start in Grade Eleven. And that carries over because there is no difference between Grade Eleven and Grade Twelve. You can carry over, so you have done some of your CASS work already so you have less in your matric year to do.

BARBARA: Okay, what are some of the other administrative things that you have to do?

TEACHER C: Well basically that's the main thing is to work that way, because I'm, I plan my work, so I don't have the difficulties that you might find other peoples experience. Because I've never, I don't really have a problem, whereas other people don't (inaudible).

BARBARA: What about the sheets that you have to fill out for the portfolios, for yourself and for your students?

TEACHER C: That's not so much, because basically it takes you about an hour or two to do, that's part of your work throughout the year. If you start beginning of the year, that front sheet is easy to fill in, some of the subjects is more difficult because there is a lot of stuff that comes up, whereas languages it is simplified and it works much easier.

BARBARA: Okay, um, when we say the management of the portfolios, you keep them in your cupboard here, do the students have access to them like if they need to study for a test or anything like that.

TEACHER C: That's what I said, I give them the memo, they have the question paper, so they have the memo, so they don't need, this is just the answer sheet that is in the portfolio. So they don't need it to study from. It makes it much easier than to duplicate everything for them.

BARBARA: If there was one thing you could like, take out a magic wand and change something, one thing that you didn't like about the portfolio, what would that be?

TEACHER C: Well, I've never hassled with it.

BARBARA: So you're fine with it.

TEACHER C: I don't have a problem with it. In Grade Twelve, definitely not. When it comes to OBE I have a problem.

BARBARA: Okay, what's the problem there?

TEACHER C: OBE, there's not, it's not as it really is on paper, because on paper it sounds very good, but you find that from Grade Ten, the kids have no knowledge, they have no basics within the subjects as they come through these Learning Areas because that is a big problem, and that's why we are suffering in the high schools because you are getting Grade Eights coming in from primary schools and they can't even read their mother tongue. They struggle to read in their mother tongue, they fail their mother tongue in Grade Eight.

BARBARA: So what is specifically about OBE that is keeping them from...

TEACHER C: I think in primary schools at this stage people think they are facilitators, root work still needs to be done. At this stage there is no real content for the lower grades and that's where your problem lies. So when they get to when they choose a specific subject and it's not just a Learning Area anymore, they don't have the basics of that subject, so you struggle to start in Grade Ten to teach them those basics as such.

BARBARA: And how do you find that?

TEACHER C: Difficult, difficult, really, because where in the past, those kids had those basics so you could carry on, now you've got to start from basically primary school level and you've got to get all those basics up 'til Grade Nine, in the beginning of Grade Ten, and the year is too short to really give them those skills.

BARBARA: Okay so back to the question about the magic wand, with OBE if you could wave...

TEACHER C: I would've taken it out.

BARBARA: Taken it out.

TEACHER C: Yes, the way it is currently. Because to me, skills, the way all these specific skills they have coming in now or outcomes as they call it, in the past we had those skills done. We didn't name them this skill, that skill, that skill, but within your work you've done and with the differentiation you've had in your class work, you have taught these skills, because go to a Grade Ten or Grade Eleven child, they can not calculate, even though they've had up to Grade Nine Mathematics. They don't know calculation and we find within our subjects they

have no background. But OBE I will change, because I said we should not import, because if you go back to Europe, if you go back to America, OBE has failed. You see it on T.V., you see the illiteracy that comes through from those countries and why follow other countries if you can produce something in your own country that is of better value than just following others because it's Psychology that brought that whole thing in, I know, it's one little school of Psychology, and that's where it comes from.

BARBARA: So why, you talk about Psychology, what do you think it was they wanted to do? Why do you think they brought OBE into South Africa?

TEACHER C: I think that you use, I don't know why in South Africa, I don't know why in South Africa. It's the Department of Education, it wasn't the Department of Psychology that brought it into South Africa, it was Education. Okay I see the point was with the past of this country, they immediately wanted to move away from everything that was part of the past and they grabbed everywhere and they took something and it's not working and they will not admit that they've made a mistake because resources are not available at schools so how can you really implement something that is not available. Or what's your best resource? Internet, we sit with Internet, but we sit with five computers at a school, so you can not utilise it, so that's a big problem, that's where it comes from, that everything from the past had to be immediately rubbed out, but they didn't look at what was good about the education system of the past, what can be done to make it better.

