

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Investigating the implementation of continuous assessment at the  
lower primary phase in a Namibian school.**

**Submitted by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Many Namibian teachers experience difficulties in actualising the principles of learner-centred education, one of which being continuous assessment. Continuous assessment serves important formative purposes. That is, it can inform education stakeholders and help improve learners' progress in the teaching and learning environment. Although a great deal is known about continuous assessment in general, not much is yet known about how Namibian lower primary teachers actually understand and implement continuous assessment in the classroom. This study investigates the assessment practices of three Grade Three teachers in a school in Oshana Region of Namibia.

The study found that although the teachers who participated in the investigation have a reasonably sound knowledge of continuous assessment in theory, they lack implementation skills. They were unable to effectively transfer what they know to what they actually do. This study found that as much as training of teachers is important, the ongoing professional development of teachers is more appropriate for enhancing a complex understanding of issues related to learner-centred education that will help them to manage continuous assessment more effectively.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **AN OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Learner-centred education as adopted by the Namibian curriculum reform of 1992 is generally believed to enrich learners' educational achievement as it provides a holistic way of learning. Continuous assessment is an important aspect of learner-centeredness. Its formative role in teaching and learning has the potential to significantly enhance the overall quality of learners' efforts. In this thesis I investigate the implementation of continuous assessment by three lower primary teachers in a Namibian school.

In this chapter I provide a brief contextual background for the research. I describe the region in which the research was conducted (see Figure 1), and describe some of the background of the people of this region. I then give some educational statistics for the region in terms of schools, learners and teachers. I locate all of this within the context of Namibia's educational reform initiatives. The later parts of the chapter outline the contents of the thesis itself.

### **1.2 Contextual background**

#### **1.2.1 The region**

This study took place at a primary school in Oshana region in the northern part of Namibia. Overleaf is a map of Namibia showing its regions. Oshana Region, number 11 on the map, is one of the four northern Regions, which occupy what was known as Ovamboland prior to Namibia's independence. Oshana is the smallest of Namibia's thirteen Regions. It is bounded by Omusati Region in the west, Ohangwena Region in the north, Oshikoto Region in the east and Kunene Region in the south. It has an area of 5291 square kilometres and a population of about 161 916 people estimate based on a census conducted in 2001. The region is well known for its vast water pans or watercourses (referred to as 'oshana' in the local languages). It is from this local word 'oshana' that the region got its name. It is generally flat, stoneless grassland. There are

some sparsely-populated areas that could be classified as semi-desert. Local inhabitants sustain cattle and goats and grow mainly millet (mahangu), melons and beans.



**Figure 1. Regions of Namibia**

(Sue Abraham, 2006. Graphic Design Unit, Rhodes University. Grahamstown.)

According to the Oshana Education Management Information System (Fifteenth school day statistics 2006), Oshana has 129 schools, of which 122 are government and 7 are private. These schools are divided into four circuits. Each circuit consists of about 30 schools, the biggest circuit comprising 43. Circuits are further divided into “clusters”. A cluster is a group of schools which are close and easily accessible to each other (Dittmar, Mendelsohn & Ward, 2002:4). Each cluster is comprised of between five and seven

schools, with one school serving as the cluster center. There are twenty-two clusters in the Oshana Region.

Lower primary education is offered at 108 schools in the Region. The Region caters to about 53 000 learners; of whom about 20 000 attend the lower primary grades (Grades 1-4). There are 156 Grade Three class groups in the region, providing education for about 4 500 Grade Three learners. The Region employs about 1755 teachers. The majority are professionally qualified (have a teaching qualification equivalent to or better than Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD)). However, there are also many under-qualified teachers (a teaching qualification lower than BETD). Exact numbers are not available. When necessary Namibian schools use the services of relief teachers (mostly unqualified teachers working on a temporary basis, though these are in very limited numbers).

The site of this study is a school on the outskirts of Oshakati. The school falls within the Oshakati circuit, and some of the pupils travel daily from within Oshakati. Oshakati is the biggest of the three urban centres in Oshana (the other two being Ongwediva and Ondangwa). It is a vast, sprawling town covering about 62 square kilometres. Based on the 2001 Population and Housing census the population is about 43 000.

In Namibia the average teacher-learner ratio in the Lower Primary phase is 1:35 (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 2001). However, in Oshana some schools have classroom numbers as high as 45 to 50. There are also some very small schools (especially in the semi-desert areas). Such schools may have fewer than 15 learners. Several of these smaller schools offer multi-grade teaching.

The following section provides a brief contextual overview of the Namibian Education reform process.

### **1.2.2 Namibia education reform**

The national policy document *Toward education for all: A development brief for Education, Culture and Training* argued for curriculum reform based on the goals of quality, equity, access and democracy (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 1993:120). The Namibian government's commitment to a shift away from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education (LCE) focusing on learning with understanding (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005a:30), has characterised the reform process and shaped education policy. LCE in the Namibian context is interpreted through social constructivism, and the belief that learners construct meaning as they make sense of their world (Johannesen, in Squazzin & van Graan 1998:21). The shift in educational theory necessitated that the role of assessment be revisited.

Shepard (2000:7) argued that to be compatible with, and to support a social-constructivist model of teaching and learning, "classroom assessment must change its form and content, and the way in which it is perceived by teachers and students". It is essential that assessment achieve a wide range of purposes in the current approach to teaching and learning. For example, it has to support teaching and learning, inform learners and parents, and inform selection and promotional decisions (Gipps, 1996; Namibia. MEC, 1993; Namibia. National Institute of Educational Development [NIED], 2003). In order to meet all these purposes, assessment needs to be as 'authentic' as possible. It should measure not only what has been remembered, but also what is understood and what can be applied from what has been learned in a range of contexts (Siebörger, 1998).

A study carried out in 1990 by the University of Cambridge local examinations syndicate (cited in *Toward education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training*) claimed that the examination and assessment procedures used at that time in Namibia were out of line with educational objectives. It was argued that examinations tended to emphasize failure and seemed much more interested in what learners did not know, leaving little room for a learner's own imagination or thinking. This same study insisted that "if this situation is to be reversed and the emphasis placed on positive

achievement then a great effort will need to be made to re-educate all concerned” (Namibian. MEC, 1993:124).

Teachers as implementers of assessment policy need to develop what is called “assessment literacy” (Namibia. NIED, 2003:31). This document claims that teachers should “be able to elicit reliable and valid information of the learners’ performance, to interpret the information, to communicate what it means back to the learners and parents, and to know what to do to improve performance” (Namibia. NIED, 2003:32). It is important that teachers know the purpose of assessment and how to implement it properly because assessment influences “life chances way beyond the point of leaving schools” (Maree & Fraser, 2004:27).

Through its Ministry of Education the Government of Namibia provides teachers with various opportunities to upgrade their understanding of continuous assessment through several workshops. These workshops are either initiated by the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) or individual advisory teachers in the regions. There are also several ongoing projects to assist teachers in enhancing their understanding of the principles of learner-centred education and so improve their implementation thereof.

The Namibian policy document *Toward Education for All: A development brief for Education, Culture and Training* recommended that assessment in the Lower Primary education (Grades 1-4) rely on informal continuous assessment. “No formal examinations, internal or external will be administered at this level. Only in exceptional cases, determined individually, will a learner not be promoted between grades at the lower primary level” (Namibia. MEC, 1993:129). This marked a shift from the previous way of assessing where learners in the lower primary, especially in Grade Four, sat for pen and paper examinations at the end of every term and wrote tests during term time. Younger learners in Grade One or Two had oral examinations. Their teachers would question them on a one to one basis. Often a whole week would be dedicated to these activities. In such cases, if a learner was found not able to successfully answer most of

the questions, she or he was made to repeat the grade (irrespective of his or her age or whether he or she had repeated the same grade several times already).

In the new system learners in the Lower Primary phase are assessed on an informal continuous basis. This system encourages the use of a variety of assessment strategies to assess learners' achievements of basic competencies as specified in the syllabus. It also encourages teachers to give compensatory or enrichment teaching to learners who need it. As learners are assessed and assisted continuously it is hoped that most of them will be able to progress through the lower primary grades without needing to repeat any grade. This implies that a "... wide range of achievement levels will be accepted" (Namibia. MEC, 1993:129). The new system is based on learner-centred education which is generally better able to accommodate all learners (low achievers, late developers, average and gifted learners). Inevitably a few, even with extensive help, will still need to repeat one or more grades but generally the view is that learners probably benefit more if they remain with learners of their age.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Based on my experience as an advisory teacher, I have observed that some lower primary teachers appear to have difficulties in implementing continuous assessment. At times fewer activities are given to learners. Sometimes the activities given are not well-defined in terms of what learners should do in order to show individual achievement based on the basic competencies of a syllabus. I also noted that sometimes learners' marks are not recorded. This has given rise to the potential for discrepancies between lower primary learners' actual capability and the 'marks' or 'scores' they are assigned. For example, a learner may be awarded a B grade in Mathematics, but be unable to solve simple calculations correctly. It is my concern for such discrepancies as these that has motivated this investigation of lower primary teachers' implementation of continuous assessment.

## 1.4 Research goals

My two goals for this study are:

- Firstly, to explore lower primary teachers' *understanding* of the policy and guidelines pertaining to continuous assessment; and,
- Secondly, to investigate these teachers' *implementation* of continuous assessment.

## 1.5 Chapter Outlines

There now follows a brief synopsis of the ensuing chapters.

In **Chapter Two**, some of the literature that informs the findings of this study is reviewed. Literature reviewed was selected both from within Namibia and from abroad. The chapter explores some key aspects of assessment. It also gives a brief but detailed overview of the events that led to the Namibian education reform process and consequently to changes in assessment policy and practice.

**Chapter Three** deals with methods. Here I identify and justify my choice of research orientation and explain how my sampling, data collection and data analyses were done. Further, I discuss issues of ethics and validity and finally give brief consideration to some of the limitations of this study.

In **Chapter Four**, I present the data regarding the continuous assessment insights and practices of the lower primary teachers selected to take part in the investigation. To present data relevant to my research goals, the data are presented under the following five sub-headings:

- Teachers' experience and qualifications
- Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment
- Teachers' implementation of continuous assessment

- Teachers' recording and reporting of continuous assessment
- Problems teachers experience regarding continuous assessment

In **Chapter Five** I examine the findings presented in Chapter Four. The discussion is guided by my research goals as indicated in section 1.4 and informed by the literature review in Chapter Two. The findings are discussed under the following categories that emerged from data presented in Chapter Four.

- Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment: Knowing in principle is not enough.
- Teachers' implementation of continuous assessment: Superficial understanding hampers execution.
- Providing feedback to enhance learning
- Recording and reporting on continuous assessment.
- Some other problems

**Chapter Six** draws together the key threads of the study and emphasises the main findings. I briefly indicate lessons I personally learned from the study and make some tentative suggestions for improvement and future research regarding lower primary continuous assessment practices. I conclude with a reflection on what I consider to have been, for me, some of the most valuable aspects of this investigation, despite its inevitable limitations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Here I analyze literature relevant to assessment, with special emphasis on continuous assessment in the lower primary phase. I have selected literature both from within Namibia and abroad. Literature from the wider field helps to better locate continuous assessment within its broader context, while Namibian literature is used to inform the particular context of the study.

The review starts with an exploration of some key aspects of assessment. I then give a brief overview of events that led to the Namibian education reform process, and consequently to changes in assessment practices. Finally I discuss continuous assessment in more detail, both generally and with specific reference to Namibian lower primary classrooms.

#### **2.2 Assessment in general: some key aspects**

##### **2.2.1 Definition**

According to Lloyd-Jones, Bray, Johnson and Currie (1986:1), assessment “covers any of the situations in which some aspect of a pupil’s education is in some sense measured, whether this measurement is by a teacher, an examiner or indeed the pupil himself”. It is a “process of gathering, interpreting, recording and using information about pupils’ responses to an educational task” (Harlen et al., cited in Lambert, in Bailey & Fox, 1996:187). It is also important to note that with time, assessment was understood to mean more than measurement as it is seen to “involve all techniques including observations and oral questions” (Oosterhof, 2003:3). Thus assessment involves both formal (such as examinations, end of unit tests, quizzes, graded homework and so on) and informal

elements (such as reading learners' work, observing what they are doing and how they behave in a learning process, listening to their questions and so on).

### 2. 2. 2 The role of assessment

Lambert (1997) identified the following five *major* roles for assessment in education:

**Formative:** Occurs during the teaching and learning process. Its purpose is to establish whether sufficient mastery of skills has been achieved or whether further work is required. Formative assessment is generally a result of both formal and informal continuous assessment.

**Diagnostic:** Identifies whether learners have the skills and other characteristics needed to enable them to successfully acquire what they are currently learning. It is also used to “establish underlying causes for a student’s failing to learn a skill” (Oosterhof, 2003:5).

**Certification:** Gathers information for the purpose of selecting learners for employment or continuing education.

**Summative:** Uses information to determine the level of pupils’ achievements across a number of skills at points during and at the end of school.

**Evaluative:** Provides results which can be used by institutions and agencies (donors) to make statements about the effectiveness of such institutions.

Wilmot distinguished between two different aspects of the process: assessment *of* learning which serves a summative purpose, and assessment *for* learning which serves a formative purpose (2003).

In the following section I consider some differences between summative and formative assessment.

### **2. 2. 3 Summative versus formative assessment**

As noted in 2.2.2, assessment for summative purposes is administered mainly at the end of a unit of learning, term or year. This kind of assessment is concerned more with the end product than with the process of learning. Examples of summative assessment include examinations and tests. Assessment of this nature aims at assessing what a learner has achieved at the end of a series of tasks. It does not necessarily assess to inform and improve the teaching-learning process as such.

Summative assessment is generally norm-referenced. This causes pressure among both learners and teachers to improve. It therefore runs the risk that teachers will ‘teach to the test’. This “...distorts the curriculum by reducing time for open-ended discussions, fieldwork and other activities of interest that may encourage high-order thinking” (Lambert & Balderstone, 2000:336). Since summative assessment generally requires norm-referenced interpretations it may be that it is perceived as less appropriate for today’s learning and teaching.

Assessment for formative purposes is more explicitly used as a tool for learning. This kind of assessment “provides necessary information to facilitate children’s progress toward identified goals and objectives” (McAfee & Leong, 2002:252). It uses a range of assessment opportunities, both informal and formal, such as essays and oral discussions, individual tasks and cooperative tasks. According to Lloyd-Jones et al. (1986), formative assessment may not be used to judge and should concentrate on positive encouragement and constructive criticism.

Formative assessment may take place at the beginning of a lesson to determine learners’ prior knowledge. It may also take place at the end of a lesson to assess what has been acquired so far in order to determine what ought to be done next. But mostly formative assessment takes place during a lesson or unit of work to inform and shape the teaching-learning process. That is to “determine whether instruction should continue, should be modified, or should cease” (Oosterhof, 2003:17). Hence, it is more concerned with the *process* of learning, and less with the *end product*.

The fact that formative assessment is diagnostic allows teachers “to design and implement appropriate learning programs which build and extend their learners’ understanding” (Wilmot, 2003:10). Hence formative assessment is, as Black and Wiliam argue, “at the heart of effective teaching” (1998:2).

#### **2. 2. 4 Some points of reference in assessment**

Wilmot (2003) identified two main types of assessment: norm-referenced assessment and criterion-referenced assessment. Siebörger identified a third type of assessment: *self-referencing assessment* (1998). Others (Oosterhof, 2003, Siebörger, 1998, Lambert & Lines, 2000) refer to these types of assessment as frames/points of reference. I will briefly look at each of these.

**Norm-referenced assessment** compares a learner’s performance or attainment to the ‘norm’ or average for any group of similar learners (Wilmot, 2003; Oosterhof, 2003; Lambert & Lines, 2000). Although this type of assessment enables teachers to gather evidence of how much a learner knows in relation to the norm, it reflects little about what a learner has mastered or understood (Oosterhof, 2003). In other words, it does not describe specific skills that a learner has acquired. Norm-referenced assessment mainly awards numerical points for what a learner has scored (e.g. 45%) and gives the group average (e.g. 52%), so that learners or their parents can compare individual learners’ performances with the group average.

**Criterion-referenced assessment** “compares a learner’s performance or attainment to a set of standards for any given subject or learning area rather than to other individuals” (Wilmot, 2003:14). This means that a “score is being interpreted in terms of the skills the test measures” (Oosterhof, 2003:13). Instead of giving numerical points, criterion referenced assessment gives clear indications of what learners can or cannot do regarding the learning competencies assessed. For example, instead of giving numerical points it gives descriptions such as, learner A can add two digit numbers but has difficulties in multiplying two digit numbers with a one digit number. Using criteria as points of

reference makes it easier for teachers to give written comments. Written comments benefit learners because they “tend to be descriptive of the weaknesses and strengths and what improvement should be made” (Black, Harrison, Lee & Marshall, 2002:8).

In **self-referenced assessment**, a learner’s achievement is measured against his or her previous achievement. For example, a teacher marks a learner’s essay and notices that a learner has done much better than the previous time. A teacher will provide feedback to the effect that “*this is a very big improvement since last term*”. The point of reference is the learner him or herself (Siebörger, 1998).

Siebörger argued that in order to improve assessment, different types of assessment should complement each other (1998). This means that it is not a matter of doing away with one type of assessment. It is the *purpose* of assessment that should dictate the choice of reference. What is important is that each assessment has an appropriate point of reference. “Without a good reference a score lacks meaning” (Oosterhof, 2003:14). For example, Lambert indicated that “if the purpose of assessment is to certificate, assessment can adopt certain features, such as externally set papers and rigorously moderated mark schemes for it to gain an adequate level of public confidence for its primary role” (in Bailey & Fox, 1996:188).

### **2.2.5 Assessment: Who benefits**

According to McAfee and Leong (2002) assessment benefits a number of people. This includes teachers, learners, parents and the community at large.

**Teachers:** Assessment helps teachers identify learners’ weaknesses and strengths. It also helps them to identify weaknesses in their own teaching methods and strategies, and helps to improve their abilities to construct better assessment tasks.

**Learners:** Formative assessment motivates learners in providing constructive feedback and opportunities to build feedback into their work. Learners’ own evaluations (or those

of their teachers or peers) help them to identify and respond constructively to their own weaknesses and strengths.

**Parents and community:** Assessment can be used to guide parents in supporting their children's study or even in discussions about career choices. Through assessment communities can determine whether schools and the education system in general are transmitting appropriate values, norms and attitudes for a society.

**Education Department:** Education Departments benefit because assessment results are used to evaluate institutions such as schools as to whether they are effective and are able to help children learn.

### **2.2.6 Characteristics of good assessment: Validity and reliability**

Regardless of the reasons for sharing assessment information or the intended recipient, such information must be valid and reliable (McAfee & Leong, 2002).

According to Messick (1989), "the single most important characteristic of good assessment information is its ability to help the teacher to make a correct decision" (cited in Airasian, 1996:19). This means that assessment information should be valid. Wrong decisions will never lead to either good understanding of a learner or to good corrective interventions. Hence, according to Airasian, the following should be borne in mind if assessment **validity** is to be achieved.

- Assessment tasks must closely match what was taught in terms of content, format and difficulty.
- Assessment results must have a message or meaning to the assessor. The assessor must understand what each score or grade means. For example, if a teacher gives a D to a learner, the teacher should know why that specific learner got a D and not an A.
- Assessment tasks should give results that can be judged on general terms. In other words, results should give indications of what learners can generally do. For

example, if a learner can do task A, he/she must also be able to do well in similar tasks.

(1996:18)

McAfee and Leong also argued that to be valid, assessment must provide evidence about what it is supposed to assess and not something else (2002). For example, if a teacher wants to assess whether a learner can count, he/she should give appropriate assessment tasks that enable the learner to show that he/she can count.

To ensure validity assessment should also be done across a number of contexts. For example, to assess a learner's communication skills a teacher must assess the learner's written essays, his/her oral communication with peers and with adults such as teachers, both inside and outside the classroom.

Unreliable or inconsistent information will not help teachers make decisions they can trust. Hence, according to Airasian another "...important characteristic of good assessment information is its consistency or reliability" (1996:20). To increase reliability, teachers need to assess the same behaviors more than once. They also need either to use different assessment strategies or assess at different times because as McAfee and Leong argue "the way information is collected, the assessment situation, the child's mental or physical state, and lucky or unlucky guesses can influence reliability" (2002:25).

In the next section I briefly look at continuous assessment in its broader terms.

### **2.3 Some key dimensions of continuous assessment**

Continuous assessment is essentially a form of formative assessment. McAfee and Leong (2002:251) define it as a "type of assessment embedded within the daily processes of instruction so that appraisal of children's responses and action - and subsequent adjustment of curriculum and teaching - is ongoing". This means that continuous assessment involves ongoing monitoring of learners' progress toward achieving specific

outcomes. Assessment information is used both to provide feedback and to feed forward in the teaching-learning process. Continuous assessment gives regular feedback and thus motivates and 'stimulates' learners on a continuous basis (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998; Stepanek, 2002).

Lambert and Lines (2000) argued that to teach successfully, teaching should not precede assessment; they should go hand in hand. The outcomes of early informal assessments should help to shape the teaching programme. Continuous assessment is therefore an ideal way to assess successful learning as it provides both "feedback and feed forward" in the teaching and learning process (Bennett & Dunne in Moon & Mayes, 1994:55). Research has shown that "feedback provided to learners proved to be the single most powerful factor that enhances learning achievements" (Mason, 2005:5).

Feedback is one of the two principle components of continuous assessment (Blythe, 1998). In order for feedback to be successful it needs to occur frequently and should provide learners with information about how well they have performed and how they can improve. It should inform teachers' future planning and be informed by the observations made by the teacher, the learner him/herself and by peers (Blythe, 1998). Importantly, as Black and Wiliam argue, "feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work and should avoid comparisons with other pupils" (1998:9).

The second principle component of continuous assessment according to Blythe is establishing assessment criteria. According to Blythe assessment criteria should be clearly and explicitly explained at the beginning of each task, they should be related to the aims of the curriculum, and should be known to everyone undertaking the task (1998).

In similar vein, Black, et al., (2002:12) argued that assessment criteria "must be made transparent to learners to enable them to have a clear overview both of the aims of their work and of what it means to complete it successfully". A further benefit of using transparent assessment criteria is that the process of negotiating criteria encourages

communication and improves the relationship between teachers and learners. This relationship is especially important in learner-centred education because it encourages openness, promotes good communication and honesty, which are all necessary for good learning. Since continuous assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning, when teachers plan their lessons they should also indicate the outcomes that they want to achieve. According to Le Grange and Reddy, the outcomes should be learner-oriented, clear and observable, and should indicate what the learner is expected to demonstrate at the end of the learning process. They further stated that assessment activities should generally use action verb such as name, explain, define, apply, distinguish, measure and so on in order for the learners to know what is expected from them. Words that are open to different interpretations should be avoided (1998).

It is generally recognized that continuous assessment is time-consuming. Teachers may feel overwhelmed by their marking commitments. However, with continuous assessment, in addition to teacher feedback, learners can also do peer-assessment and self-assessment which is an advantage of assessment in learner-centred education. It is crucial however that at every point of assessment, learners are provided not only with assessment criteria but also with meaningful feedback (Blythe, 1998).

## **2. 4 Recording and reporting evidence of learning**

Le Grange and Reddy argued, “essential elements that ensure successful implementation of continuous assessment are record keeping and reporting” (1998:27). They further stated that information recorded and reported should never be presented in isolation but should be done clearly and simply so that the intended audiences can interpret it correctly (1998). Siebörger also noted that recording and reporting systems should contain more than marks or symbols. They should list the outcomes, assessment criteria and performance indicators to be achieved, together with comments and levels attained (1998).

Oosterhof (2003) listed the following systems for reporting learners' progress: percentage grade, letter grades, pass-fail marks, checklists, written description and parent conferences, while Kotze discussed rubrics (in Maree & Fraser, 2004). For formative purposes the last four items are generally more appropriate – i.e. checklists, written description, parent conferences and rubrics. These systems of reporting describe learners' achievements in more detail and indicate what a learner can and cannot do. They can also be used to report on learners' achievement on life skill competencies as opposed to academic skills only. Oosterhof indicated that it is vital for parents to be sensitized on how to read their children's reports, especially checklists. If they do not understand them, little or nothing is gained by giving checklists. Checklists should therefore be accompanied by a brief written description to help parents in the interpretation of the children's ratings (2003).

The feasibility study on continuous assessment that was done in Malawi by the American Institutes of Research in collaboration with the Academy of Education Development in 2003, indicated that simple recording and reporting procedures are some of the main features of continuous assessment. To record, and ultimately report formatively, they created six levels of progress, each having its own set of assessments that were directly connected to curriculum content in each of the three subjects used in the study (Mathematics, English and Chichewa). The first level which is the lowest assesses the simplest basic competencies while the sixth level which is the highest and most difficult one assesses the most complex basic competencies of a specific syllabus. Each of the six levels was known by a rainbow colour. Recording assessment this way not only shows clearly differences in levels of achievements but most importantly it is simple and easy to read. The study indicated that they “intentionally avoided lengthy and complicated calculations which have often been shown to be inaccurate, causing some pupils to fail unnecessarily or others to pass without merit” (Du Plessis, 2003:22).

## **2.5 Professional development of teachers**

Shepard argued that well-intentioned efforts to help learners improve on assessment tasks could be misdirected if teachers do not understand the philosophical and conceptual foundation of the intended curricular goals. He advises that to make changes that are conceptually meaningful, teachers need:

- Appropriate materials to use and adapt
- Time to reflect on their experiences and to develop new instructional approaches
- Ongoing support from experts to make clear the conceptual bases behind intended reforms.

(1995:43)

Shepard argued that for classroom assessment to change, teachers need help in abandoning traditional ways of assessing (2000). This may include giving them a variety of concrete examples of implementations demonstrated by teachers with whom they can identify. On the same issue, Black and Wiliam suggest that assessment changes should be introduced gradually (1998).

In the following two sections, current theory is discussed as related to the Namibian context. A historical overview of assessment in Namibia is provided and then Namibia's assessment policy is discussed.

## **2.6 A broad historical overview of Namibia's reform goals and their implications for assessment practices**

While assessment as such is clearly not something new to Namibian teachers, the term 'continuous assessment' only became widely used in the Namibian schools after Namibia's independence, 21 March 1990. This was a result of the curriculum reform that was introduced shortly after independence.

Prior to independence Namibia was governed by South Africa and educational provision was based largely on ethnicity and race. The majority of learners in Namibia were forced to follow Bantu education programs of South Africa. Bantu education was generally inferior to what was provided for the white population in Namibia, (then called South West Africa). Alberts notes that there was limited funding, many unqualified teachers, lack of proper facilities (such as classrooms) and literally no teaching and learning resources in 'native' schools across the country. The depth and breadth of the curriculum used in 'native' schools left much to be desired (in Otaala, Mostert, Keyter, & Shaimemanya, 1999).

According to Alberts, some of the main features of education and assessment in the period before independence were as follow:

- Teaching and assessment were mainly theoretical and not aimed at understanding.
- Memorizing and rote learning were the accepted ways of teaching and learning.
- Assessment aimed to find out what learners do not know and understand.
- The entire education system was examination driven.
- Continuous assessment played a minor part in the assessment system.
- Practical skills and performance skills were hardly acknowledged or tested.
- For technical subjects and languages a minor part of the marks was based on continuous assessment.

(quoted in Otaala, Mostert, Keyter & Shaimemanya, 1999:129)

This largely summative, often punitive, approach to assessment, coupled with the fact that the majority of Namibian learners struggled to find relevance in what was an essentially Eurocentric curriculum, led to high failure, repetition and dropout rates in Namibian schools before independence. Writing of South African circumstances, Macdonald and Burroughs argued that "when a formal education is imposed in a situation which is culturally different, the drop-out rate is a good indication of its negative effects" (1991:26). The same could probably be said in relation to Namibia.

After coming to power on 21 March 1990, the new Namibian government set about reforming the curriculum in order to make it relevant and useful to *all* Namibian citizens and to modernize all aspects of the curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning. In 1993, the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture produced its document “*Toward Education for All: A development Brief for Education, Culture and Training*”. The policy outlined in this document is based on the following four major goals:

**Access:** The goal of access aims to make education accessible to all, both in terms of expanding capacity and addressing the barriers that keep Namibian children from going to school.

**Equity:** The goal of equity aims for the provision of equitable access to schooling and to its benefits. It also promotes multiculturalism in Namibian institutions of learning and thus aims to redress injustices of the past.

**Quality:** The goal of quality includes the quality of teacher training (both pre- and in-service). Through quality training of teachers, the goal of quality ensures in principle that all learners receive quality education.

**Democracy:** The goal of democracy aims at ensuring broader participation and accountability amongst all Namibians. It encourages both learners and their parents to participate freely in educational affairs.

(Namibia. MEC, 1993:32-42)

The reform policy reoriented teaching towards learner-centred education, shifting it from the pre-independence approach to education that was generally teacher-centered. This was influenced by changes in worldview of what knowledge is and how it can be successfully acquired. This paradigm shift has affected views on what is to be learned, how it is to be learned and how learning should be assessed.

According to *Toward education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training*, the approach to learning and teaching should be a learner-centred one. Learner-centred education has its roots in a social constructivist view of knowledge. What this meant in educational terms was that:

- Formal education should start with the prior knowledge of the learners, derived both from in and out of schooling
- Formal schooling should nourish the natural curiosity of the learners by giving challenging and meaningful tasks
- Learners' ways of looking at things should be appreciated
- Learning and teaching should encourage both individual and cooperative learning
- Teachers should see learners as partners in the teaching process.

(Namibia. MEC, 1993:60).

The new understanding about teaching and learning has also caused a change in perception of the nature and purpose of assessment. The policy document *Toward Education for All: Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* argues that learner-centred education requires teachers to move “away from a narrow notion of examination to a broader and more inclusive concern with assessment and evaluation” (Namibia. MEC, 1993: 124). This is in line with international understandings of the paradigm shift on assessment. Gipps described this paradigm shift as “a move from a testing and examinations-as-hurdle model to an assessment model where we try to give all the candidates a real opportunity to show what they know, understand and can do” (1996:3).

## **2. 7 Assessment policies**

### **2. 7. 1 General policy on assessment**

In order to understand Namibian policy regarding continuous assessment, it needs to be framed within a general policy informing continuous assessment. With the reform and the adoption of learner-centred education, assessment was to serve the following purposes:

- To develop a reliable picture of each individual learner's progress and level of achievement in relation to minimum competencies specified in subject syllabuses.
- To expand the notion of assessment from examinations to a holistic way of assessment by using several tools for assessing and evaluating progress.

- To move the emphasis on failure toward an orientation that focuses on encouraging and recording achievement.
- To inform teachers, learners and parents of the learners' development as well as to determine appropriate supplementary or remedial strategies.

(Namibia. MEC, 1993:123-125)

The shift was thus from a summative to a formative role of assessment. Strong emphasis was thus placed on continuous assessment. As shown earlier, continuous assessment claims to focus on the ideals identified by the Namibia reform policy. Education reform also led to the introduction of new forms of criterion-based assessment at all levels. The Namibian policy document *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* stated that “in Basic Education, minimum competencies will be identified by which teachers and learners can monitor progress” (Namibia, MEC, 1993:124). These basic competencies are clearly articulated in the syllabi of different subjects.

In the following section I briefly focus on Namibian policy pertaining to continuous assessment.

### **2.7.2 Continuous assessment**

The Namibian document, *National policy guides: Lower primary* defines continuous assessment as “...the process of gathering information about how learners are progressing in their learning” (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005b:12). It went on to say that continuous assessment is integrated with teaching in order to help shape, direct and improve the teaching-learning process (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005b). This document further indicated the 12 principles of continuous assessment. It stated that continuous assessment should be “continuous, valid, reliable, fair, transparent, criterion-referenced, instructive, informal, holistic, informative to the teacher, informative to the learner and parents, and influence our teaching” (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005b:16). This description is in line with the way continuous assessment is viewed in learner-centred education in general.

According to the Namibian document *The Curriculum for the Lower Primary Phase Grades 1-4*, continuous assessment is appropriate for following a learner's progress and giving feedback on an on-going basis. It is also regarded as the only form of assessment whereby all the aims and objectives of the new curriculum can be assessed (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005a).

The Namibian policy document *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* indicates that “where previously examinations were generally regarded as the sole measure of success for individuals, they will now become one of several tools for assessing and evaluating progress” (Namibia. MEC, 1993:123). The use of multiple strategies of assessment ensures that learners are assessed in totality because different skills, judgments and knowledge can be assessed.

In the Lower Primary phase in Namibia, continuous assessment should be informal. *Toward education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training*, states “assessment will be informal and continuous in the Lower Primary phase, without internal or external examinations” (Namibia. MEC, 1993:61). I discuss informal continuous assessment below.

#### **(i) Informal continuous assessment**

The Namibian document *Pilot Curriculum guide for Formal Basic Education* explains that teachers should continuously assess the mastery of the basic competencies identified in the various syllabi in order to gain a picture of the “all-round progress of the learner” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1996:32). This should be done while learners are busy with their normal classroom activities: “Through structured observation of each learner's progress in learning and practice situations while they are investigating things, interpreting phenomena and data, applying knowledge, communicating, making value judgments, and in their participation in general” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1996:32).

*Towards improving continuous assessment in schools: A policy and information guide* distinguishes between less structured and more structured informal continuous assessment, both of which should be used in the Lower Primary phase. Less structured informal continuous assessment is “an assessment that is usually made on the spur of the moment or casually on selected class learners with the purpose of providing a teacher and learners with feedback on the effectiveness of a learning process by determining what some learners know and/or can demonstrate” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 1999:31). In other words, it is the kind of assessment of learners that is not planned in detail before-hand. It is done by observing learners’ performance during the learning process. This kind of assessment allows for immediate feedback to both teachers and learners and helps the teachers monitor the mastery of skills and the development of knowledge on a continuous basis. “Done over time, less structured continuous assessment gives a teacher a more all-round picture of a learner’s performance which should complement information gathered from the more structured informal continuous assessment” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 1996:22).

More structured informal continuous assessment is defined as assessment that is crafted for lower primary learners (Grades 1-4) and requires a relatively short administration time. In general, “the administration time should not exceed the common attention span of the learners and: (1) is valid and reliable; (2) is made on all class learners; (3) provides the learners with feedback on what they have learned; (4) enables the teacher to record the learner’s achievement, usually in the form of a letter grade” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1999:31).

More structured informal continuous assessment is mainly done through short tasks such as a quiz or a short test. It requires that a teacher plan and prepare tasks carefully, keeping in mind the basic competencies and the learning objectives of the curriculum. Ideally, more structured informal continuous assessment tasks should be planned at the beginning of each year to ensure that the syllabus is covered in a coherent way (Namibia. Ministry

of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1996). This also ensures that tasks are geared to assess most or all outcomes for a specific grade.

### **2.7.3 Guidelines for continuous assessment in the first language (mother tongue or home language)**

Since my classroom observations will be done on assessment of a first language (mother tongue) grade three, I decided to look at guidelines of assessing languages as given in the Namibian curriculum document *Continuous Assessment Record Book: Grade 3* (Appendix 7(a)). This document consists of guidelines on the completion of assessment record forms and the record forms themselves. There are two types of record forms, Continuous Assessment Class List and what I will call ‘Continuous Assessment Record Sheet’.

The overall learning outcomes of the first language in the lower primary phase are described as follows: “On completing grade 4, the learners can express themselves well orally, read appropriate texts, and write reasonably correctly for their everyday purposes in their mother tongue” (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005a:6). This learning outcome is made up of several basic competencies which are indicated in the first language syllabus. Basic competencies describe “what a learner ought to achieve as the outcome of a lesson or sequence of lessons. A teacher will identify a learner’s level of achievement by assessing how well they carry out the basic competencies” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1996:11).

The Namibian document *Continuous Assessment Record Book: Grade 3* states that in each weekly lesson plan provision should be made to assess all the different language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). The following guidelines for assessing languages are highlighted:

- Listening and speaking skills are combined both in the syllabus and in the continuous assessment record sheets. However, specific activities should be taught on each of the skills and therefore also separately assessed on the class list.

- In reading skills, both prepared reading (everyday reading lessons) and unprepared reading (unknown reading text on the same level) should be assessed.
- In writing skills, both creative and formal writing should be assessed.
- Handwriting is not being assessed as a separate component in language teaching. However, it should be regarded as one of the assessment criteria in all written work in all lower primary subjects.

(Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005a:3)

#### **2.7.4 Recording and reporting evidence of learning in the Namibian context**

As noted in section 2.2.8 a number of different tools can be used to record evidence of learning. However, in the Namibian context, continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase is recorded first on a class list and later on a Continuous Assessment Record Sheet (provided by the Ministry of Education). At the end of each term, assessment is then reported to parents in a school report (Appendix 8(c)).

According to the *Continuous Assessment Record Book: Grade Three*, teachers should award marks according to the 5-point assessment scale (5 being the highest and 1 the lowest). This is done both for ‘less’ and ‘more structured’ informal continuous assessment in all the subjects and for all the various skills, components and topics. Below I give the guidelines for recording marks in the first language for the first school term.

- 1) Marks awarded to learners are recorded on a class list (Appendix 8(d)) for approximately six weeks (half the term) for Assessment One. The same is also done during the last six weeks of a term for Assessment Two. In Namibia one school term is about 13 weeks.
- 2) In the middle (Assessment one) and at the end of the term (Assessment two) the teacher summarises marks in the class lists by calculating and rounding the marks for each of the skills (for example, speaking). The marks are then written on the Continuous Assessment Record sheets (Appendix 8(e)) in the appropriate columns based on different skills as full marks 1-5 (without decimal fractions).

- 3) All the marks from different skills in a language are then added up to give the total. The total is divided by the number of marks added together to give the average and the average is then converted into a grade or a symbol to give a grade for a specific assessment (Assessment One or Two). The values of assessment are: 5 = A, to 1 = E.
- 4) At the end of the first term the teacher makes a summary of the term's marks by adding the two totals (Assessment One and Assessment Two). The final average is the total of Assessment One and Two divided by two and is then again converted into a Grade or symbol. Only the final grade is carried over to the school report for parents.

(Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005c:1-2)

The same exercise is done during term two and three for Assessment Three and Four and assessment Five and Six respectively.

## **2.8 Continuous assessment: Implications for teaching and learning**

The introduction of formative continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase has clear implications for the teaching-learning processes. Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development put continuous assessment at the heart of teaching. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the gap between what a child can do unassisted and what he/she can do with the assistance of knowledgeable others (Capel, Leask & Turner, 1995:220). Knowledgeable others may be teachers, more capable peers or parents. Formative continuous assessment makes it possible for teachers to be aware of what learners know and can do and what they do not know and cannot do. It helps teachers not only to identify their learners' ZPD, but also as Wiliam and Black put it formative assessment is used "...to close the gap between actual and desired levels of performance" (1996:542).

For Vygotsky the only good learning is that which is in advance of learners' development (Hendricks, 2003:5). Knowing learners' zone of proximal development enables teachers

to “present ideas in advance of development” (Hondson & Hondson, 1998:36), which to Vygotsky represents good teaching. The identification of this gap (ZPD) is also useful to learners. Doyle and Mallet argue that “the feeling of intellectual uneasiness when we find a tantalizing gap in our knowledge is an excellent foundation for learning” (1994:4).

Learners enter classes with different prior knowledge. This arises from differences in their background and experiences. However, these “schemata as they are generally called, are likely to be incomplete, hazy or even plain wrong (Bennet & Dunne in Moon & Mayes, 1994:51). It is a teacher’s responsibility to find effective ways to modify, extend or elaborate upon what a learner already knows. Generally, this requires varieties of teaching and assessment strategies and methods.