BARBARA: Do you think they are going to have to do that?

TEACHER C: I don't think that it's going to happen with our current government, I don't know, I don't want to get into politics. I differ a lot with them yes.

BARBARA: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

TEACHER C: Nothing. Not if there is anything else you would like to know.

BARBARA: No, that's great. Thank you.

TEACHER C: Would you like to see my portfolios?

BARBARA: Sure.

TEACHER C: You won't be able to understand the language.

BARBARA: It's in Afrikaans.

TEACHER C: Ja. You see this is how we start with it, here's the, this had to be filled in. What happens is, I have, their other tests and stuff I have, so only the best ones have been chosen and that's counts of it. You see they do have a little bit of lenience within.

BARBARA: Now this one has a nine out of thirty.

TEACHER C: That's for a composition.

BARBARA: That's the best?

TEACHER C: For this child, yes. I have children who have twenty-four out of thirty.

BARBARA: `Cause this person has...

TEACHER C: I can tell you, come and teach here for a week and I can change you in a week. When you see the circumstances we suffer under, the kids, they choose the subjects, but they don't want to learn, they don't read the literature, they don't read anything. Then you sit, and if you don't read, you don't build up vocabulary, not in the language. That is the problem we sit with. And I inherited this group, I don't not teach them previously. Apparently, the past two, three years nothing was done with these kids in the subject.

BARBARA: So you're re-training...

TEACHER C: I was forced to take them this year, the Grade Twelves, by the principal because of my background of being a facilitator for Afrikaans within the district. I was forced to take them and see what can I do with them.

BARBARA: So have you seen any change since you've had them?

TEACHER C: Not much, I'll see now with the final exam. That will give me an indication, did I succeed with one or two of them, because they all failed throughout the year. All forty of them failed because they are not up to standard. Because it is difficult in one year to pick up five years, four years and then try and get them to do that all in one year. This is basically their work that's the same. Tests, compositions and what we have actually done is, you get a standard and it comes to creative writing. We have a common piece that is written for compositions, a common piece that is written for letters or shorter

pieces and all the schools write the same topics, they write the same topics and we have a common, what do you call it, matrix from which we mark so that everybody marks the same and from that you can see what are the standards at the schools. This is my...

BARBARA: So the group itself decided to do that?

TEACHER C: We as a district.

BARBARA: As a district.

TEACHER C: We have been doing it. And you will find that within all the districts in Grahamstown. Actually it should be throughout the province that way.

BARBARA: Now is that voluntary or did they have to do that?

TEACHER C: Actually it is compulsory otherwise how would you know if the standard of the teacher is right or not? This is my portfolio. There is some stuff that I have taken out. You can now see, that is my register class. That is how they faired with their September exams. There were (inaudible). And that goes for all their subjects that.

BARBARA: So what will happen to these students?

TEACHER C: We'll see at the end of the year. It might be the worst result we've had since I've been here the past twelve years. This is oral, let me just make sure. This is fifty. Now this is what goes through to the Department of Education. So that's their final mark that they received for creative writing.

BARBARA: Okay, so you have some who have ten, fourteen, sixteen. This one has a twenty-six, and a twenty-nine.

TEACHER C: Out of fifty.

BARBARA: Out of fifty.

TEACHER C: So there are some who did okay and some who did not do so well and this part the thirty part is the exam and the tests, all added together and a mark out of thirty is calculated. There you can see how poorly they have done. A seven can still cope, okay but a triple nine means they were absent.

BARBARA: And you have a three?

TEACHER C: They did badly, they really did badly. This is just where I had problems, people were absent so the Department can see why have they been absent, why don't I have marks for them. Because they believe there must be continuous evaluation marks for a child. This child dropped out of school and this child is not doing Afrikaans. It was a mistake from them.

BARBARA: Do you have a lot of dropouts?

TEACHER C: We do find from time to time we have dropouts. The one girl in my class dropped out because she became pregnant and she could not cope. Although while she is pregnant she should not be at school, she may come back afterwards, but she couldn't cope with it so she dropped out, she may come back next year, although I believe they should go to adult school. These are my forms before the where written on the computer forms. Uh, this was just with my portfolio. Everything was here that was needed.