The importance of prior knowledge in learning cannot be over emphasized. The late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu put forward what he called the theory of cultural and social reproduction. One of the concepts referred to in his theory is cultural capital, “which refers to the assets (knowledge, experience, attitude etc.) that learners bring to the classroom” (Robertson, 2005:10). According to Bourdieu learners’ cultural capital affects their educational returns. Those who have more of the requisite cultural capital get more returns and those who have less get less. Education in its current form favours some learners either through the language used at school or the culture of school. Suitably sophisticated assessment of prior learning ought to be able to identify the lack of certain skills of say, formerly disadvantaged learners, thus alerting the teacher to the need to develop appropriate responses. Of course finding suitable responses has its own challenges.

The slogan “all learners can learn” (Shepard, 2000:7) challenges teachers to provide opportunities for high quality instruction for diverse learners. It encourages teachers to practice differential teaching in order to cater for more of their learners’ individual learning needs. It encourages the use of varieties of assessment strategies and methods as well as the assessment of different skills and abilities of learners. Continuous assessment is likely to be the best tool to identify these individual needs.

Although assessment should be done on a continuous basis it should be non-threatening to learners. It should not be associated with stupidity or cleverness. Learners should look forward to assessment and see its focus as “one of facilitating learning rather than one of making judgments” (Oosterhof, 2003:205).

A feasibility study done in Malawi by the American Institutes for Research in collaboration with the Academy for Education Development in 2003, indicated that in order to encourage learners to show what they know and to give them room for improvement, a number of assessment strategies were used during the study. Among others, teachers were asked to avoid certain language, for example, to avoid using a term ‘fail’ and rather use ‘did not yet pass’. The emphasis was placed on progress rather than failure. During assessment learners were treated in warm and caring ways. Teachers used neutral language to the learners after every answer. Another strategy was to give feedback immediately after learners had done some activities (Du Plessis, 2003).

## **2.9 Some strategies to facilitate effective continuous assessment**

In the following four sections, I look at some strategies that can be used in order to facilitate effective continuous assessment. In particular I look at learning portfolios, co-operative learning, effective questioning and provision of feedback.

### **2.9.1 Learning portfolios**

Brown, Rust and Gibbs argue that there is a gap in traditional assessment strategies, between assessing theory and assessing practice. They feel that portfolio assessment helps teachers to bridge this gap (as cited by Marnewick & Rouhani in Jacobs, et al., 2004). A portfolio is a “file or folder consisting of various samples of a learner’s work” (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:23). However, Wilmot argued that “a portfolio should not be confused with a file of work” (2003:17) because it is more than that. It consists of tasks that show learners’ growth over time such as learners’ reflective comments, remedial work that was done with learners, examples of tasks that have been re-worked by learners

and so on. This is probably a reason why Marnewick and Rouhani (in Jacobs et al., 2004) argued that a portfolio can be seen as the story of a learner's life.

According to Marsh, many teachers see a portfolio as an important and authentic assessment tool because among other things it:

- Encourages learners to demonstrate thinking and expressive skills
  - Provides an equitable and sensitive portrait of what learners know and are able to do
  - Enables teachers to focus on important learning outcomes
  - Provides parents and the community with credible evidence of learner achievement.
- (1997: 178).

Klenowski (1996) argued that portfolios reduce the time teachers have to spend on individual learners and maximizes the task involvement of learners. It is however vital to note that the use of portfolios in the Lower Primary phase should be adapted to suit that particular level.

### **2.9.2 Co-operative learning**

The general formative role of assessment is “to provide feedback to teachers and pupils about progress in order to support future learning” (Lambert & Lines, 2000: 4). Group-work and discussion time in classrooms help learners to talk about their understanding. Vygotsky argued that putting thinking into words makes understanding real because it is only when we are able to make our understanding explicit that we allow learning to take place (Capel, Leask & Turner, 1995). Vygotsky further stated that “the foundation of learning and development is co-operatively achieved success, and the basis of that success is language and communication” (Bennet & Dunne in Moon & Mayes, 1994:52). It is therefore generally believed that many forms of co-operative learning benefit learners' learning because they give learners opportunities to make their understanding explicit, through discussions and sharing of experiences. Open-ended assessment tasks are often very appropriate for group work as they are likely to encourage learners to reflect and exchange ideas and views with other learners and teachers and this helps to consolidate learners' learning (Bennet & Dunne in Moon & Mayes, 1994).

### **2.9.3 Effective questioning**

Black et al. argued that if assessment is to bring about desired outcomes, teachers should improve the way they ask questions during lessons. They further argue that the response waiting time for most teachers is too short. This does not encourage thinking in all the learners (2002). Only learners who know the answer benefit if only short periods are allowed before an answer is given. Learners should be given enough time to respond in order to encourage all of them to think and to look for answers.

The importance of questioning effectively was also emphasized by Moore (1998), when he indicated that it is important for teachers to have a deeper understanding of the kinds of questions they ask. For example, teachers must be able to categorized questions as narrow (convergent) or broad (divergent). Narrow questions usually require only factual recall or specific correct answers while broad questions can seldom be answered with a single word and often have more than one correct answer. He went on to say that it is also important for teachers to be able to adapt the level of questions to their teaching objectives. To do this, teachers need to be able to categories questions according to the mental operation involved in answering them. In other words teachers should be able to differentiate between factual, empirical, productive and evaluative questions. He further indicated that it is similarly important to know that different types of questions, such as focusing, prompting and probing questions can be asked within each category of questions and by using different techniques. For example redirecting, waiting time, halting time (teacher pauses) and so on (Moore, 1998).

### **2.9.4 Providing feedback**

Teachers should always provide feedback to learners. For example, they should give timely and appropriate feedback on how a learner can improve her/his performance and each learner should be given opportunities to incorporate feedback in her/his work (Black and Wiliam, 1998). It is only then that assessment can have powerful, positive effects on learner learning and achievement (Hattie, 1992) as cited in Mason, 2005). In addition, Lambert and Lines argue that in order to maximize effectiveness, feedback should:

- Be conducted at the level of individual learners, and avoid comparisons with other learners
- Emphasize “ipsative functions” (Lambert & Lines, 2000: 137) – individualized, challenging but achievable targets
- Should be criterion-referenced and steps should be taken to ensure that criteria are shared between teachers and learners.

They go on to say that both teachers and learners need changes in attitude before real feedback can happen. These changes include:

- Teachers and pupils learning to converse within a culture of success
- Pupils learning to take risks, and accepting that making mistakes is a positive attribute in the sense that it enables learning to take place.

(2000:137-139)

However, a question remains whether feedback should be explicit or indirect, allowing learners to examine their own ideas (Oosterhof, 2003).

## **2.10 Limitations and dangers in continuous assessment in general**

Although continuous assessment remains an important strategy for assessing young learners, it has some limitations. These include:

- Continuous assessment increases the workload of both teachers and learners. Teachers need to keep a lot of records and monitor the progress of individual learners. Learners are required time and again to assess their own work and that of other learners.
- Continuous assessment encourages the use of tasks that can be done outside the classroom, sometimes with little or no supervision from teachers. For example, learners may be required to do projects at home. This creates a possibility of collusion among learners. Assistance from experienced persons may also occur. Assessment may not therefore reflect the true abilities of a learner.

- Continuous assessment is difficult to apply with large classes because it generally takes time to assess individual learners authentically.

(Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:34)

Talking about assessment (testing) in general Gipps argues that there are dangers in assessment. Among others, she talks about “curriculum backwash”. This means that the significance of assessment will influence what is to be taught. Teachers are unlikely to teach untested skills and activities (1990).

Another danger of assessment discussed by Gipps is labeling. She sees labeling as able to “set an unconscious limit on what children are perceived as being able to do” (Gipps, 1990:23). It is important that teachers know that it is their job to plan learning experiences which give learners a chance to acquire the experience, knowledge, skills or whatever they need to avoid being labeled (Clemson & Clemson, 1996).

## **2.11 Limitations of continuous assessment in the Namibian context**

Although the Namibian policy documents insist that assessment in the lower primary phase should be continuous, should serve the formative purposes of assessment, and should be informal and criterion-referenced, it appears that curriculum- related documents allow little chance for that to happen. This seems to be the reason why assessment in the Namibian Lower Primary phase looks problematic. Some of the problematic aspects are:

- 1) Criterion-referenced assessment, although mentioned in *Toward education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training* (1993), *Pilot curriculum for formal basic education* (1996) and *National policy guide: Lower Primary* (2005), is not explained clearly and in the kind of ‘layman’s language’ that would help teachers understand it better both in terms of its relation to the basic competencies and its role of making assessment transparent.

- 2) Although the Namibian assessment policy calls for assessment of a formative nature, the curriculum documents require that the assessment outcomes be handled summatively. For example, the calculation of marks that will end with a learner awarded an average in a subject looks more summative than formative. It does not necessarily give a clear picture of what a learner can/cannot do. Because it "...combines multiple, unrelated qualities into a single grade" (Oosterhof, 2003:219).
- 3) Some of the terms used (e.g. "informal less structured" and "informal more structured") lead to confusion. Although these terms are explained in the policy documents it is still difficult for teachers to see the difference between formal continuous assessment and more structured informal continuous assessment, especially looking at the examples given. (Appendix 7(b))
- 4) Guidelines for recording continuous assessment talk interchangeably of 'marks' and '5-points scale'. Marks being more norm-referenced and point scales being more criterion-referenced.
- 5) In a newly- published Namibian document, *Guidelines for school principals*, continuous assessment is referred to as a type of assessment together with formative and summative assessment (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005d). Again, this may confuse teachers as continuous assessment can be either formative or summative or both.
- 6) Some continuous assessment- related documents are periodically reviewed for example the *Syllabi*, *Lower Primary policy guide* and so on, to be in line with the unveiling understanding of learner-centred education in general. Others are not reviewed, for example, the *Pilot curriculum guide for formal basic education* in use today was published in 1996, while *Towards improving continuous assessment in Namibian schools* was published in 1999. This situation seems unhealthy as there are some discrepancies between the 'old' and 'new' documents.

To minimize the limitations of continuous assessment, especially in Namibia where many teachers do not have deep understanding of the principles or philosophical background of

continuous assessment, such teachers need help to properly implement changes in assessment practices. They need to know what to assess, how to assess, to interpret assessment information, be able to communicate the information to parents and learners, and should know what to do to improve learners' performance (Namibia. NIED, 2003). Secondly, the teaching and learning support materials teachers are using need to be educative.

The following section deals with professional development opportunities for teachers in Namibia.

## **2.12 Professional development of teachers in the Namibian context**

The Namibian policy document *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* indicated that teachers would be equipped with professional know-how both through pre-service and in-service professional development programs (Namibia. MEC, 1993). Since curriculum reform in Namibia, a lot has been done to ensure that Namibian teachers are well-acquainted with learner-centred education, its strategies and assessment practices in order to provide quality education.

After independence, Namibian teachers were given various opportunities to improve their understanding of learner-centred education. The government introduced the Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD) as the minimum teachers professional qualification in basic education (Grades 1-10). BETD programmes aim to reinforce the ideals of learner-centred education.

Other initiatives for professional development for teachers especially in the Lower Primary phase include:

- The Namibia Early Literacy and Language Project (NELLP) funded by DFID and the Ministry of Education (1992-2001), trained Lower Primary teachers to improve the standard of literacy and language teaching and English Second Language for grades 1 and 2.

- The Basic Education Support (BES I) Project, (1993-1997) USAID funded, operated in some regions in Namibia. This project focused on curriculum development and produced Continuous Assessment Manuals to support teachers in a crucial area of concern.
- The BES II project (2000-2004) is a more recent USAID funded project focusing on teacher development in Grades 1-4, reforming instructional practices, methods of assessing and reporting on learner performance.
- Various in-service programs, leading to certification in education, such as BETD inset, Open Learning Group Namibia, UNISA, offer distance teaching to teachers to upgrade their qualifications.

(Van Graan, 2006:4)

Professional development for Namibian teachers continues under the auspices of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) and the Basic Education Support (BES) III Project. The aim is to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed in an evolving education system.

## **2.13 Conclusion**

The reform process in Namibia aims at making basic education a right for every Namibian (Namibia. MEC, 1993). The reform is based on the paradigm shift in the worldviews about knowledge and epistemology. This understanding is then reflected in the curriculum and the assessment processes. Thus, assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

According to Van Graan (2006:4), research shows that “many teachers still have not been reached by sufficient professional development to change their classroom practice in any noticeable way”. They are still struggling to understand and implement the requirements of education reform i.e. teaching in learner-centred ways and assessing continuously and formatively. My study explores lower primary teachers’ understanding of the policy and guidelines pertaining to continuous assessment. It investigates teachers’ implementation

of continuous assessment. I hope my investigations help me to better understand how theory informs practice as far as continuous assessment at a Lower Primary phase in Namibian schools is concerned.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter first I identify and justify the research orientation used in the study. Second, I explain how sampling, data collection and data analysis were done. I then discuss issues of ethics and validity, and finally, I briefly consider some of the limitations of this study. All these aspects of methodology were shaped by the goals of my study as indicated in Chapter One, section 1.4.

#### **3.2 Research orientation**

Because of the nature of the study I have opted for an interpretive orientation. An interpretive orientation focuses on subjective understanding and meaning generated through language (Connole, 1998). It is appropriate for small-scale research projects such as this one.

Interpretive studies are located in a specific socio-political and historical context (Creswell, 2003). An interpretive orientation recognises multiple ways of understanding things. It embraces the belief that human actions are intentional. Thus, an interpretive framework “seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:181). An interpretive researcher looks at a particular (or specific) case. In that sense, it fits with a constructivist view of knowledge that holds that knowledge is not independent from the knower and for that reason it fits well with the philosophical understanding on which my study is based.

According to Herbert and Higgs the broad goals of an interpretive paradigm are to “understand, interpret, seek meaning, describe, illuminate and theorise” (2004:63). As the primary emphasis of interpretive orientation is on the process of understanding (Connole,

1998; Cohen et al., 2000), this orientation will help me to understand how lower primary teachers ‘make meaning’ of the policy and guidelines pertaining to continuous assessment and ultimately how they implement it.

This study follows a qualitative approach. It employs words and not numbers; it does not seek to prove or to compare things. It seeks to describe and understand an aspect of human behaviour as it happens in its “natural setting” (Anderson, 1998:152). My study focuses on a specific case, involving a limited number of individuals. It is not a large-scale study. Three teachers who are the respondents in this study were interviewed and observed in their own classrooms.

Qualitative research is not only conducted in the natural setting, it also “uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic” (Creswell, 2003:181). The particular method that I have chosen for my investigation is that of a case study. My understanding of a case study is based on the definition given by Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, namely, that a case study is “a study of an instance in action” (Quoted by Cohen et al., 2000:181). A case study is interested in understanding in depth, something specific in a particular situation. This includes a description of how things in that particular situation work and why. It examines the “lived experiences” of respondents and enables the researcher to see what is happening through respondents’ eyes (Cohen et al., 2000:181).

Anderson argues that the distinctive feature of a case study is that the case must be something (an event or process) that is worth studying (1998). My study looks at the implementation of continuous assessment at Lower Primary phase in a specific Namibian school. This implementation process is of great professional significance to me. I am an Advisory Teacher for the Lower Primary phase. It is not only important that I have a deep understanding of what is involved in continuous assessment. I also need to develop insights into why teachers implement continuous assessment in the ways that they do. Understanding this will enable me to advise them more effectively.

### **3.3 Sampling and site selection**

This study uses both “convenience sampling” (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996:235) and “purposeful sampling” (Mouton, 2001:446). The sample consists of three Grade Three first language teachers, (two females and one male). Each of these teachers was interviewed, and then observed in three lessons. Documents relating to continuous assessment implementation were also analysed.

With regard to the convenience sampling aspect of my study, the site was selected simply because it was one which was most readily accessible to me. It was a primary school close to my own place of work in the Oshana region of Namibia. I am on good terms with both the principal of the school and the teachers. It had a further advantage in that it had several Grade Three classes. It was therefore easy for me to ‘hand pick’ three of their Grade Three teachers for my study.

“In purposive sampling researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality” (Cohen, et al., 2000:103). The criteria I used in selecting them were firstly, that they were experienced teachers with two or more years of teaching experience in the Lower Primary phase; and secondly, that they all had a minimum teaching qualification of category C (Basic Education Teachers’ Diploma (BETD) or equivalent) or were in the process of obtaining it.

In the Namibian context it is generally assumed that BETD teachers have a deep understanding of learner-centred education (LCE) and thus of the central significance of continuous assessment in their areas of specialization. Grade Three teachers were selected for my study as their learners were in their third year of formal schooling and were likely to be able to participate more fully in class activities.

### **3.4 Data collection**

In this study three main methods of data collection were used:

- Interviews
- Observation
- Documentary analysis

These methods of data collection were dictated by the nature of the study, the orientation and my recognition of the desirability of using more than one source of data. Patton argues that “by using a combination of observation, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings” (2002:306). He further argues that triangulation increases validity; the strengths of one approach compensate for the weaknesses of another approach (Patton, 2002). For example, it is difficult to identify people’s understanding solely through an interview as their actions may differ from their espoused position. Thus, observation provided me with an invaluable means of seeing my respondents’ understanding through the way they do things and react. This is an indication that for deeper understanding of any case, no single source of information can be relied upon to provide a comprehensive understanding.

### **3.4.1 Interviews**

My main data collection method was interviews. “Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (Cohen, et al., 2000:267). As I was interested in understanding my respondents’ experiences, opinions, attitudes and beliefs concerning continuous assessment in the lower primary phase I saw interviews as the best tool to elicit relevant data for my study. Importantly, I opted for semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews gave me the chance to probe more deeply and so get “rich data” (Maxwell, 1996:95). “Probing can come in the form of asking for more details, for clarification” (Merriam, 2001:80). Through probing, semi-structured interviews “add depth, detail, and meaning at a very personal level of experience” (Patton, 1990:18). In other words semi-structured interviews can help to deepen the understanding of phenomena under study from the point of view of the respondents. Semi-structured interviews fit well with a qualitative

approach as they are, as Burgess termed them, “conversations with a purpose” (quoted by Mason, 1996:38).

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with Grade Three teachers selected for my study. The interviews were conducted during March 2006.

Prior to the actual interviews, I drew up an interview guide (Appendix 5) to help me focus on the goals of the study during each interview. The interview guide was then piloted and some alterations were made to it. The piloting was done with a Grade Three teacher who was not to participate in the actual study. My reasons for piloting the interview guide were to see whether my questions were clear and appropriately sequenced. Alterations were made to the sequence and an additional question about feedback was added to my original five questions. I added this question because I needed to get some ideas of how feedback is given to learners following continuous assessment, and how teachers use this feedback to guide their teaching. Merriam (2001) argued that pilot interviews are crucial for trying out questions. It not only provides an opportunity to practice interviewing skills, but also allows the interviewer to identify any questions which are confusing and need rewording.

After the pilot interview and when everything was ready, I visited the school to negotiate interview dates with the three teachers. Dates were set according to the teachers’ preferences. All three interviews were conducted at the school in the teachers’ own classes after teaching hours. It was important to me that the interviews were done after classes, as I did not want to disturb normal classroom activities.

During the interviews a tape recorder was used, with the interviewees’ permission, to capture ideas, views and opinions. I assured them that the recorder was to be used only for data collection, and not to ‘judge’ them in any way. During the interviews I also took notes of things I wanted to come back to at a later stage (probing questions). I also made notes of my respondents’ body language.

The interviews were mostly conducted in a second language (English) as per the wishes of the interviewees. Consequently, language errors are evident in quotes from my respondents. I have not corrected these in any way, as I wanted to report the data *verbatim*.

A problem with semi-structured interviews is that the interviewer may easily be distracted and lose focus of the goals of the interview. However, in this case I made sure that I followed my interview schedule and only asked extra questions for probing and clarity purposes.

### **3.4.2 Observations**

Observation was the second method for collecting data. As I am interested in teachers' implementation of continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase, data from observation helped me to see just how the sample teachers practiced continuous assessment. This included how they behaved, what activities they gave to their learners, and how they interacted with their learners. All teachers were observed in their "situated practice" (Sakui, 2004:157). This helped me to see how continuous assessment is done in their natural classroom settings. It also helped me to note things that had not been obvious during the interviews. Observations afforded me the opportunity to gather 'live' data from live situations. As Cohen et al., (2000) note, this enables a researcher to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations and to access personal knowledge.

Each of the selected teachers was observed three times, twice in a lesson series and then at a later stage. This was because I had other official duties to perform at the same time which prevented me from observing all three sets of lessons in sequence. The first two lessons I observed lasted 80 minutes (double periods) each, while the third lessons were only 40 minutes (single periods) each. In total nine lessons were observed. After lesson observations "stimulated recall" (Nunan, 1992 as cited in Murray & Malefu, 2001) was used as a follow-up interview with each teacher. Stimulated recall enabled me to better

understand what happens in the lessons from the teachers' perspectives and to take account of his/her intentions in my analysis (Murray & Malefu, 2001).

To capture what I observed I kept field notes. Field notes were recorded in a lesson observation schedule form (Appendix 6). Field notes contain the description of what has been observed. This includes a description of the setting, what went on, and what people said. It also contains the observer's own feelings and reactions to the experience. In brief, field notes provide the observer's "*raison d'être*" (Patton, 2002:302).

### **3.4.3 Document analysis**

Documentary analysis was done on all nine lesson plans, three learners' exercises books per class, the first- language textbooks in use, continuous assessment record books (class lists and record sheets), and term schedules for each teacher. I also analysed three end-of-school term reports in each class. With teachers' permission these documents were photocopied for proper analysis. Other Namibian curriculum documents related to assessment in the Lower Primary phase such as *Continuous Assessment Manual for Grade Three* (2005); *First language syllabus for Grade Three* (2005); the *Pilot curriculum guide for Formal Basic Education* (1996); and *Towards improving continuous assessment in schools: A policy and information guide* (1999) were also analysed.

Through analysing these documents I was able to get "information about many things that cannot be observed" (Patton, 2002:293).

### **3.5 Data analysis**

As discussed earlier under research orientation (section: 3.2), this study uses a qualitative approach. It is generally argued that there is no single 'right' way to analyse data in a qualitative study (Leedy & Omrod, 2001; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993; Patton, 2002). For that reason I analysed my data in a way that I felt would help me make sense of the

process under study in terms of the *meaning* that respondents brought to this particular case.

I started the analysis process with a draft template (Appendix 9) of the characteristics of continuous assessment. This helped me focus on the essence of continuous assessment both in theory and in practice. I did however keep an open mind to evidence of continuous assessment characteristics that I had not listed myself. It was important that I really ‘listened’ to what the data told me as in qualitative data analysis “most categories and patterns emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on the data” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:479).

During analysis of the interview transcripts I used the interview schedule to guide me during the first layer of analysis (Appendix 9(a)). I summarised what the data told me about each question. For the observation, I developed a different but related schedule keeping in mind my research goal (Appendix 9(b)). Again I used the lessons transcripts to help me identify how teachers implement continuous assessment. For documentary analysis, I mainly looked at the teachers’ lesson planning (to identify whether assessment is planned as part of lessons or not), learners’ exercises books as well as the textbooks they used (to give me a sense of kinds of tasks undertaken), how recording and reporting of continuous assessment marks was done (to see whether they are done as per ministerial guidelines) (Appendix 9(c)).

I employed a deeper ‘layer’ of analysis that looked across the three methods of data collection. From the data, I derived key indicators concerning the teachers’ understanding and implementation of continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase. These indicators were naturally influenced by the philosophy underpinning learner-centred education, (this being the key objective of Namibia education reform and the impetus for this study). However, to make my data easy to manage during the discussion, these indicators were grouped into different sub-headings. To decide which sub-heading to use I looked at the data and let them emerge from there. I also kept the goals of my study in mind. In order to achieve these goals I needed to record data which are relevant.

### **3.6 Validity**

To strengthen the validity of my study I used multiple sources of information such as interviews, observation and documentary analysis. Multiple sources of data are used to “validate and cross check findings” (Patton, 2002:306). The following strategies to enhance the internal validity were used:

- Triangulation: I used different methods of data collection such as interviews, observation and document analysis. Data collected were compared and cross-checked for consistency.
- Member checking (interview transcripts were given to participants to read through and make comments on things that were wrongly captured);
- Collecting what is termed by Maxwell “rich data” (1996:95) to facilitate dense description of my findings. Thick description “may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Cresswell, 2003:196);
- Getting feedback from colleagues in the field to establish whether they agreed or disagreed with the interpretations and conclusions I drew from the data.

### **3.7 Research ethics**

To conform to international standards of research ethics, all ethical considerations were observed. Respondents were told what the study was about, its purpose and how the information would be used. I obtained their consent and assured them of their right to anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.

Before conducting the study I requested and obtained permission from the Regional Director: Oshana Education Region (Appendix 1 and 2) I then contacted the school, briefed the school principal and showed him the letter from the Regional Director’s office. After the principal had granted me permission for the study I asked him to sign a permission/consent form (Appendix 3). I then contacted each of the Grade Three teachers I had identified as suitable respondents. I gave them a brief description of what the study

was about, explaining its purpose to them and also telling them that participation in the study was entirely voluntary.

Once the teachers had agreed to take part I asked them to sign a participants' consent form (Appendix 4). My challenge was to make teachers understand that I was doing this for study purposes only. The investigation was in no way related to my official duties as an Advisory Teacher. It was important for me to ensure that during this study teachers did not see me or relate to me in my professional capacity as this may have compromised the validity of my study.

To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms are used to refer to all respondents who participated in this study.

## **3.8 Limitations**

### **3.8.1 Limitations regarding interpretive qualitative studies**

As discussed earlier this study falls under an interpretive orientation. There are some limitations that are generic to qualitative studies that may affect this specific study. The fact that findings from qualitative studies cannot be generalised as qualitative research focuses on aspects of the human or social world and its context (Creswell: 2003), can also be a limitation.

Generally qualitative research uses a lot of data. Making sense of those data needs a careful and often complex analysis process: skills that might be a challenge to a novice researcher such as myself. Therefore because of a possible lack of those skills the validity of this study may be compromised.

### **3.8.2 Limitations regarding my research process**

Some limitations can be related to a specific process that a researcher goes through. In my case one of the data collection methods used was semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview allows for probing. Probing is helpful as it allows the researcher to

dig deeper and ask for clarity. However, it can also be used to support the researcher's own biases. For example, being an Advisory Teacher I am well aware of some of the challenges facing lower primary teachers as far as continuous assessment is concerned. In that case I might probe in a way that supports my own beliefs and assumptions. Similarly, interviewees might have also talked just to 'satisfy' me and not necessarily about things that they believe in or what they do.

Another method used for data collection was lesson observation. As indicated earlier, lesson observation took place in natural settings. It is generally believed that the mere presence of a "foreigner" or "observer" in a setting can change people's behaviour patterns. Leedy and Omrod argue "by his or her very own presence (sic), the researcher may alter what people say and do and how significant events unfold" (2001:158). For that reason the data collected through lesson observation may be affected.

Assessment improves with time. The more teachers know their learners the better is their assessment of their learners. The timing of this study also posed a potential limitation because the study took place early in the year when teachers were still learning about the abilities and challenges of their learners.

I am aware that the validity of the findings depends upon the quality of the social, linguistic and cognitive skills of the participants in the study. The fact that semi-structured interviews for this study were conducted mainly in a second language may pose as a further limitation of this study.

To reduce the extent to which each of these limitations compromised my research the following was done.

- My supervisor has helped me to overcome challenges that may face a novice researcher.
- Triangulation was used to complement data from different data collection methods, as already described.

- My choice of Grade Three in which the same teacher teaches all the subjects compensate for the timing limitations of this study. Teachers in class teaching spend more time with their learners and this accelerates teachers' knowledge of their learners.
- Except for interviews that were done mainly in a second language other data were collected in Oshiwambo in which both parties expressed their ideas freely.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the research methods applied in my study. These include research orientation, sampling and site selection, data collection methods, data analysis, validity and ethical issues. I have also briefly mentioned some of the limitations that may affect the findings. In the next chapter I present key findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I present data obtained in my investigation of how teachers understand and implement continuous assessment. My fieldwork was conducted at a primary school in Oshana Educational Region. As indicated in Chapter Three (section 3.3) three Grade Three teachers took part.<sup>1</sup> The data presented here were obtained through interviews with these teachers, lesson observations (three per teacher) and through analysis of relevant documents such as teachers' lesson plans, learners' work, the first language textbooks in use as well as several Namibian official documents on continuous assessment.

My data are presented under the following sub-headings:

- Teachers' experiences and qualifications
- Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment
- Teachers' implementation of continuous assessment
- Teachers' ways of recording and reporting continuous assessment
- Problems teachers experience regarding continuous assessment

I provide a general description of the school context from which these data were collected before proceeding with the presentation of the actual data.

#### **4.2 The school context**

The school is situated in Oshakati circuit a few kilometres from Oshakati town. During its early years it operated as a church school, but it is now a government school comprising 577 pupils. It has a principal, two heads of department and 14 teachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Two females. To protect their identities I have given them pseudonyms: Dineo, Maggy, Gabs

The school has 17 permanent classrooms (bricks) and two corrugated-iron shacks (not in use). It does not have a staff room, but has four small offices: the principal's office; Head of Departments: Administration's office; an office for cleaners and another office which is used by Grades Four and Five teachers as a staff room. Grades One to Three follow class teaching; hence the teachers for these grades stay in their classes. The school has water and electricity, a computer used for writing, and a photocopier. It has a small school library and all learners in the school can borrow books to read at home. The school is surrounded by a fence and has a playground, which is just outside the school fence. It is here where learners go for Physical Education lessons and during breaks to play either soccer (boys) or traditional dances (girls). The school has six pit latrines; two for boys and girls and two others for the teachers' use. The school surroundings look well maintained. It is clean and seems to have been renovated and had some new buildings added to the existing infrastructure in recent years.

Entering the Grade Three classrooms, learners are seated in groups. They sit in these groups even when they are not doing group work activities. In Dineo's and Maggy's classrooms there are many materials hung on the walls. These materials are arranged in thematic groups. All these materials are relevant to Grade Three work. It is different with Gabs' class. The walls of his classroom are almost bare with the exception of a few, rather old materials.

## **4. 3 Presentation of data**

### **4. 3. 1 Teachers' experience and qualifications**

Table 4.1, outlines the experiences and qualifications of the three teachers who are respondents in this study.

*Table 4.1: Teachers' experiences and qualifications*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Overall teaching experience (in years)</b>	<b>Teaching experience in the Lower Primary Phase (in years)</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Dineo	18	12 (mostly teaching Grade Three)	Standard 10 Education Certificate Primary (ECP) Diploma in Education: African Languages (DEAL) Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD) (specialised in Lower Primary)
Maggy	20	12 (mostly teaching Grade Three)	Standard 10 Education Certificate Primary (ECP) Completed Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD) in August 2006, (specialised in Lower Primary)
Gabs	20	20 (mostly teaching Grade Three)	Standard 10 National Higher Education Certificate (NHEC) Currently enrolled for Diploma in Education: African Languages (DEAL)

#### **4. 3. 2 Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment**

In the first part of this section I look at these teachers' general understanding of what continuous assessment is and how it works. Next, I look at their understanding of terminologies used in the Namibian continuous assessment documents (policy and curriculum). In the last part I look at what influences their understanding (in other words how they came to understand continuous assessment the way they do).

As indicated in the Method Chapter, section 3.4.1, quotes from respondents are reported *verbatim*. This was done because I want quotes to come across in a completely authentic way.

### **(i) General understanding of continuous assessment**

All three teachers appear to have a common understanding of what continuous assessment is. For example, all teachers see continuous assessment as ongoing and of a remedial/compensatory, diagnostic and/or formative nature. This is how Dineo puts it, *‘Continuous assessment is a method of assessing learners. For a teacher to see the progress and performance of learners in your class so that you can come up with who understand everything and who need assistance. Assessment helps to check whether the learners understand the lesson.’*

Maggy explained it in the following words *‘Ahh, to my knowledge continuous assessment is an assessment which is done sometimes at the end of the lesson. Sometimes I can also assess my learners while I am busy teaching. This helps me to see whether the learners are following. It helps me to know the difficulties of my learners. To know which learners need help and which one is trying and from there I know them better. For example those who are slow I will do my level best to do remedial teaching.’*

Gabs sees continuous assessment as a form of assessment where all aims, objectives and basic competencies of the whole curriculum can be assessed. He further stated that *‘continuous assessment is a method that is done from the time you enter a class. It is done by talking to learners and observing what they are doing. It gives information how far they are, whether learners understand the lesson or not. Continuous assessment is the process of finding out who the bright learners are and who the slow learners are, with the purpose to help the slow learners.’*

All three teachers indicated that they felt continuous assessment is valuable as it enables them to know the levels of understanding of their learners and so direct their teaching. For example, Dineo stated that by knowing her learners’ level of understanding she is able to give them appropriate assessment tasks. She cited an example of reading saying that a teacher must first find out what text a learner can read before asking a learner to read a specific text. She said that *‘some learners who do not know how to read you cannot give them three letters for example, ngwee or ondjamba (triagraphs). You need to*

*start with the letters which are simple and easy to read such as ontaku, oshimbombo (diagraphs) and so on.'*

This suggests that all three have a good general understanding of what continuous assessment is and what it does.

## **(ii) Understanding of the terminologies regarding continuous assessment**

Generally, the teachers appear to lack a good understanding of the terms used in continuous assessment. For example, all indicated that they use both formal and informal continuous assessment in their teaching yet policy says that only informal continuous assessment may be used in the Lower Primary phase.

Another example is when Dineo was asked to explain what she understood about 'less structured' informal continuous assessment and 'more structured' informal continuous assessment she said '*I have no idea*'. It was only Gabs who attempted to respond. He said '*I think more structured continuous assessment is formal while less structured continuous assessment is informal. Formal is when they (learners) do something practically and informal I think is when they do theoretically .... Let me say in formal I can give them homework and say write for me your name, your surname, your village and the name of your school and then they will put it on their papers. Then informal I can ask where do you live? What is your father's name? How many brothers do you have? That is informal*'

This suggests that to Gabs informal continuous assessment is oral, while formal continuous assessment is assessment through writing. However, this is not always the case. For example, where do projects and others come in?

Another example was when Maggy was unable to say what kinds of papers she uses to record continuous assessment marks in. She could only say '*I also use .....assessment papers or what do we call them?*' (instead of Continuous Assessment Record sheets). Similarly, Dineo did not seem to be familiar with the term 'basic competencies'. When

asked how she assesses according to the syllabus all she could say was *'in the new syllabus they state that these activities should be given to the learners for assessment tasks'*.

These teachers' responses and use of continuous assessment terminologies seems to suggest that they have difficulty remembering and internalising terms used in continuous assessment. Such a situation has the potential to hamper their abilities to implement continuous assessment effectively.

### **(iii) How do teachers learn about continuous assessment?**

When asked how they had learned about continuous assessment they indicated that except for the teachers' training workshop on the Grades Three and Four revised curriculum held in December 2005, they only learned almost incidentally from a visit made to their school by an advisory teacher late in 2004. None of the teachers interviewed mentioned whether they had seen the assessment guidelines materials sent to their school by the Ministry. This suggests that the teachers do not always read curriculum- related materials which the Ministry provides to all schools. Alternatively, it suggests that schools do not always make these materials available to teachers. There are also several projects that were or are still working with professional development of teachers in the region but none was mentioned.

### **4. 3. 3 Teachers' implementation of continuous assessment**

In this section I look at teachers' lesson preparation, methods and strategies they use, the kinds of questions and tasks they give, their use of assessment criteria, their use of feedback, and the way they interact with their learners during the assessment process. It is useful to note that data presented here were mainly acquired through observation and document analysis and to a lesser extent from interviews.

#### **(i) Preparation**

Gabs stated that assessment tasks should be based on the aims, objectives and basic competencies as indicated in the syllabus. Dineo also indicated that her assessment tasks

are ‘sometimes’ based on the basic competencies in the syllabus. However, from the lessons observed it emerged that generally all three teachers did not plan their assessment tasks in advance of their lesson presentations. None of the lesson plans analysed included what assessment tasks learners would do.

On the other hand, most of the basic competencies listed on the lesson plans (first language) are related to the basic competencies<sup>2</sup> related to Environmental Studies subject. Currently, Namibian lower primary teachers are busy implementing a newly revised curriculum based on theme teaching. Environmental Studies is seen as a central subject from which themes are taken. This seemed to cause confusion among the teachers as far as continuous assessment is concerned. Although teachers are supposed to use a thematic approach in their teaching, they nonetheless still need to assess learners in all areas of learning (Oshindonga, English, Environmental Studies, Mathematics and so on).

Below are examples of the basic competencies that were indicated on some of Dineo’s and Maggy’s lesson plans:

- ‘To name both Christian and national holidays’ (Dineo)
- ‘To know the names of the months’ (Maggy)
- ‘To know seasons’ (Dineo)

The focus of a language lesson is on acquiring skills such as speaking and listening, reading and writing. As can be seen, the basic competencies bulleted above relate more to Environmental Studies than to language.

I also observed in some few cases that the assessment tasks the teachers gave were not directly related to what they taught. Or alternatively what was presented was not related to the basic competencies given for that specific lesson. For example, in Maggy’s first lesson, she talked about public holidays. This is how she did it:

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<sup>2</sup> Basic competencies “describe what the learner ought to achieve as the outcome of a lesson or sequence of lessons. A teacher will identify the learners’ level of achievement by assessing how well they carry out the basic competencies” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 1996:11).

What is a holiday?

Who can remember an important event that happened in the past?

Religious holidays are Christian holidays

Is there anyone who is not a Christian here?

She went on to talk about what happened on specific days. For example, *which day is Good Friday?*

*Which one is Ascension Day?* She then did the same with national public holidays.

However, the assessment tasks that were given to learners were as follows:

‘I want you to do individual work, not in groups. These three groups should draw Jesus on a cross. Next to the picture write sentences related to the drawing’.

The problem with these assessment tasks is that they focused on writing skills while the lesson mainly focused on describing specific events. One can also say that the lesson itself lacked the essence of a language lesson and as such it would definitely be difficult to assess language skills properly. One would say that such a situation can be attributed to not only lack of planning but also to a shallow understanding of the purpose of continuous assessment.

Although the *Pilot Curriculum guide for formal basic education* states that ideally ‘more structured’ continuous assessment should be planned at the beginning of the year to ensure that all learning objectives are covered, these teachers do not have continuous assessment plans to indicate which continuous assessment activities had been undertaken or were yet to be undertaken by learners.

Although no record is available, the data suggest that these teachers only seem to plan or perhaps think about ‘more structured’ informal continuous assessment tasks before they give it to learners. For example, Maggy indicated that *‘if you just assess learners by giving them tasks or activities, some of the activities are too easy (referring to activities from a textbook) even slow learners will get an A but if I give them a test I will make sure that I include difficult questions which will be answered by bright learners only.’*

This suggests that Maggy does not plan less structured activities but takes them directly from a textbook. One also suspects that she does not choose specific activities from a textbook to match her overall plan of work but rather follows the sequence set by the textbook. This can also be said of the other teachers. Looking at learners’ exercises books it became evident that learners from these three classes generally do very similar activities.