BARBARA: Your check sheets.

TEACHER C: Yes, my check sheets, this is compositions that they wrote. There's the common assessment task, short and long pieces that they hand. Okay these are my tests and my memorandum comes with it so that when we moderate they can get my memo and they can see whether I have done what my memo says or not. Tests, and then at the end you have your examinations. The memos that you have in front comes out of here as well, yes. That's how I have done it. I have never had a problem with the authorities as such. I've been marking matric papers, Grade Twelve papers since 1994, I've been marking Grade Twelve papers. I have been into it, I have been an examiner for the whole province, I have set papers for the province, I have that experience that comes with it. That's why my papers are up to the standard of what is required by the external examiners of the country. They accept my papers and I believe in a high standard.

BARBARA: I have a question for you, you've got to send your portfolios out for moderation, right?

TEACHER C: Yes, it's completed, I've got to keep them. If the external moderators want to see my work, I've got to keep it here for two three years. Then they can come and have a look.

BARBARA: Now do you have any old portfolios that I can have?

TEACHER C: I don't think, not yet. My old ones are at home. I can always bring one tomorrow.

BARBARA: All right, that would be...

TEACHER C: But it's also Afrikaans, from previous years.

BARBARA: All right thank you.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

## Appendix C - Nvivo Coding Sample

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NVivo revision 2.0.161      Licensee: Barbara

Project: CDA 2      User: Administrator      Date: 5/23/2005 - 10:16:14 PM

### DOCUMENT CODING REPORT

Document:    XXXX 8, 11&12

Created:      2/21/2005 - 12:16:48 PM

Modified:     5/23/2005 - 4:15:39 PM

Description:

Interview with XXXXXX #1

Experience 20

Training by HOD

Node: Assessment

Passage 1 of 5      Section 0, Para 24, 458 chars.

so the syllabus or the outcomes, required outcomes, states that the learners, 'pupils' I still call them, must learn certain skills and be able to demonstrate that they can do those skills and what the portfolio does is structure it, to make sure that there is a record that all they'd covered these skills, had practice at them, (inaudible) and had summative tests on them and been able to demonstrate and develop those skills.

So it gives some structure.

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Passage 2 of 5      Section 0, Para 28, 267 chars.

Um, each little question is supposed to be analysed for each different skill and then this huge grid with numbers, marking each box: we streamlined that. We didn't put numbers in every single little box, but we did demonstrate that all the skills had been covered and

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Passage 3 of 5      Section 0, Para 28, 25 chars.

how they'd been covered.

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Passage 4 of 5      Section 0, Para 30, 819 chars.

Well, for the practical skills that had to be assessed during the practical lesson, things like the ability to measure and focus the microscope and what...you know, all those sort of practical things that are marked there and then, we'd have little they weren't really rubrics little mark sheets for each child, with the headings and what they got. So it was there. The skills were listed, what they how they'd done on each skill was listed um and that was then stapled to the written work and outcomes and that sort of thing.

The way in which Biology sort of separates some of the different levels of skills is in terms of you know, they need to design an experiment, they also need to be able to carry out the experiment, so that if their design is faulty, they're not penalising themselves in the carrying out.

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Passage 5 of 5      Section 0, Para 34, 280 chars.

Most of the work covered had to go into the portfolio. There just isn't time to some people couldn't manage it but there isn't time to do a lot of extra practicals, extra tests and things, but on the whole, they...what went into the portfolio was, to a large extent, prescribed.

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NVivo revision 2.0.161      Licensee: Barbara

Project: CDA 2      User: Administrator      Date: 5/23/2005 - 10:25:08 PM

#### DOCUMENT CODING REPORT

Document:      XXXXXX Teacher 3

Created:      2/25/2005 - 3:26:57 PM

Modified:      5/23/2005 - 3:06:30 PM

Description:

INTERVIEW WITH XXXXXXXX

TEACHER#3

Experience 2

Training none

Node: Assessment

Passage 1 of 11      Section 0, Para 30, 163 chars.

As long as there are ten or six learners whose portfolios are up to date, I don't mind because for the moderation I will simply take the ones that are up to date.

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Passage 2 of 11      Section 0, Para 34, 275 chars.