Evidence of ‘weak’ planning is perhaps illustrated by the fact that these teachers’ time management was not good. In most cases very little time was used for teacher/learners interactions and more time was used for assessment tasks. In the first two of Dineo’s lessons that I observed (each scheduled to last 80 minutes) she only interacted with learners for about 25 and 18 minutes respectively. In the third lesson she only taught for 12 out of the 40 minutes allocated for the lesson. Similarly, Gabs taught for about 20 minutes in both his first and second 80 minute lessons. In the third lesson he only taught for 14 out of 40 minutes. The rest of the time learners were left to do assessment tasks with the teachers (Dineo and Gabs) marking books that were ready. Maggy managed her time differently. She spent most of her time interacting with learners before giving them tasks to do on their own. For example, in her first and second lessons she spent 59 and 50 minutes respectively interacting with learners, while in the last lesson she spent about 30 out of the 40 minutes before giving learners activities to do by themselves.

These data seem to reveal that the three teachers do not properly prepare for their continuous assessment tasks - especially what is going to be assessed and how it will be assessed. There is however an indication that these teachers give learners short tests once

in a while. These seem to be the only kind of continuous assessment activities that are prepared ('more structured'). But whether they are based on the relevant basic competencies is a different question. It seems also that these teachers do not plan how much time to spend on each activity.

### **(ii) Methods and strategies used for continuous assessment**

During the interviews all three teachers indicated that assessment tasks are given either as individual, pair or group activities. For group tasks, Dineo and Maggy indicated that they favour same-ability grouping while Gabs favours mixed-ability grouping. Dineo explained that the reason she prefers same-ability grouping is because when learners are *'sitting in a group with different ability levels, sometimes slow learner are just benefiting from the gifted learners because they do nothing in the groups. But if they are sitting according to the levels it is fine because you (teachers) have to set up questions according to their understanding.*

Gabs on the other hand indicated that *'the method that I like for assessment is only using group .... In groups I think the learners who can think fast can help others in the group, but whenever there are only slow learners they do nothing. So, the bright learners help the slow ones'*.

On the question of strategies Maggy indicated that she uses a range of assessment strategies to elicit what learners know and are able to do. In her own words she said that *'I use questioning method, sometimes I observe them, tell them stories and ask questions, or I ask them to tell stories in front of the class. I also give them dictations and I can also give them a test.'* Gabs indicated that he also observes his learners while doing continuous assessment tasks, he asks them to tell stories and gives them reading activities and grammar-related activities (writing activities). Dineo also indicated that she uses tests, oral questions and sometimes she gives them reading activities.

Although both Dineo and Maggy indicated that they use testing as an assessment strategy, the use of tests in the Lower Primary phase in Namibian schools is a debatable

issue. Both teachers are aware of this but still seem to think that giving tests is one of the best continuous assessment strategies available. Maggy indicated that *'when I give them a test I teach them how to learn. Sometimes the continuous assessment does not teach the learners a lot. For example, you can give marks to the learner which she/he did not deserve. But if I give them a test, an individual test I would find out that this learner is progressing well or he/she is not progressing well'*.

Dineo on the other hand believes that when you give a test *'you will know those who can do the work and those who cannot even read. Those who cannot read they cannot also write. With informal assessment is not always easy to see that. Through speaking is not easy to see that this child cannot write'*. She however indicated that what she gives to her learners *'is not a test but it is just a type of questions to ask them to see, to check whether they use to follow when I teach them'*. However when asked to give a difference between a real test and the kind of tests she gives to her learners all she could say was *'no I cannot'*.

From lessons observed, all three teachers gave written exercises as end of lesson tasks. They also used individual work only, with the exception of Dineo's second lesson where learners were asked to work in groups. During the lessons a lot of oral questions were asked. It was however observed especially in Dineo's lessons that only few learners were participating in answering these questions.

Deducing from what these teachers have to say about methods and strategies they use, it seems that these teachers use the methods they feel will benefit their individual learners the most. However, the fact that their knowledge of continuous assessment seems to be poor has a negative effect on what they do. This includes the choices they make about the methods and strategies used.

### **(iii) Purposes and kinds of questions/tasks used**

During the lessons observed, all three teachers used questions throughout their lessons. I also observed that during teaching the teachers asked questions for different purposes.

Among others, questions asked appeared to serve the following purposes:

- Access learners' prior knowledge '*Do you know these holidays?*' (Dineo)
- Clarify / explain something '*Is that correct? Why not?*' (Gabs)
- Check understanding '*Do you understand what you need to do?*' (Maggy).
- Confirm '*Is that correct?*' (Dineo)
- Direct teacher's teaching '*This group does not understand must I repeat?*' (Dineo and Maggy)
- Check on learners' speed '*Are you finished?*' (All three)
- To call for the learners' attention / arouse curiosity '*What is on the chalkboard?*' (Maggy)
- To link what is not known to what is not yet known '*Now if it were you, how will you feel?*' (Gabs)
- To see if learners are following '*What did I say we are going to learn today?*' (Maggy)
- To develop concepts '*Do you know what being colonised mean?*' (Dineo)

I observed however that most of the questions/tasks given to learners for writing were generally kinds of questions/tasks that would encourage recalling of facts and memorization (closed questions). Below are some of the questions/instructions given to learners to write in their exercises books:

- *What is the last day of the previous month?*
- *Name two types of holidays.*
- *Mention the date and the place where the first gun was shot.*
- *Where did Jesus go after resurrection?*
- *How many weeks are in one month?*
- *Copy the sentences and fill in the missing words*
- *Write your date of birth*

- *When was Jesus born?*

Tasks that encouraged critical thinking (open questions) were generally few and mainly oral. These tasks asked for evaluation, understanding, analysis, synthesis and so on. Below are examples of such questions. It is however important to note that the levels of thinking indicated next to the questions are not independent of each other. This means that a learner may go through a certain level of thinking in order to solve a problem at an even higher level of thinking.

- *Choose one holiday and say why it is important* (Evaluate)
- *Construct a sentence/sentences in which a given word/words is/are used* (Understanding)
- *How do you think they felt?* (Analysis)
- *What do you think they did?* (Synthesis)
- *If it was you what could you have done?* (Evaluate)
- *Why it is like that?* (Analysis)
- *What does it mean?* (Understanding)

This seems to indicate that assessment was largely integrated into the teaching and learning process and the teachers asked questions to serve different purposes. It also seems to indicate that teachers see assessment as multifaceted. Further, it also seems to suggest that oral activities or questions given to learners were more open-ended than those that they had to write in their exercises books.

#### **(iv) Use of assessment criteria by the teachers**

The study found that the three teachers whose lessons I observed do not use assessment criteria every time they give assessment tasks. For example, Gabs only reminded learners to *'draw nice, write properly and clearly, write good numbers'* in two of his lessons. In one of the two lessons I heard him telling the learners to write clear sentences. *'I want sentences with at least four words not two or three words. Do not give me sentences like, Dog far. (Ombwa kokule).'* He further explained that *'the sentence is a clear idea,*

*starting with a capital letter and end with a full stop*'. I would say that these are good assessment criteria.

Maggy also gave assessment criteria sometimes. Hers are similar to some of what Gabs gave, for example, draw nicely, write clearly, or write good numbers. However, I did not hear Dineo giving any assessment criteria. I also observed that when given, assessment criteria were not given before or even together with the assessment tasks but were given while learners were already doing the tasks.

Although Gabs gave what can be seen as assessment criteria when asked to explain what he understood about assessment criteria he confused it with lesson reflection. This is what he said: *'assessment criteria I think is whenever the learner is having a problem. Say, all learners do not come up with the answer and I have to make another lesson plan.'*

During my documentary analysis however, it appears that when marking, these teachers do not worry with letter construction or good numbers as such (criteria given earlier) because even if a learner wrongly constructs letters but the idea or answer is correct, she/he will not be penalised for incorrect letter construction. This seems to indicate that even if assessment criteria are given, they are not used to guide teachers' marking.

This suggests that teachers lack deep understanding of what assessment criteria are and why it is important to give them to their learners.

#### **(v) Giving feedback**

It was observed that two of the three teachers do their marking during class while learners are doing continuous assessment activities. During marking these teachers made several comments. For example, in one of Dineo's lesson she remarks, *'I thought these things were easy but oh, this is not good at all.*

*Yes, this is good oh, where did you copy them?*

*You wrote them in English, so you copy them from the wall because they are on the wall.'*

These kinds of comments that teachers make can be seen as feedback, though not explicit.

It was also observed that feedback was given in some lessons. For example in Dineo's class, soon after the books were marked the children did corrections. Giving 'correct/right answers' is what Dineo thought to be feedback. This is how she did it in her first lesson:

'Now we are going to give answers. Because you do not know names of the months, I am going to write them on the chalkboard and you must copy them in your homework book so that you can learn them at home.'

In Gabs' lessons he tried to help learners as he marked their books. However it was not in every lesson that he was able to mark all the books before the period was over. Books that were not marked during the period were either marked after school or they were never marked. For the three lessons that I spent in Maggy's class I did not observe her giving any oral feedback at all to learners. However, through documentary analysis all three teachers indicated marks that the learners obtained from marked written activities in the exercises books.

On the question whether these teachers give feedback to learners, they all indicated that they do. This how Gabs put it; *'we use to do corrections of the work that we do in class. I write the correct answer on the chalkboard and the learners will copy them in their exercises books for them to know them. I also correct learners when I mark their books'*

This seems to suggest that the concept of feedback is not particularly clear to these teachers. This is because when feedback was given it was not given properly, or was not given to all the learners. Sometimes it was just a matter of giving correct answers.

**(vi) The way teachers interact with their learners during the assessment process**

The general atmosphere in the lessons observed during continuous assessment varied. It depended on the specific teacher, the purpose of the task or whether the learner/s in question 'knows or not'.

With Dineo the atmosphere changes as different learners are asked to do tasks or answer questions. For example, when a learner fails to answer a question correctly, Dineo's remarks appeared to be either discouraging or intimidating, for example, '*do not sit, stand up to show that you do not know*' or '*you are older than others, you should know.*' However, when a learner answered correctly the atmosphere became encouraging and motivating, for example, '*very good, clap hands for her*' or '*Priskila, be careful some people will take over your position.*' This last remark can also be seen as discouraging insofar as it may encourage unhealthy competition among learners.

In Maggy's lessons the environment was quite different. It seemed to be encouraging most of the time. For example, when a learner could not answer a question correctly, Maggy remarked '*yes, Ben has tried*' or '*who can help Simeon?*' She also encouraged all of her learners, even quiet ones to participate, for example, '*is Victoria the only person in this class?*' When boys were a bit quiet she called on them '*Come on boys.*' But she also made learners who could not answer question/s stay standing. '*Venasius, you must stand up if you do not know the answer*'. However, I got the impression that during the activities which learners did in their exercises books she made sure that learners did not talk to one another or leave their spaces without telling her what they needed. This is consistent with what she said in her interview where she indicated that she believed learners should work on their own in order to show their true abilities.

Gabs did not make a lot of remarks to his learners. In one of his lessons he encouraged them to write fast and gave some words of encouragement '*Ester has written very good sentences, I will give her six out of six.*' With very good sentences, he was actually referring to what he told them earlier about what a sentence is.

Another thing, which I observed, was that learners seem to be 'labelled'. For example, Maggy indicated that to her continuous assessment is valuable because it helps her to know which learners are '*slow learners*', which ones are '*middle learners*' and which ones are '*bright learners*'. Labelling was also observed in one of Dineo's lessons when a 'slow' labelled learner answered a question correctly; the teacher remarked '*I did not expect you to know that*'. This kind of attitude is in line with what she said during the interview that in mixed-ability groups '*slow learners are just benefiting from gifted learners, they do nothing but relaxing and wait for other to do the activities*'. Similarly, it is also in line with what I have observed in her second lesson where she told the class that she was going to repeat the lesson because of a specific group of learners, '*... I need to repeat what I said because of this group*'.

This seems to suggest that different teachers interact differently with their learners during continuous assessment. As such assessment is not only used to encourage and support learning, but sometimes to hinder learning as well.

#### **4. 3. 4 Teachers' recording and reporting of continuous assessment**

##### **(i) Recording**

During the interviews two teachers indicated that they record their learners' marks first in a class list and later transcribe them onto a record sheet. This is how they put it:

Dineo:

*'We got two, first a book (class list) and continuous assessment record sheet. First of all you have to enter different type of activities in your book (class list). For example, entering different activities under the Environmental Studies theme, Health and Social Services. When you assess you record in your own book (class list) and for the next lesson you are going to record again until you finish the whole theme. You have to add them (marks) together if you finish with a theme and enter them (marks) in the continuous assessment record sheet'*.

Maggy:

*'... when I assess my learners I keep a record book. I keep my learners' marks in a book (class list) and then from these I also use ... assessment papers or how do we call them? Assessment papers and when I finish adding those in the record book (class list) I will write in the assessment papers (record sheet). I then add marks from different skills together; I divide them and give symbols'*

Gabs on the other hand indicated that he does it differently. *'During the lessons I record in the assessment papers (class list). Later I copy the marks from there and I put them in the assessment record sheets. For example, whenever I observe that this is meme Paulina, she got four marks in reading then this I record it in my book then after that if I get a chance I will put this four marks in my assessment sheet'*

During my analysis of documents I found that all three teachers had two records of marks (class list and record sheet) as per Ministerial requirements. In their class lists all three teachers recorded the learners' marks in numbers as required. However, the way they recorded their marks was different. Generally all three teachers did not record all the information in the way that it should be recorded. For example, in most class lists, assessment dates were missing. Secondly, marks were not recorded clearly, for example, the teachers did not indicate clearly that this is Assessment One (first six weeks in a term) or this is Assessment Two (last six weeks in a term). For writing, marks are not clearly indicated whether they are for formal or creative writing.

It was also difficult for me to see which marks belonged where. For example, with Dineo, marks which are indicated to be for listening only on a class list are recorded on a record sheet as for both listening and speaking, while those which appeared to be for speaking in a class list were not recorded in his record sheet at all. The explanation she gave is that *'I did not know how marks should be calculated from a class list to a record sheet because topics in the class list are slightly different from those in the record sheet. For example, in the class list speaking and listening have two different columns while in the record sheet they share a column.'*

The calculations made by Maggy were not clear. Even with her help I could not see how the marks were summarised from the class list to the record sheet. I noticed that most of her marks differ from what was in the class list and what was in the record sheet. The explanation given was: *'sometimes I can award let say high marks to a specific learner but as time goes by I note that the learner does not perform as 'expected'. I reduce the marks to fit the learner's current performances.'* Further, instead of using numbers, Maggy used grades on her record sheet. It was only in Gabs' marks that one could see the relationship between what was in the class list and what was in the record sheet. He did not do any summarization; he simply transferred the marks, from a class list to a record sheet.

These teachers also indicated that one other thing that has influenced the way they record their marks is the curriculum directive which indicates that, "...although a learner might have a D symbol or better as an overall grade in the language used as the medium of instruction, a learner who does not meet the minimum requirements for reading should not be promoted to the next grade" (Namibia school report: Lower primary: 2005). The teachers told me that this directive made them reduce a learner's language marks from other skills than reading in those cases where they found a learner could not read. They feel that if these marks are not reduced some learners though they cannot read may get a D average which is a pass. They feel that it is better to give a child an E average (which is a fail), than a D average (which is a pass) and then *still* claim that a child should repeat because he/she cannot read a language that he/she has passed.

I also analysed first term schedules (April 2006). In these documents I looked at whether first language marks were transferred correctly (as they were) from the continuous assessment record sheet. Maggy's schedule was correct. Dineo's had three mistakes. For example, three learners were awarded different grades in the term schedule compared to what they were awarded on the record sheet. In Gabs' schedule more than half of the learners in his class got different marks in the schedule compared to what was recorded on the record sheet. It is unfortunate that when I went back to him for clarity he could not

give me a reason why the marks were like that. Another thing I found with Gabs' marks was that there was one learner listed on the term schedule, given all the marks, but who did not appear anywhere else (neither in the class list nor the record sheet). This is how he explained the situation: *'This learner joined the class sometime in March 2006, so his name was not in the class list and by the time he joined the class, others had already done a lot of assessment activities. So I just give him the marks that I felt reflected his ability.'*

This seems to indicate that recording of continuous assessment is not always done as per ministerial guidelines. It also suggests that these teachers do not always record marks their learners get from tasks they do, but record marks that teachers feel specific learners should get depending on how the teachers know them.

## **(ii) Reporting**

The three teachers indicated that they mainly use school reports to report learners' progress to their parents. Gabs, however, stated that he used to contact parents as often as it became necessary. For example, he would inform parents when a learner was struggling and he needed more time with her or him. This is how he put it *'ya, I will make a note to ask for permission from parents to allow the learner stay after school. Yah, then after school we will do what we have done during classes'*.

Dineo and Maggy used to rank the learners in order of learners' performances. In their term schedules both indicated learners' positions. Maggy, however, did not indicate the positions on learners' school reports.

Although Gabs and Maggy claim that they observe their learners' behaviour which indicates the achievement of life-skill competencies, no record of this was documented. In fact there is no space where such recording should be made in the continuous assessment record book. It seems to me that this inevitably affects the quality of remarks that are made on learners' school reports. Looking at the school reports all three teachers

made very general comments on their learners' reports such as, "*promoted*", "*pass*", "*satisfactory*", "*beware of English*" (when English is not good) and the like.

This seems to indicate that the fact that continuous assessment record book does not require teachers to record on the learners' achievement of the life-skill competencies negatively influences the quality of remarks that these teachers made on learners' school reports.

#### **4. 3. 5 Problems teachers experience regarding continuous assessment**

The teachers in the study indicated that they experienced some problems in their continuous assessment of a first language.

Dineo for example indicated that she had a problem in assessing speaking '*sometimes you can even call the learner to tell a story, the learner can just come and face the writing board, or he can just start crying or can just keep quiet without saying anything. Sometimes they do this because they are afraid of others. Because sometimes when the learner for example, the gifted one, if they know that Helena for example, do not know anything, sometimes they will start ha-ha-ha- Helena. Helena will just believe that she do not know anything*'. Or you ask a learner '*to tell a story but he or she will just come and say one word and he is finish or at other time they can just speak so soft that the others or even me, a teacher do not hear anything or what they are saying*'.

The problems Maggy experienced include awarding marks for group-work activities. She indicated that '*sometimes when I give the learners to work in groups sometimes it is very difficult to give marks to those learners. There are some learners who do not want to participate or some of them they do not know anything and that make it very difficult for me to assess them*'. Maggy also sees lack of textbooks as hindering proper assessment. She remarked that teachers need guidance as to what information should be given to learners. This is how she put it: '*You know if I do not have textbooks how can I teach. I cannot teach without textbooks. I must give them summaries from textbooks but if I do not*

*have that textbook, where am I going to get those summaries of information so that I can teach and assess the learners?'*

Gabs indicated that he experienced continuous assessment problems with learners who could not read or do not read well. *'Yah, somehow there are many problems like some learners they cannot read and some they read slowly. About writing some will take even 10 minutes to write the month and date'*. This dictates the amount of work he can give to the class. *'To make it easy I can give them three up to five sentences to write – yah- to make sure that they are finished'*. Another strategy that he said he used to improve the learners' speed of writing was *'to force them to write faster. When I walk around the class I tell learners, you are behind, write as others then I say if someone is finish then the whole class must be finish'*.

This seems to indicate that these teachers experience some major problems with continuous assessment. The kinds of problems they have indicated, such as assessing group work and shyness during oral assessment, lie at the heart of language assessment because participation in assessment activities indicates the extent to which a learner has acquired different language skills. Lack of teaching and learning support materials also contribute to ineffective assessment.

#### **4. 4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented my findings on how teachers understand and practise continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase. My research goals were the starting point of this presentation of data. I started the chapter by looking at the school context in which these data were collected and then presented the actual data using the following general topics:

- Teachers' experiences and qualifications
- Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment
- Teachers' implementation of continuous assessment
- Teachers' way of recording and reporting of continuous assessment

- Problems teachers experience regarding continuous assessment

In the next chapter I discuss my findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I take the data presented in Chapter Four to a deeper level of analysis. Merriam describes this aspect of an investigation as involving "... consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read" (2001:78). In this chapter I try to consolidate, reduce and interpret the data pertaining to my three lower primary teachers' understanding and implementation of continuous assessment. This will help to establish whether or not my research goals have been properly addressed.

#### **5.2 Teachers' understanding of continuous assessment: *Knowing in principle is not enough***

To understand continuous assessment it is essential to know what its intended role is, and be familiar with the terminologies used in policy documents pertaining to continuous assessment. In the following two sub-sections I look at the three teachers' understanding of these two aspects.

##### **5.2.1 The intended role of continuous assessment**

According to Le Grange and Reddy continuous assessment is "the ongoing assessment of learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes in terms of the learning outcomes that they are required to achieve over a period of time" (1998:37), and formative assessment plays the complementary role of providing "the learner with feedback about his or her performances" (1998:37). Looking at how Le Grange and Reddy explained the two concepts and how the teachers I interviewed explained them I could see many similarities. This indicates that these teachers are able to *articulate* quite well what continuous assessment is and what its roles are. It also indicates that these teachers have

successfully absorbed insights from the various workshops and policy documents which considered the desired paradigm shift in views of what knowledge is. However, there are two points that call for further elaboration.

Firstly, Le Grange and Reddy clearly indicated that assessment should be directed toward the various learning outcomes that learners are required to *achieve* over a period of time (1998). An understanding of this seems to be lacking in the explanation given by the teachers. Gabs vividly indicated that continuous assessment should be used in order to ensure that all objectives, aims and basic competencies of the curriculum are achieved, but the other two teachers made no mention of this. The same could also be said with regard to what I observed in their lessons. Very few of their lesson plans indicated 'correct' basic competencies. This is a matter of concern. Namibian policy clearly states that "in Basic Education minimum competencies will be identified by which teachers and learners can monitor progress" (Namibia. MEC, 1993:124). For proper monitoring of learners' progress, learners must be assessed on the basic competencies prescribed in the syllabus for their particular grade. This is also important in terms of assessment validity. If assessment is based on 'correct' basic competencies, this is likely to give a good picture of what a learner knows, understands and can do in comparison with what he or she is expected (by the syllabus) to know, understand and be able to do.

Secondly, the teachers indicated that continuous assessment should inform them about the *progress* of each learner: to know for example, which learners need help and what particular difficulties different learners have (Maggy). This shows that these teachers do understand that they should learn from their own assessment. However, what was not made explicit was whether they realised that their learners *also* need to learn from the assessment feedback they receive. Literature shows that for continuous assessment to be productive it must include continuous feedback (Blythe: 1998). I will pick up this aspect later in my discussion on providing feedback (Section 5.4).

### 5.2.2 Confusion about continuous assessment terminology

*“I also use ..... assessment papers ... or what do we call them?” (Maggy)*

All three teachers seemed to have some confusion about the terminologies used in continuous assessment policy and guidelines. They clearly found it difficult to talk confidently about these terms. This may in part be a language problem as none of the three teachers taking part in this study are English first language speakers. But irrespective of its origin, this terminological confusion has definitely affected the teachers’ conceptual understanding of continuous assessment to different degrees.

Baumann, Bloomfield and Roughton put forward the argument that until such time as a person is able to put into words what they know, it is unlikely that they fully understand what they claim to understand (1997). As long as these teachers are unable to use continuous assessment terminologies confidently it is unlikely that they do fully comprehend its underlying principles and rationales. It is thus likely that their implementation of continuous assessment will also then be less effective.

One reason for these teachers’ difficulty in using continuous assessment terminologies confidently might be attributable to the way in which they learned about continuous assessment. This is how Dineo described how they learned about continuous assessment: *‘Last year (2005) we attended lower primary curriculum workshop. They explained how assessment should be done. But before that we were also explained by an advisory teacher who visited our school and found that the way we did our continuous assessment, especially recording of marks was not good’* .

Literature indicates that new assessment practice should be introduced slowly (Black & Wiliam: 1998); should be accompanied by ongoing professional support from experts; should aim to help teachers understand what changes are to be made and why they should be made (Shepard, 1995); and lastly, it should assist teachers to abandon traditional ways of assessing (Shepard, 2000). Research indicates that teachers “need to undergo a

rigorous assessment training program in order to become skilled assessors” (Wilmot, 2005:29).

I argue that although these teachers do seem to have some knowledge of what continuous assessment is and what its roles are, they lack understanding of some crucial components that would help them implement continuous assessment more effectively. Although these teachers got professional guidance it was perhaps insufficiently rigorous. It seems there was a lack of a deeper kind of *theoretical* understanding built into these teachers’ preparation for continuous assessment. These teachers’ training focused more on *practical* aspects of how to do continuous assessment. Perhaps it is this gap that created opportunities for terminological confusion. I believe that ongoing professional support of teachers, as advocated by Shepard (1995), is what is needed if Namibian lower primary teachers are to be able to successfully implement continuous assessment in their classrooms. Such professional support should aim at enhancing both theoretical *and* practical understanding.

In the next section I discuss how these teachers implement continuous assessment. In doing so, I look at how they prepare for continuous assessment and the actual methods and strategies they use in their implementation.

### **5.3 Teachers’ implementation of continuous assessment: Superficial understanding hampers execution**

Research has indicated that high-level confusion and anxiety about assessment is inevitable unless changes are made in the way we introduce teachers to changes (Wilmot, 2005).

Continuous assessment is a learner-centred strategy and should be implemented as such. Continuous assessment activities should be explicitly planned and not simply come about incidentally. Continuous assessment must use a variety of assessment methods and strategies so as to elicit the kind of information that will provide a picture of the all-round

progress of a learner. It should enable teachers to provide clear evidence of what their learners know, understand and can or cannot do.

### **5.3.1 Preparation for continuous assessment**

*'I give assessment sometimes according to the syllabus'*

(Dineo)

Proper planning is essential if all aims, objectives and competencies of the syllabi are to be assessed. My data indicate that there is generally poor planning for assessment activities among the three teachers. Assessment tasks were not always carefully thought through, and learners were not made properly aware of what criteria would be used to assess them. For example, none of the lesson plans analysed indicated the particular assessment task to be done, and no assessment criteria were specified on lesson plans. This is in direct conflict with the *Namibian policy guide: Lower primary* which states that “assessment must be part of the lesson planning and clear assessment criteria must be set” (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2005b:13).

Literature indicates that assessment criteria are used not only to assess a learner’s level of achievement of the basic competencies but also to make assessment transparent.

Transparency requires that learners know beforehand *what* they are expected to do and *how* they will do it and how marks will be awarded [my emphasis] (Siebörger, 1998). If learners are not provided beforehand with assessment criteria they are definitely less likely to be able to show their true ability in relation to what their teacher expects from them. Similarly, if marking is not organised around set criteria the extent to which it can provide valid information on a learner’s ability is probably minimal.

As indicated in Chapter Two, literature argues that teachers should plan their lessons in a way that indicates the basic competencies that they intend to achieve and what method of assessment they will use to establish whether learners have achieved the outcomes (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998). I observed that at times assessment activities given to learners did not match what was actually taught; or even that there was little if any relationship between the basic competencies listed on the lesson plan and the subject being taught.

For example, in a first language lesson, the basic competencies which the teacher listed related to Environmental Studies. Literature argues that for assessment to be valid it *must* [my emphasis] closely match what was taught in terms of content, format and difficulty (Airasian, 1996). If basic competencies used are different from what is in the syllabus this has obvious implications regarding the validity of such an assessment. I argue that if teachers plan their lessons properly, they are more likely to ensure that what is assessed relates to what is taught. Similarly, it will also ensure that what is taught (and therefore assessed) is geared to cover the basic competencies of the particular subject being taught.

For ‘more structured’ informal continuous assessment, the *Pilot curriculum guide for Formal Basic Education* indicates that “continuous assessment should be planned and programmed at the beginning of the year” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1996:32). Contrary to this, none of these three teachers kept a record of their continuous assessment planning to show that this had been explicitly planned and programmed earlier in the teaching year. Such a situation obviously creates the possibility that not all aims and competencies of the syllabus will be assessed. This situation would have implications for what the learners are *perceived* to know, understand, able to do and what they *actually* know, understand and can do.

Evidence of weak preparation was also reflected in Dineo’s and Gabs’ time allocation. I noted that they spent relatively less time on teaching and learning, and more time on assessment tasks. Wilmot (2005) indicated that although within the constructivist paradigm, assessment should be at the heart of any teaching and learning process it should not dominate it. She further noted that research has indicated that in systems where assessment dominates teaching and learning, it has often been at the “expense of innovative teaching” (Wilmot, 2005:25). The Namibian document *Pilot curriculum guide for Formal Basic Education* indicates that “in order not to take up too much teaching time with assessment, not less than five and not more than nine assessment should be done (two for the first term, and two each in term two and three but not more than three per term)” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1996:32). Time for assessment tasks needs to be limited to ensure that there is sufficient time for teacher and

learner interaction. This teacher-learner interaction is perhaps even more important in the lower primary phase, which is probably why the policy suggests that continuous assessment should be informal and carried out as learners continue with normal classroom activities (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1996). The teachers who participated in my study however, are clearly not aware of the essential balance between time allocated to teaching and learning, and time allocated to assessment.

### **5.3.2 Putting continuous assessment into practice: A real challenge**

Literature argues that the use of a wide range of continuous assessment methods and strategies provides a comprehensive view of learners' development in all areas. (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998). It ensures that both basic and life skill competencies are assessed. My study found that contrary to what the teachers claimed during their interviews, a relatively small range of assessment strategies was used. My observations revealed that question and answer methods were the main strategies used, and then a few writing activities. I observed only one group activity.

I did note in my study that 'question and answer' assessment was generally integrated into the teaching and learning process. I observed the teachers asking questions throughout their lessons. For example, they would ask questions to clarify, confirm, or explain, and they asked questions in order to assess what their learners already knew so as to see if they were ready to move on to new material. This sort of integration of assessment into the teaching and learning process is an important aspect of learning. Lambert and Lines (2000) argue that teaching should not precede assessment but they should go hand in hand to inform one another. In fact this is what formative assessment is all about: informing the teaching and learning process, and is directly in line with Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Formative assessment can be used as a 'tool' to identify any "gap between actual and desired levels of performance" (William & Black, 1996:542). It can also be used to create opportunities to close the identified gap. However, although the teachers *were* able to integrate assessment in their lessons, which then allowed them to use the results from

their assessment to help shape, direct and improve the teaching and learning process (to close the gap), they did not, in my view, do this often enough, and when they did, it was in a rather superficial way. For example, when Dineo found that some of her learners did not understand her lesson well, she simply *repeated* the lesson in exactly the same way she taught it before. This shows a superficial grasp of what it means to say that continuous assessment should direct and improve teaching. Dineo could not see that it was not enough to repeat what was already said in order to improve understanding. She did not seem to realise that what might be necessary was a change in her teaching and assessment approaches. It is lack of such understanding that I see as hindering the three teachers' proper implementation of formative assessment.

Using Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives I was able to see that the oral questions and assessment tasks the teachers gave were from different levels. There were questions and tasks that asked for recalling (*Write your date of birth*), for comprehension (*What does it mean?*), for analysis (*Why is it like that?*), for synthesis (*What do you think they did?*) and for evaluation (*Choose one holiday and say why it is important*). Personally, I was impressed that these teachers were able to use questions at different levels. In learner-centred education all kinds of questions, and especially different levels of questions, are valuable. Learners need to develop different kinds of knowledge: *inter alia* knowledge what (recalling), knowledge how (applying) and knowledge why (analysis). Such questions may also encourage critical thinking.

I did observe however, especially in Dineo's lessons, that she asked her questions in a rather problematic way. She gave insufficient waiting time, she would only call on those learners who raised their hands, and made no apparent effort to encourage all of her learners to participate. Research has shown that one of the reasons why some learners, especially low achievers, do not participate in oral question and answer activities is because teachers fail to give enough waiting time after asking a question to enable all learners to think about the answer. It is further shown that in most cases teachers only call on those learners who raise their hands (Black et al., 2002). Consequently, other learners

may withdraw themselves both mentally and physically from such activities. Hence, Dineo's way of checking on learning is probably not very productive.

All tasks given towards the end of the lessons were written tasks. Using Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives I noted further that most questions given in these tasks were fact orientated. For example, the following questions were asked: *How many weeks are in a month?* or *When was Jesus born?* These questions encouraged mainly recall and memorisation. Literature warns against an education system that relies too heavily on one kind of question, and mainly recall-type questions, at the expense of broader more thought-provoking ones. Le Grange and Reddy, for example, argue that "less emphasis should be placed on memorising content and more emphasis should be placed on the attainment of a variety of learning outcomes" (1998:11).

My view is that the reason why these teachers did as they did is because they lack understanding of the purpose of assessment - namely to get an all-round picture of a learner's progress. In all the lessons I observed it was only during written activities that all learners got an opportunity to demonstrate what facts they could recall. Their teachers used this to give marks for recording purposes, but these written tasks did not call for different levels of thinking *beyond* factual recall. Higher-order thinking questions, which would encourage critical thinking and help learners to broaden their general understanding, were in short supply. I believe that reasons why these teachers' oral questions were more open-ended than the ones asked in their written tasks should be further explored.

According to Le Grange and Reddy continuous assessment strategies could include "journals, diaries, project work, portfolios, practical work, exhibitions, discussions, essay assignments, reports and interviews" (1998:20). I appreciate that Grade Three learners may not be able to successfully use all of these strategies, but I feel that some of them could be used. None were used however. Journals and portfolios not only provide a different *quality* of learning to learners through taking part in such a process, but they are generally easier to assess using assessment grids. "Assessment grids can be used to detail

the criteria that have been set and the form the assessment actually takes” (Le Grange and Reddy, 1998:20). Such grids then provide a useful basis for feedback.

In the following section I discuss the way in which the teachers provided feedback to their learners.

## **5.4 Providing feedback to enhance learning**

The Namibian policy document *Pilot curriculum guide for Formal Basic Education*, clearly states that “the information gathered about the learners’ progress and achievements should be used to give feedback to the learners about their strong and weak points, where they are doing well, and why, and where they need to try more, how, and why” (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1996:31). “Continuous feedback is an essential element within a constructivist approach to instruction” (Oosterhof, 2003:208). In Namibia, where the education system is based on the philosophy of constructivism, the use of feedback is vital. Although all three teachers claimed that assessment should inform them about the progress of their learners, the fact that they never spoke of assessment to inform *learners* on their own progress would seem to confirm that there is only a partial understanding of the role feedback plays in enhancing learning. According to Le Grange and Reddy, regular feedback and progress updates facilitate the motivation and stimulation of learners on a continuous basis (1998). In my view lack of feedback does just the opposite. I also believe that because feedback indicates what and where a learner needs to improve, it creates that essential feeling of “intellectual uneasiness” which Doyle and Mallet (1994:4) argue is an excellent foundation for learning. More recently, Mason argued that teachers “... who care about their students and what they know, will be better able to set challenging goals and to provide well directed feedback” (2005:6). Continuous assessment will only be informative to learners if they are given regular and worthwhile feedback.

The findings of my study indicate that feedback was either not done at all by the teachers or, when done, was not done properly. For example, in some of Dineo’s lessons, learners

were simply given the correct answers to copy. Gabs did try to give individualised feedback to learners but was frequently unsuccessful because of insufficient time. All three teachers gave feedback mainly in the form of marks achieved. Research indicates that “mere presentation of the ‘correct’ view is ineffective” (Black et al., 2002:16). I agree with Black et al. (2002). Research shows that an emphasis on ‘marks’ achieved tends to heighten competition rather than personal improvement among learners (Black et al., 2002). This is probably because marks, unlike comments for example, are easy to compare. However, the only message they seem to give is who is better than whom. Literature argues that feedback must avoid comparisons between learners (Siebörger: 1998) because comparisons might bring about unhealthy competition among learners. This might prevent learners from co-operating and learning from each other. This may also result in lack of motivation especially among low achievers. Siebörger argues, “... assessment which does not motivate learners to learn and tell them what to do in order to improve does not fulfil its educational purpose” (1998:16).

As Oosterhof argued, the emphasis in feedback needs to be on *understanding* [my emphasis] and not on superficial knowledge (2003). If the main purpose of feedback in continuous assessment is to improve learning, feedback *must* bring about understanding, rather than merely encourage memorisation of facts. Learners should not simply be given correct answers. Without understanding why an answer is right or wrong, they are doomed to fail. Literature argues that feedback should be individualised, thereby providing specific learners with specific information on how well they have performed and how they can improve based on the assessment criteria that are used (Black & Wiliam, (1998); Blythe, (1998); Lambert & Lines, (2000)). Individualised feedback should focus on individual work and be given to all learners, not only a selected few. If only a few learners are to benefit from feedback then the work of others will remain unchanged.

The way these teachers approached feedback may possibly be attributed to a lack of insight into the important role that feedback plays in the learning process. I therefore argue that until such time as these teachers take genuine responsibility for the quality of

their learners' learning and achievement, their assessment practices are unlikely to change.

## **5.5 Recording and reporting on continuous assessment**

It has been argued that record-keeping and reporting are essential elements in ensuring a successful implementation of continuous assessment (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998). The data discussed in the following two sections come primarily from my documentary analysis. This includes analysis of the teachers' completed continuous assessment record sheets and class lists, term schedules, and progress reports, as well as official forms (continuous assessment class list, record sheet, term schedule and progress reports forms). For triangulation purposes relevant data from interviews and observations is then used.

### **5.5.1. Recording**

All three teachers appeared to find recording challenging. This is mainly because the official continuous assessment forms used in Namibia were originally designed for summative type assessment. They are therefore almost impossible to use for continuous assessment purposes.

All three found difficulty recording their learners' marks in official record sheets (Appendix: 8(d & e)). Language skills are not combined in continuous assessment class lists but some language skills are combined continuous assessment record sheets (for example, listening and speaking). In other words teachers are required to award separate marks in the class list for listening and speaking, but to combine these marks before entering them in the record sheet. It is this sort of thing that these teachers find very confusing.

Le Grange and Reddy explain that "record keeping involves the detailed recording of a learner's performance as assessed by the teachers, peers or the learners" (1998:27). They further note that the main purpose of the recorded information is to monitor the progress

of the learner and to design methods that can improve that learner's development. If I look at how recording of continuous assessment (in languages) is supposed to be done in the Namibian Lower Primary phase, I find it difficult to see how teachers could implement recording of continuous assessment in the way that Le Grange and Reddy (1998) describe.

But the problem is made even more difficult. To start with, continuous assessment record sheets combine unrelated qualities into a single mark. For example, on this form one could indicate only a single mark for writing, without distinguishing between different kinds of writing such as formal writing, creative writing, sentence construction, and handwriting. Similarly, some of the skills, such as for instance, speaking and listening, are combined. Clearly, this cannot properly show what a learner can or cannot do in terms of speaking and listening. This prevents teachers from effectively interpreting assessment results, and thus complicates their ability to put appropriate compensatory interventions in place. It also makes it difficult for parents to interpret what their children can or cannot do. Problems like this are a direct result of poorly designed assessment record forms.

This same form (record sheet) does not provide space for teachers to indicate how well a learner has achieved life-skill competencies. Although the curriculum documents indicate that continuous assessment should include life skill competencies to provide a reliable picture of the all-round progress of the learner, the official form as it is now is not supportive of this. The omission of life-skill competencies from the recording form diminishes the formative value of the school reports the teachers write for each learner. Teachers can of course compensate for such assessment gaps themselves, but the extent to which an educational system can rely on this is doubtful.

Although the teachers I observed were able to actually record their learners' continuous assessment results on a five-point scale as required, I noted a number of discrepancies. For example, several learners were given different marks in either the continuous assessment class lists compared to what they were given in the continuous assessment

record sheets, or the continuous assessment record sheet compared to the term schedule. Dineo recorded listening marks to represent both listening and speaking. Such discrepancies occur mainly because these teachers find the recording of continuous assessment results complicated and difficult to do. Their recording of continuous assessment is therefore open to a lot of mistakes. This leads to a situation where assessment does not fulfil its primary role as identified by Le Grange and Reddy (1998).