I was at moderation, we were told that they sometimes don't take the marks for, the marks. Say for instance, if the learners CASS mark is too high compared to the exam mark they don't concede to the marks on the portfolio. They simply take the exam mark and divide it again.

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Passage 3 of 11      Section 0, Para 36, 163 chars.

The job? Hmm, the job of a portfolio should be to make it easy for the teacher for when it comes to moderation, but it doesn't serve that, it doesn't serve that.

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Passage 4 of 11      Section 0, Para 40, 170 chars.

It is too much work. It is too much, we are required to give at least four (inaudible) tests, class tests, six, examine, June exam, (inaudible) exam. It's too much work.

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Passage 5 of 11      Section 0, Para 54, 171 chars.

Our moderation was in October, So I called upon the students to bring all their tests, then we take the portfolios from the cupboard and we give them to them to organise.

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Passage 6 of 11      Section 0, Para 58, 32 chars.

I've got a plan for next year.

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Passage 7 of 11      Section 0, Para 60, 165 chars.

I'm for every test that I give them, I'm not going to give them their scripts, I will simply show them them and then take them back and I will organise them myself.

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Passage 8 of 11      Section 0, Para 72, 64 chars.

I don't think the idea of portfolios served students this year.

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Passage 9 of 11      Section 0, Para 74, 440 chars.

Portfolios. I don't think there's a need for learners portfolio, as well as there is a one for the teacher because I record all the class tests I have, I file them in my portfolio, the marks are in my portfolio. I don't think there is a need really for a learners portfolio. They can simply look at my portfolio and see the things that I have covered for the year. Because I won't cheat, I won't say I've given them this test if I haven't.

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Passage 10 of 11      Section 0, Para 76, 184 chars.

You have to produce your portfolio for moderation and then they check that against the learner's portfolio so they want to confirm that you have indeed done what is in your portfolio.

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Passage 11 of 11      Section 0, Paras 77 to 78, 113 chars.

BARBARA: And what do you think about that? What do you think about that? TEACHER: It's bad, it's bad, it's bad.

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## Appendix D - Discourse Analysis Diagram

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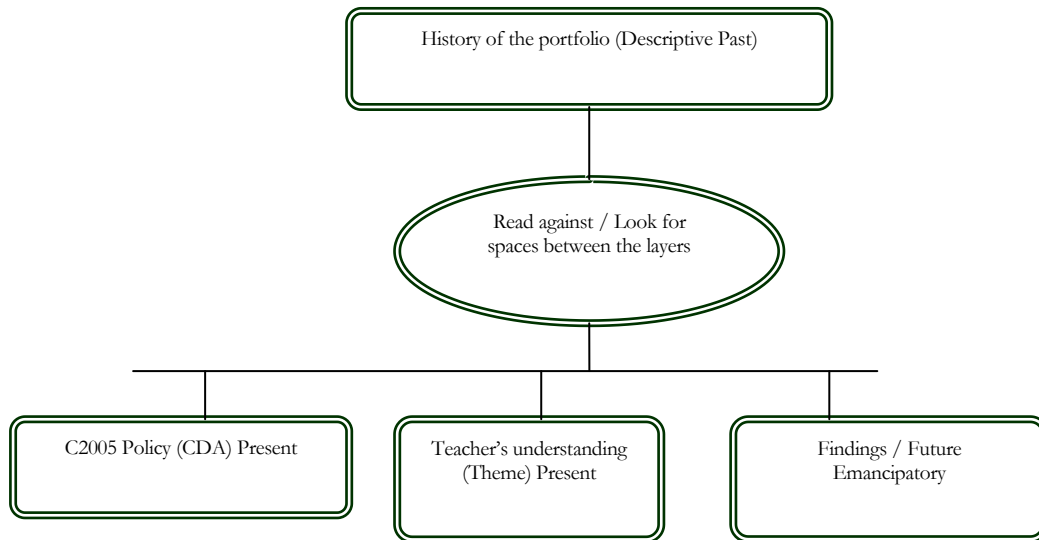


Figure D-1:

**Social Transformation-** Aimed at ensuring equality among all South Africans and to provide opportunities for all sections of the population. (Passed by- The National Constitution of the Republic of South Africa-Post apartheid)

**Outcomes-Based Education-** (OBE)- Outcomes are to be achieved by the end of the education process. Learner- centered and activity-based approach to education. (The National Curriculum Statement)

- Identify and solve problems (critical thinking)
- Work with others (Team)
- Analyze information critically
- Use science and technology effectively and showing responsibility for the environment and others.
- Recognize that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation, (takes more than one to solve the bigger problems.)