### **5.5.2 Reporting**

Le Grange and Reddy explain that reporting involves presenting information about the learner to learners and their parents. Information is selected to reflect the learner's progress in achieving the required outcomes (1998). The main way the three teachers in my study reported on their learners' progress was through termly school reports. School reports *should* [my emphasis] be easy to understand so as to inform properly (Du Plessis: 2003). The Namibian Ministry of Education provides the school report forms. A rating scale is provided but - as is the case with continuous assessment record sheets - this form does not specify learners' achievements in, for example, different language skills. Such a way of presenting continuous assessment results is less formative as it cannot be easily understood by those for whom it is intended (parents and learners). Le Grange and Reddy indicate that information in reports may be expressed in different ways, but argue that it should "never be presented in isolation and should be presented clearly and simply" (1998:27).

The teachers I investigated seemed to realise that the progress form they use is not very informative. It is probably for this reason that they tried to improve it by, for example, adding their learners' positions in class. Because of their lack of deep understanding of the principles of continuous assessment and learner-centred education, they unfortunately add things like this that are in conflict with the purpose of continuous assessment.

I do recognise that much of this confusion results from these teachers' own failure to adequately learn from the several workshops that they attended, and from the continuous assessment guidelines given to them. It seems to me, however, that a lot of the problem

arises from the design of the actual record forms themselves. I argue that these forms are inappropriate for formative assessment. I believe that the Namibian Ministry of Education needs to give further attention to the way in which lower primary learners' continuous assessment results are recorded. The way continuous assessment is recorded inevitably influences the quality of the reporting that follows.

## **5.6 Some other problems**

The three teachers who participated in this study experienced several other problems during their implementation of continuous assessment. These problems include negative labelling of learners; lack of teaching and learning support materials, awarding of 'marks' during group work activities; and assessing learners who have problems in reading and writing.

In relation to the problem of negative labelling, Dineo for example, indicated that some of her learners did not like to speak because other learners would laugh at them or make negative remarks about them, which caused them to lose self-confidence and even become less cooperative. It is this sort of atmosphere in the learning environment that probably provoked such behaviour. From a sociological point of view, William Isaac Thomas showed how others have the power to "define the situation" (Robertson, 2002:20). In the educational arena this can apply to teachers and other learners having the influence "to steer learners into achieving as well or as badly as is expected of them" (Robertson, 2002:21). As Gipps (1990) indicated, labelling may set an unconscious limit on what learners are perceived as able to do. Several studies indicate that learners who come to see themselves as unable to learn, usually stop trying and become instead disruptive (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Assessment should not be associated with making judgements, identifying stupidity or cleverness, but rather with enabling learners be see ways of enhancing their own learning (Oosterhof, 2003). Until such time that all learners and teachers see assessment in that way, and improve the classroom atmosphere, I expect name calling and labelling among learners during assessment activities will be the order

of the day in our classrooms. This will prevent any realization of Namibia's dream of access to an equitable education for all.

Lack of teaching and learning support materials was also identified by Shepard (1995) as a factor that negatively affects the implementation of continuous assessment. He indicated that in order to make assessment changes that are conceptually meaningful, teachers need appropriate materials to use and adapt. This is important in the Namibian context where teachers are still learning how to implement continuous assessment successfully. If the learning support materials they use do not help them in this, this makes it even more difficult for them.

Dineo expressed a feeling that some learners do not contribute meaningfully to group work but are '*... just benefiting from other*'. This, she said, makes it difficult for a teacher to award marks for group work activities. If one group activity that I observed was anything to go by, the reason for such a situation could be partly attributed to the way these teachers organise their group activities. That particular group activity was not set up in a way that encouraged collaboration. Literature indicates that teachers should consider the nature of an activity or the basic competencies or skill that they want to assess before they decide on the assessment strategy. For example, cooperative learning tasks should *demand* collaboration so that everyone is involved, challenged and benefited by the experienced gained through such tasks (Wilmot & Euvrard, 2003). Similarly, learners need to be taught how to share responsibilities amongst themselves during group activities so as to avoid one learner doing everything. For example, learners should be taught how to choose a group leader, a secretary, some advisers, a timekeeper and so forth.

Lastly, it was also indicated that these teachers found it difficult to assess learners who cannot yet read and/or write competently. The Namibian document *Pilot curriculum for Formal Basic Education* indicates that learners in Grades One to Three may be assessed through reading and writing only after they have achieved the relevant skills, otherwise assessment in these grades should be done orally (Namibia. Ministry of Education, Sport

& Culture, 1996). However, even Gabs who specifically indicated this problem, gave mostly *written* tasks to his learners which would surely have prevented him from showing their true abilities. It is important to note that *reading* (in the language for learning) is a promotional requirement in the Lower Primary phase. It is therefore vital that every assessment activity should dictate how the assessment is to be done (Lloyd-Jones et al., 1986). So, for example, if assessment is for promotional purposes, reading *must* be a requirement.

## **5.7 In conclusion ...**

In conclusion then, it seems to me that the teachers in this study know what continuous assessment is, but they lack a deeper understanding of how it ought to be used in their classroom situations to fulfil its purposes. It also seems to me that there is a gap in the Namibian policy documents and its related curriculum documents especially on recording and reporting of continuous assessment progress. The recording and reporting systems in Namibia are definitely more geared towards summative as opposed to the formative ideal embraced by the principles of learner-centred education. Such a situation creates unfortunate discrepancies between what learners are awarded and what they can actually do. My study confirms Van Graan's view (2006:4) that many teachers still struggle to understand and implement some of the requirements of the education reform such as, in this case, assessing continuously and formatively. I believe that there is something of a 'domino effect' regarding these teachers' implementation of continuous assessment, where one difficulty leads to another. Until such time as all teachers have a more sophisticated understanding of continuous assessment, its effective implementation will remain a challenge.

In my next, and final, chapter I weave the different threads together to conclude this piece of work.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I pull together the threads of my investigation by presenting a critical overview and reflection on the findings of this study. I think it necessary to highlight certain key lessons that I personally have learned from my investigations because personal growth was the major purpose of this research. During this learning process I was able to see some of the issues that need to be looked at in order to improve continuous assessment in Namibian schools. Hence, I indicate some tentative suggestions for improvement. Similarly, during this same process a number of important issues arose that need to be pursued and understood in terms of continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase. I identify these as areas for possible future research. Lastly insofar as this research is valuable to me and may be to some others, it is important to note some of its limitations. In the last part of the chapter I look briefly at what I consider to be the value and limitations for this investigation.

#### **6.2 Overview and reflection**

Following the reform process of the Lower Primary Education in Namibia in 1996, assessment shifted its focus. The main purpose of assessment became that of assessing what learners know, understand and can do, as opposed to assessing what they do not know as was previously the case. Its ultimate goal became that of helping learners to learn more efficiently and thus improve their progress at school. As literature reviewed indicates assessment is complex. Therefore in order to implement new assessment strategies teachers need not only to understand what is expected of them but also to have the necessary practical skills.

Having observed how lower primary teachers experience problems where continuous assessment is concerned, I could not help but wonder whether I, in my capacity as a lower primary advisory teacher, might not inadvertently have contributed to this apparent lack of understanding. Could part of the problem lie in the way I advise in-service teachers? As noted previously it was my desire to know more about how lower primary teachers actually understand and implement continuous assessment that prompted this study. Understanding this would definitely put me in a better position to provide more effective guidance to teachers.

In this research I have used a qualitative case study method because I believe that using such a method will enable me to reach my research goal of more deeply understanding the phenomenon chosen to focus on. The time available for this study did not allow for large scale investigation. In my research I hoped to identify the problems teachers had in implementing continuous assessment and how such problems arose. Knowing this is vitally important to me as a lower primary advisory teacher. Thus my study was a tool I could use to inform my own professional practice. In the last part of this chapter I evaluate the extent to which my investigation has served its purpose.

### **6.2.1 Overview of key findings**

This study found that among the three teachers there is generally a good *expressed* understanding of what continuous assessment is and what its role ought to be. However, these teachers had difficulty in transferring their expressed understanding into practice. This was evident in the way they planned teaching and learning activities (including assessment activities) for their learners. There was a general lack of planning for continuous assessment tasks among the three. The methods and strategies used for continuous assessment were limited. All three teachers tended to set their learners individual written tasks only. I also observed that although these teachers used different levels of questions, especially during their oral interactions with learners, the way the questions were asked and the feedback given to learners was inappropriate for formative assessment.

Further, I found that the recording and reporting methods the teachers used were generally not appropriate for formative assessment. These teachers may be seen to have a lack of implementation skills. There could be several factors contributing to such a situation. These factors include lack of ongoing professional support for lower primary teachers, insufficient teaching and support materials and improper curriculum materials for recording and reporting continuous assessment.

## **6.3 Lessons learned**

The purpose of this study was primarily to inform both my personal and professional understanding. Essentially the ‘lessons learned’ can be distilled down to four key components:

### **6.3.1 Lessons learned from the research topic**

I have learned that assessment in general and continuous assessment in particular, is a broad area. In order to understand continuous assessment one must first understand the philosophical principles on which continuous assessment is based. This understanding is important for me so that I can properly locate continuous assessment in its broader context. By doing this study I am now able to see how continuous assessment, learner-centred education and the four goals of education reform in Namibia inform each other. Further, I now better understand how learner-centred education in general and continuous assessment in particular can be used as tools to realise the four goals of Namibian education reform: equity, quality, access and democracy. As an Advisory Teacher, this understanding is crucial to me.

### **6.3.2 Lesson learned in terms of research goals**

As indicated in Chapter One, my research goals were to explore lower primary teachers’ understanding of the policy and guidelines pertaining to continuous assessment and to investigate their implementation thereof. I have learned that although these teachers can articulate what continuous assessment is and what it should do, this does not mean that they will always be able to transfer their understanding or knowledge into practice.

Proper implementation requires more than simple understanding. It also requires proper learning and teaching support materials and on-going professional support for teachers to deepen their understanding. The quality of teachers' implementation of continuous assessment depends heavily on the nature of their understanding. For example, it was observed that although these teachers were able to employ some good strategies as far as formative continuous assessment is concerned such effectiveness was short-lived due to the teachers' inability to effectively derive meaning from their continuous assessment results. This failure can be attributed to the fact that teachers employ formative continuous assessment strategies without really being fully aware of what they do and why they do what they do.

### **6.3.3 Lessons learned in terms of the methods used.**

This study followed an interpretive orientation. It is a qualitative case study. It became clear to me that the nature of the case to be studied dictates what research approach and methods are used. For example, *because* my study sought to understand 'something' through other people's understandings and actions, the interpretive orientation was clearly the most appropriate.

Secondly, I learned that it is better to use a variety of data collection methods as this helps with triangulations as well as with uncovering issues that may have been missed had only one or two methods of data collection been used. Thus, by using a variety of methods I was able to enhance my insights into this particular case.

Thirdly, the use of semi-structured interviews deepened my understanding of the case. It provided me with an opportunity to really probe in order to get greater detail. It was also appropriate because I had relatively few people to interview. For that reason, group or focus interview would definitely not have been as appropriate.

Fourthly, lesson observations enabled me to get first hand information about the teachers' implementation of continuous assessment. The kind and quality of information I obtained would have been difficult to get as clearly through any other method of data collection.

Finally, document analysis is a valuable method of data collection. Unlike lesson observation, documents can be ‘played back’ as often as necessary to get a clear picture of what they contain. Hence it was possible for me to get a very clear sense of what the teachers actually did, as opposed to what they said they did. My discussion on planning, recording and reporting is based heavily on an analysis of documents.

#### **6.3.4 My own professional enrichment**

This study has definitely helped me to grow professionally. By reviewing literature I broadened my understanding of assessment in general and continuous assessment in particular. I was able to relate continuous assessment to other learner-centred education strategies and to better understand its role in making the achievement of Namibia’s education reform goals a reality.

Through data collection I learned from these teachers their problems, challenges, fears and achievement as far as continuous assessment is concerned. As an Advisory Teacher it is very important for me to learn that although numerous workshops on continuous assessment were run for teachers on several occasions, these seem not to have markedly influenced teachers’ practice. I find it useful that this study made me realise that what seems to influence teachers’ learning is not once in a while training sessions but ongoing professional support of teachers which aims to *educate* them.

Education is mainly concerned with enhancing learners’ cognitive skills. Thus its objective is to help learners to gain knowledge, comprehension, abilities to apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate. On the other hand, training has to do with gaining a skill. So-called “right” answers and ways of doing things are all too often part of a training ‘recipe’. If we do not adequately acknowledge and prepare teachers for the complexities of assessment, to educate them to fully understand the purpose of assessment, they are unlikely to implement assessment in any truly useful or meaningful way.

In general the whole process of a case-study also proved to be a good learning strategy. As an Advisory Teacher this is a strategy that I could use to understand other instances in my professional life. Similarly, teachers can also be encouraged to use these kinds of strategies to enhance their own understanding of different issues.

The exercise certainly enhanced my ability to work with teachers more effectively. Although at the beginning of the study the teachers I worked with seem not to have been 'free' with me, as time progressed and through continuous assurances that what we were doing was for study purposes only, trust was built. In my professional context it is a good lesson to know that being patient and honest helps create trust. I will use similar strategies in future to gain the trust of other teachers. Not all teachers see an Advisory Teacher's role as that of advising them to improve the teaching and learning process. Rather, they often see us as threatening authority figures.

This exercise also gave me an opportunity to look more critically at Lower Primary phase continuous assessment record books (class list, record sheet) and school reports. I am now able to make suggestions for improvement in these forms to make them more 'user friendly' and more informative. Finally, this process helped me to improve my writing skills and language use in general. In brief, this whole process has been very rewarding for me.

## **6.4 Tentative suggestions for improvement and future research**

Although this study was not undertaken for the purpose of making generalisations of any kind, what follows could be useful in improving continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase in Namibia. These suggestions are made in light of the data presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

Strategies should be put in place to ensure that teachers get ongoing professional support as far as continuous assessment is concerned. Currently we have in Oshana Region two lower primary Advisory Teachers who, with the help of the facilitators, organise

workshops for teachers mostly on NIED's instruction and mainly only when something new is to be implemented. However, these seem not to be enough. More professional support can be given using structures which already exist. For example, workshops can be done at circuit or cluster levels to reduce financial costs. Circuits and cluster facilitators can be encouraged to give ongoing professional development workshops to support fellow teachers. This should be done with the support of lower primary Advisory Teachers. Similarly, it is high time that schools start to conduct on-site professional development for their teachers. Experts, such as lower primary facilitators or Advisory Teachers, could be invited if necessary.

My research suggests that the professional support I am advocating needs to be based on the *theory* behind continuous assessment, and how continuous assessment can be used to *inform* teaching and learning. These must include 'scaffolding' for proper understanding of the relationship between learner-centred education and continuous assessment; how continuous assessment can support teaching and learning; how it can inform different stakeholders, and how it can inform selection and promotional decisions. Activities need to include planning of continuous assessment tasks (basic competencies and criteria), sharing of continuous assessment methods and strategies that teachers can use. Types and purpose of questions that could be asked need to be clarified, as well as strategies that can be used for successful feedback. There is also a need to sensitise teachers on how they could cope in situations such as ours where the supply of learning and teaching support materials is inadequate, as this inevitably impacts negatively upon the kinds of assessment tasks that can be set.

I also suggest that the way continuous assessment results are recorded and reported should change. If teachers are to be able more accurately to assess what their learners know and are capable of doing they must keep records that clearly show their learners' capabilities. In the current forms the records we keep do not show this. Similarly, if parents and learners are to learn from the school reports sent by the schools, their format should also change. In addition to actual levels attained school reports should also clearly

show what skills learners need to acquire and which levels of competencies they should achieve. They should also provide meaningful comments and remarks.

The following areas therefore could be considered for future research in the field of lower primary assessment.

- Formative assessment strategies used by lower primary teachers for continuous assessment purposes.
- The impact of professional development and support on lower primary teachers' understanding and implementation of continuous assessment.
- The role of feedback in continuous assessment.

## **6.5 Value and limitation of this study**

This study has greatly enhanced my understanding of the process I set out to investigate. Although this study was not done for generalisation purposes I strongly believe that those in similar situations can learn from both its findings and suggestions for improvement. Secondly, this study has also raised a number of questions that need to be pursued in order for those interested to understand lower primary continuous assessment more fully. This, I think, is this study's greatest value.

On the other hand, this study also comes with a number of limitations, one of which was time. Due to time constraints not all the questions that arose could be pursued. Similarly, not all findings of this study were discussed as thoroughly as they might have been desirable. Hence, the need for further research as suggested.

The number of lower primary teachers who participated in the study is also a point of concern. I used only three. Their views and actions may not represent those of the teachers in the whole region. Hence, care needs to be taken if for any reason, opinions expressed in this study are to be used to inform a different context.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Assessment describes a wide range of different ways in which to measure the achievement of learners (Siebörger, 1998). It involves various techniques including observations and oral questions, and giving feedback on the progress of the learners. Continuous assessment as such is not a new kind of assessment, but a more holistic approach to assessment. Its purpose is to improve the way teachers assess so as to improve instruction and ultimately the quality of our learners' learning.

Assessment which is done on a continuous basis and which uses a variety of strategies enhances educational quality. It helps teachers to develop a reliable picture of individual "learners' progress and level of achievement in relation to minimum competencies specified in subject syllabuses" (Namibia. MEC, 1993:128). It makes education more accessible to learners as it promotes differentiated learning and values what is already known, understood and can be done. Further, giving feedback not only enhances equity but also quality and democracy because learners are not only advised on *how* they can improve on their performances but they are also given the *opportunity* to improve on their performances. As a lower primary Advisory Teacher, it is my duty to educate lower primary teachers on how they can use continuous assessment to help Namibian learners achieve their full potential as educated and useful adults. It is my sincere hope that, through efforts of this sort, the four goals of education in Namibia may be brought closer to reality.

## APPENDICES

### Introduction

I have arranged the following set of appendices in their chronological order (the sequence in which they have happened during the research process).

**Appendix 1** is a copy of the letter that I wrote to the Regional Director seeking permission to conduct the study.

**Appendix 2** is the letter I received from the Regional Director that indicating that permission was granted.

**Appendix 3** served as my introductory letter, as well as the consent form for the principal of the school where the study was conducted.

**Appendix 4** is a copy of the consent form participating teachers were asked to sign. Three Grade Three teachers participated in this study. To protect identity the actual signed consent forms are currently lodged in my CASE RECORD file, but are available on request.

**Appendix 5** is the interview schedule I followed during the semi-structure interviews with the three teachers.

**Appendix 5 (a)** is my interview transcript for one teacher. I interviewed three teachers. The other two transcripts are not included here but are available in my CASE RECORD file.

**Appendix 6** is the lesson observation schedule I used to observe the nine lessons.

**Appendix 6(a)** consists of three lesson observation transcripts for one of the three teachers that participated in the study. Other lesson observation transcripts are in my case record file and are available on request.

**Appendix 7** consists of the three of the official documents I used in my documentary analysis.

**Appendix 7(a)** is a copy of *Continuous assessment record book: Grade 3*. This document guides teachers on how to assess and record continuous assessment marks.

**Appendix 7(b)** is a section from the document; *Towards improving continuous assessment in schools: A policy and information guide*. It tries to explain ‘informal more structure’ and ‘informal less structure’ continuous assessment.

**Appendix 7(c)** is a school report used by teachers to report learners’ progress in the Namibian Lower Primary phase (Grades 1-4). The reverse side of the school report is marked as school report (reverse side).

**Appendix 8** consists of the six documents (learners’ or teachers’) I used in my documentary analysis, namely:

**Appendix 8(a)** is a sample of a lesson plan

**Appendices 8(b)** and **8(c)** provide examples of learners’ work

**Appendix 8(d)** indicates how one of the three teachers recorded learners’ marks in the continuous assessment class list

**Appendix 8(e)** shows how the marks recorded in appendix 8(d) (continuous assessment class list) were transcribed onto the continuous assessment record sheet

**Appendix 8(f)** shows a class list that a teacher used as her first term schedule indicating how she transferred marks from the continuous assessment record sheet (Appendix 8(e)). (As indicated in Chapter 3, a significant number of documents were analysed. I have only provided few examples here. The remainder are available in a separate case record file, and could be provided on request.)