**Integration and Applied Competence-** Cross curricular learning. (National Qualifications framework) three competences-practical, foundational and reflective.

**Progression-** Each grade level is clearly set; (outcomes). They build on each other.

**Articulation and Portability-** The “bands” are set to meet a smooth transition from high school to further training.

**Portability-** Subject or units and how transferable they are to another qualification in a different learning pathway of the same National Qualification Framework.

**Valuing Indigenous Knowledge Systems-** Further education and training band must:

- Have access to, and succeed in, lifelong education and training of **good** quality.
- Demonstrate an ability to think logically and analytically as well as holistically and laterally.
- Be able to transfer skills from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

**Learning Field-** Occupation linked (Unified Arts)

- Languages
- Art and culture
- Business, commerce, and services studies
- Manufacturing, Engineering, and technology

**Learning Programme Guidelines-** The scope of learning and assessment for three grades in the further education and training band, i.e. 10-12. The guidelines assist the teacher and other learning program developers to plan and design quality learning, teaching, and assessment programs.

## **Appendix E- Continuation of National Curriculum Outcome-Based 10-12**

## 10-6 Notes Continuation of National Curriculum Outcome-Based 10-12

### Chapter-2 Languages (Second)

**Purpose-** In view of many languages and cultures throughout South Africa, its citizens must be able to communicate. Learners are required to be able to include at least **two** official languages as fundamental subjects. Further languages may be taken as core/elective subject.

**Home Language-** (Good base by grade 10) including reading and writing

**First Language-** including reading and writing

**Second Language-** (Choice) emphasis on listening and speaking

**Language levels-** official languages in the education and training band are:

1. Afrikaans
2. English
3. IsiNdebele
4. IsiXhosa
5. IsiZulu
6. Sepedi (Sesotho SaLeboa)
7. Sesotho
8. Setswana
9. Siswati
10. Tshivenda
11. Xitsonga
12. Sign Language- (Pan African Language Board endorsed)

### Learning Outcomes:

1. Listening and speaking
2. Reading and reviewing
3. Writing and presenting- The learner is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts. \*\*\*

*The aim is to produce competent, versatile, writers who will be able to use their skills to develop appropriate written, visual and multi-media texts for a variety of purposes.*

4. Language- use structure and conventions appropriately and effectively

### Writing and Presenting Outcome #3

- *Demonstrates planning skills for writing a specific purpose, audience, and context. (10.1/11.1/12.1)*
- *Demonstrates the use of writing strategies and techniques for a first draft (10.2/11.2/12.2)*
- *Reflects on own work, considering the opinion of others, redrafts and presents (10.3/11.3/12.3)*

**10/6 Notes National Curriculum Outcome Based 10-12**

**Scale of Achievement for the National Curriculum Statement 10-12**

**6-Outstanding 80-100**

**5-Meritorious 60-79**

**4- Satisfactory 50-59**

**3- Adequate 40-49**

**2- Partial 30-39**

**1- Inadequate 0-29**

## Appendix F - Letter

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Rhodes  
University  
Education  
Department

4 January 2005

XXXX College

Dear Sir or Madam:

I want to thank you for volunteering to participate in the portfolio research. I want to assure you that your confidentiality will be of high priority. Interview transcripts will be given to you for validation before any analyses will begin and professional conduct will be followed throughout the research endeavor. All dates and times will be kept between the teacher and the researcher. If schedule changes must be met do to unforeseen circumstance, both parties will agree in advance to the change and rescheduling will be made to the satisfactory to both parties. Upon the signature to this document, the participant agrees to allow the researcher to conduct two personal interviews, a survey and eight focus group interviews over a span of seven months. Thank you once again for allowing to me to conduct my researcher in your school and for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Jones  
Ph.D. Student

Yes, I agree to participate in Barbara Jones' portfolio research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date