**Appendix 9** is a draft template that I drew up to guide me in my data analysis level 1.

**Appendix 9(a)** Interviews

**Appendix 9(b)** Lesson observation

**Appendix 9(c)** Documentary analysis



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REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
Oshana REGION

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Tel: (065) 230057  
Fax: (065) 230035

Private Bag 2020  
Ondangwa

Enquiries: Paulina Hamukonda

01 December 2005

To: The Director  
Oshana Education Region

Dear Madam,

Re: Permission to do research in Oshana Region

I am a register part-time student with Rhodes University (student no. 603I4428). I have been studying for a master degree: General Education Theory and Practice since February 2005. To successfully complete my master's degree, I am required to do research on a topic linked to course work done through the year and also related to my work as a Lower Primary Advisory Teacher. My research topic is *“Investigating the implementation of continuous assessment at the lower primary phase at a selected school in Namibia”*. The study aims to explore lower primary teachers' understanding of the policy and

guidelines surrounding continuous assessment as well as to investigate their implementation of continuous assessment.

I am humbly requesting permission to use \_\_\_\_\_ as my research sites for the report, which I am required to write. Data will be collected through interviews, classroom observation and documentary analysis with the grade three teachers. Should you allow me to use the schools, research ethics will be observed i.e. I will assure teachers of their right to privacy and anonymity and obtain their participation consent. They will be invited to proof read drafts of the report to ensure that details are accurately recorded and reported.

As my research interest was triggered by the classroom visits and lesson observations that I do as part of my everyday official duties, I hope that the result of this study will be of value not only to myself but also to teachers, curriculum developers as well as the education sector in general. I will therefore be most grateful if permission is granted to me to do my research work in the above-mentioned schools. Should you have any concerns or questions about this request, I can be contacted at (065) 230057 during business hours or at (065) 230907 after hours.

Counting on your support and understanding

Sincerely yours

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paulina Hamukonda  
LP AT \_\_ Oshana Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
OSHANA REGION**

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Enquiries: Menette N. Nambala  
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TO: Ms. Paulina Hamukonda  
Ongwediva Teachers' Resource Centre  
P/Bag 5550 Oshakati

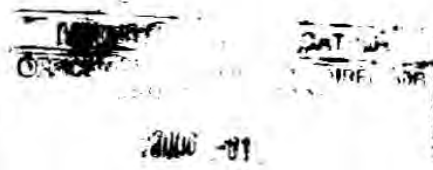
18 January 2006

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO REASEACH IN OSHANA**

1. Your letter dated 1st December 2005 is hereby acknowledged.
2. The Office of the Director grants you permission to use the two schools for the purpose, on condition that the normal school work schedule is not disrupted due to research activities.
3. We wish you success in your studies.

Yours truly,

*D. Shinyemba* 18/01/06  
**DUTTE N. SHINYEMBA  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR**



**CONSENT FORM (PRINCIPAL)**

The principal

\_\_\_\_\_ Primary School

Oshakati

Oshana Region

Dear Sir

**Permission to do research at \_\_\_\_\_ Primary School**

I am a registered part time student at Rhodes University (student no. 603I4428). I have been studying for a master degree: General Education Theory and Practice since February 2005. To successfully complete my master's degree, I am required to do research on a topic linked to course work done through the year and also related to my work as a Lower Primary Advisory Teacher. My research topic is *“Investigating the implementation of continuous assessment at the lower primary phase at a selected school in Namibia”*. The study aims to explore lower primary teachers' understanding of the policy and guidelines surrounding continuous assessment as well as to investigate their implementation of continuous assessment.

I am already granted permission to conduct research in Oshana Region and at this particular school by the Regional Director (see the attached letter). However, I am still humbly requesting you to permit me to use your school as my research site. Three Grade Three teachers will take part in this study. Data will be collected through interviews, lesson observations (three per teacher) and documentary analysis.

A consent form is hereby attached for your signature.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal) of \_\_\_\_\_ (School), permit Ms. P. Hamukonda to use our school as her research site. I fully understand the purpose of the research.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSENT FORM (TEACHERS)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Grade Three teacher) hereby agree to take part in the study that will be conducted by Ms. Paulina Hamukonda. I am aware that that I will be interviewed and later on be observed while teaching; and that she will also analyse some documents. I understand that she is interested in the understanding and implementation of continuous assessment among Lower Primary teachers. I am aware that the study is necessary for her to complete her studies (MEd: general Education Theory and Practice). I am also aware that the information generated will be used for study purposes only.

Based on the information that I have, I have no objection in allowing her to interview and observe me, and also do documentary analysis of work or my learners' work. Similarly, I have no objection in allowing her to use a tape record during the interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Interview schedule**

### **Section A: Contextual information**

**Type of school:** Rural:                      Urban:                      Peri-urban:

How long have you been teaching?

How many learners do you currently have in your class?

Tell me a bit about how you trained to become a teacher.

### **Section B: questions about perceptions**

1. Can you please tell me a bit about what you understand by the idea of “continuous assessment”
2. What do you think is the value of assessing children?
3. What assessment methods/strategies do you use? Give examples.
4. Do you give feedback to your learners? How do you do that?
5. As a teacher, what are your views on assessment portfolios?
6. Do you experience any problems in assessing your learners? Can you tell me about these problems?
7. What assessment records do you keep? Get a used sample.

### **Section C**

1. What do you think are the shortcomings of continuous assessment in the lower primary phase, both in policies and in practice?
2. What do you think are the benefits?

*Thank you very much for your time!*

**RAW DATA**

**Interview**

**Maggy**

**March – April 2006**

**By P. Hamukonda**

## **Maggy**

Type of school: Peri-urban

Teaching experience: 20 year

Teaching experience in lower primary: 12 years

Learners in the class: 32

Paulina: Tell me a bit how you trained to become a teacher?

Maggy: First, I started teaching at Okatana School with only grade ten then I taught for more than eight months and then I found that teaching is very interesting so I decided to go and further my studies at Ongwediva college of Education where I gained ECP [Education Primary Certificate].

Paulina: How long was that training?

Maggy: For two years.

Paulina: And then from there?

Maggy: From there I went to Nuujoma Secondary School. I have been teaching there for five years and then because I have been trained to teach small children I transferred to ----- Primary School.

Paulina: Have you done any upgrading since?

Maggy: No, but at the moment I am busy upgrading myself, I am doing BETD.

Paulina: How many years have you spent so far in the BETD?

Maggy: It is my fourth year; yes I am going to finish this year.

Paulina: The next question is about teachers' perceptions. What do you understand by the idea of continuous assessment?

Maggy: Ahh, to my own knowledge, continuous assessment is an assessment which is done sometimes at the end of the lesson. Sometimes I can also assess my learners while I am busy teaching.

Paulina: Why do you do that? Why do you assess them while you are busy teaching or at the end of the lesson?

Maggy: I assess them because ahh, sometimes when you are teaching you find out that some of the learners they are not paying attention. They are not listening so I try to observe them so that I can see which learner is following and which learner is not following.

Paulina: What is the use of them following? Why do they need to follow?

Maggy: They need to follow so that they can catch up with the lesson content  
mmmhhmm, come again with the question/

Paulina: You are saying that you assess them to see who is not following and who follows. It seems as following is important to you. Why is it important?

Maggy: It is important because you know that if they don't follow, they won't know what they are going to do in the lesson. And then if they do not follow they will also disturb other learners who want to follow. Because they come here to be taught and to gain something from what I am teaching them.

Paulina: The next question is what, do you think is the value of assessing children?

Maggy: To my own view the value of assessing children, number one is to know them better, number two is to know the difficulties of my learners, to know which learner need help and which learner is trying and which learner need assistance and then from there I know then better. For those who are slow I will do my level best to do remedial teaching either during break time or either during classes mmmm. For example, my bright learners are busy with some activities while myself I am busy teaching my slow learners. Or I can also give remedial teaching after classes. I would tell them to stay with me and then I will tell them why it is important to stay after classes, I will tell them that it is for their benefit if they stay with me because I want them to catch up with the other learners.

Paulina: You said you have bright learners. Sometimes you are busy with the slow learners and then you give bright learners some activities to do can you give me an activity that you have currently used in class for that purpose?

Maggy: For example, I can give them writing work, mmhhmm, I can tell them to dramatise the story in front of the class while I am busy teaching my slow learners. I can give them a test; I can write some questions on the chalkboard

and tell them to answer those questions while I am busy or focusing on my slow learners.

Paulina: Dramatising in front of the class while you are busy teaching your slow learners?

Does it work? Will it not be noisy?

Maggy: of course it will be noisy, but I will tell my learners to control their voice by not speaking or talking too loud so that they cannot disturb me while I am teaching my slow learners.

Paulina: What assessment methods or strategies do you use?

Maggy: Methods which I use sometimes I use questions method, sometimes I observe them; by telling the story in front of the class, sometimes I can write or I can give them a dictation and then I just spell out the words and I tell them to write those words in their exercises books. Sometimes I can write the sentences on the chalkboard or on the chart and then I will tell them to copy those sentences in their exercise books.

Paulina: you said something about observing them how do you do that? Assessing through observation.

Maggy: I can observe them by asking them to come and write words on the chalkboard I just say the word and then I would ask one learners to come and write those words on the chalkboard or I can observe them by giving them an activity and after that I will mark their books so that I can find out which learner need help and which learner do not need help.

Paulina: What does the policy say about continuous assessment? Continuous assessment policy, *Towards Education for All, Pilot Curriculum* and the like.

Maggy: We must assess the children.

Paulina: Do these documents give hints on how to assess for example methods of assessing?

Maggy: Yes, there are many methods to assess learners.

Paulina: Can you give me an example, for example that the Pilot Curriculum or Towards education for All tells us that we should assess this way?

Maggy: Okay, for example, I can give them a test; by giving them a test it is a form of assessment. I can ask them questions by asking those questions and they answer those questions is a sort of an assessment.

Paulina: What about the saying that LP learners should not write tests?

Maggy: Okay, they said that it is not necessary to give them test but sometimes it is needed. Because when I give them a test I teach them how to learn. Sometimes continuous assessment does not teach the learners a lot. For example, you can give marks to the learner which she/he does not deserve. For example, in writing eh, but if I give them a test I would find out that this learner is progressing well or he/she is not progress well.

Paulina: You said that when you give them a test you learn them how to learn, what do you really mean, elaborate a bit?

Maggy: I learn them because when I told them that they are going to write a test they are going to study because no one want to fail by this I have learn them to study for the test.

Paulina: Again you said that you can give marks to the learner which she/he does not deserve, what do you mean by that? How can that happen?

Maggy: Sometimes if you just assess learners by giving them tasks or activities, some of the activities are too easy even slow learners will get A but if I give them a test I will make sure to include difficult questions, which will be answered by bright learners only.

Paulina: How do you make sure that learners do not copy from one another?

Maggy: I tell them to take an extra book and cover it so that they cannot copy from one another.

Paulina: How do you assess them in group-work?

Maggy: When I give them group work I know is group work. But I tell each and every learner in that group to participate. I give them marks according to their participation. If she/he does not participate I won't give him marks.

Paulina: What do you mean by participation?

Maggy: Participation I mean helping one another by giving ideas, in his or her group. She must say something, she must contribute. She must participate.

Paulina: That is I very interesting. How do you set your tasks that the tasks force all learners to participate?

Maggy: Sometimes I would give each and every child turn to say something for example if started with okay, now you are the next to give us the answer.

Paulina: What if they give the same answer. For example, you only have five answers and you have six children in the group. What if they say the same answers?

Maggy: I would do my level best to use another method to create another .....

Paulina: Give me a practical example of the activity that you have used to make all the learners participate in group-work?

Maggy: Okay, for example, I gave them an activity about weather for example then I ask them different questions for example, what is the weather like today, excetra and then expect different learners to give me different answers from that particular topic the weather.

Paulina: What assessment records do you keep?

Maggy: Mhhmmm... when I assess my learners I keep a record book. I keep my learners' marks in a record book and then from these I also use mmhhmm assessment papers or how do we call them, assessment papers and when I finish adding those in the record book (class list) I will write in the assessment papers (record sheets). I then add marks from different skills together; I divide them and then give symbols.

Paulina: Which marks do you divide here?

Maggy: I divide the marks which the learner got for example in speaking. I give each learner two chances to come and tell a story I add these mark together and divide them by two so that I can get a symbol for each learner.

Paulina: Thank you; do you experience any problems in assessing your learners?

Maggy: Yes, I experience mhhmmm sometimes when I give the learners to work in groups sometimes it is very difficult to give marks to those learners. There are some of the learners who do not want to participate or some of them do not know anything and that make it very difficult for me to assess them.

Paulina: How do you make them participate?

Maggy: I use different methods of teaching. If I know that they do not understand I will mmhhmm try my level best to mmhhmm to make my instruction very clear to them. If I see that they do not understand I will repeat until I see that each and every learner in that group has understood my instruction very clearly.

Paulina: And then even if they understand they still do not know anything? Because you said that some learners do not know anything.

Maggy: But I think what I believe and I think that if they understand the instruction very clear I do not think there will be a problem.

Paulina: So, those learners, who do not know anything, are those learners who do not understand?

Maggy: Or those who have misunderstood the instructions.

Paulina: What you are trying to say is that they know ... ..

Maggy: mmhmm, sometimes they know but sometimes if he or she do not understand I would try to either to do remedial after classes or either to repeat the subject again when I see that the majority of the learners did not catch up with the lesson content so, I will repeat the lesson content.

Paulina: I it is only one child?

Maggy: If it is only one child I can explain to that child during break time or I can tell her to stay with me after classes so that I can give her remedial teaching. I would make sure that she understands.

Paulina: Any other problems?

Maggy: With assessment, okay the problem that I have experienced with assessment is for example, when I, for example, in my class I have a problem in English when I tell my learners to come and tell stories most of the learners they do not want to tell my learners to come and tell stories. Most of the learners they do not want to tell the stories in English. I found out that sometimes they are shy. But sometimes they do not understand but I try my level best to speak more English in the class so that next time when I tell them to come and tell a story or something in English they are familiar with it.

Paulina: How do you help those who are shy?

Maggy: Shy, no I will just tell them that there is no need for them to be shy. We are all human beings. They must not be afraid of human beings so be free and I will also tell them that so that they can get an example from other learners who are able to say something in front of the class but they are free.

Paulina: But do they change after that?

Maggy: Yeh, they change.

Paulina: Do you experience similar problems in the first language?

Maggy: No

Paulina: The next question is about feedback. Do you give feedback to your learners?

Maggy: Yes

Paulina: When and how do you give it?

Maggy: After I have marked all learners' books we make correction. Or I talk to learners while they are doing their tasks.

Paulina: What do you think is the value of feedback?

Maggy: For the learners to know the correct answers.

Paulina: Thank you very much. The other question is about assessment portfolios. What is your view on assessment portfolio? Do you keep portfolios for learners' work or ....?

Maggy: Yes, I keep portfolios for learners' work. I assess them I put assessment marks in the portfolio and to me it is also important to put those marks in the portfolio because when their parents come to visit at our schools to check their work it is easy for me. I will just pick my portfolio and show the parents their children's progress.

Paulina: How did you manage to get a file for each and every learner?

Maggy: Oh, you mean that each and every learner to have a portfolio?

Paulina: Mmhhmm yes. With a portfolio I mean a file or a kind of file where the learners keep selected piece of work that they have done.

Maggy: I just buy myself. I just buy myself and then I put their marks or work in the portfolio mmhhmm.

Paulina: What did you say why do you keep portfolios?

Maggy: I keep portfolios number one I must keep those portfolios so that I can find out which learner is progressing well or which learner is not progressing well. Secondly, I keep those portfolios so that I can write learners' marks from the portfolios because assessment is also there. It is where I take those marks and write in the certificates and then I will also use the portfolios when their parents come to visit the school. It is easy for me because I will only take those marks and show it to their parents so that they can see how much their children are learning at school or how much their children are progressing at school.

Paulina: So in the portfolio you only keep learners' marks and not activities as such?

Maggy: Oh, tasks, I think I also keep tasks.

Paulina: Thank you very much our second last question is: What do you think are the shortcomings of continuous assessment in the Lower Primary phase, both in policy and practice?

Maggy: mmhmm, I just got a little bit answer there when the materials are not enough or when teaching aids are not enough. You know that learners like teaching aids very much. So, teaching materials are not enough.

Paulina: Which materials are you talking about?

Maggy: Textbooks

Paulina: How does the lack of textbooks related to assessment?

Maggy: It is related because you know if I do not have textbooks how can I teach. I cannot teach without text books so it is related to assessment because I must give them summaries from textbooks but if I do not have that textbooks where am I going to get those summaries of information so that I can teach and assess the learners. It is related to assessment.

Paulina: Now, with this lack of materials, who do not have the materials? Is it the learners or the teacher? Which books are lacking?

Maggy: For example, at the moment we are having thematic but we do not have English books, so we are facing problems.

Paulina: How does the school, especially the school management help?

Maggy: You know, for example, ahhh we need those Oshindonga and English books we go to Gamsberg the books are not available so we are still waiting for the books

to come. They help us but at the moment the books are not there. That means it is not the management's fault it is just that the books are not there.

Paulina: Now how do you assess them?

Maggy: Okay, I told you that I use to make copies from the other schools who are having those books.

Paulina: Do you have a copy now?

Maggy: Yes, I have a copy.

Paulina: How do you use it for assessment?

Maggy: For assessment, I give them work for example writing work, and then I assess them by giving the tasks.

Paulina: What advice can you give to other teachers who might be in the same situation as you are?

Maggy: I will tell them to go to the other schools where I found the information or I can even tell them to come to me and make a copy in my book.

Paulina: Proper teaching and assessment goes hand in hand with teachers' creativity.

Where can you say here we need teachers' creativity? Like, in a situation of lack of materials.

Maggy: Come again with the question?

Paulina: I am saying that we are encouraging teachers to become creative.

Maggy: Creative in what?

Paulina: Creative in sitting assessment tasks, in teaching and in approaching the syllabi.

Now my question is with this creativity and with this lack of materials, where can the two meet?

Maggy: They will meet because you must just try your level best to go and approach other people who have got the materials so that you can go and use it to your class.

Paulina: Thank you. What benefit does continuous assessment have? What are the benefits?

Maggy: the benefit, you assess the children you will know which learner needs help, which learner understand, which learner do not understand. Mhmm and then by this you can help those learners who do not.

Paulina: Specifically we do not only refer to assessment but to continuous assessment.

Now what are the benefits of continuous assessment?

Maggy: when you are assessing the children you know them better, you will know that, that one is a bright learner, this one is a medium learner and that one is a slow learner. Then I must concentrate too much to that slow learner because he/she is the one, which need my help mhhmmm.

Paulina: Is there perhaps anything that you need to add concerning assessment/

Maggy: No, I think that is all.

Paulina: thank you very much for your time.

Maggy: It is my pleasure.

**THE END**

### Lesson observation schedule

<b>Participant:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Lesson topic:</b>	<b>Lesson length:</b>	
<b>Basic Competencies:</b>				
Time	Description of lessons	Learners' activities	Observer's comments	Stimulate recall

## Class observation transcript (Maggy)

### Lesson 1 Lesson Topic: Holidays

<b>Participant:</b> Maggy		Date: 29 March 06	<b>Duration:</b> 80 minutes
<b>Lesson objective:</b> Learners to freely tell stories in front of others.			
Time	Description of lesson	Learners' activities	Observer's comments
11:01	<p>I want you to tell me about independence. What is independence?</p> <p>It is correct. Now we are independent. We are free and we walk around freely. Somebody must then tell us a story about independence.</p> <p>What is a party?</p> <p>Who else will come and tell us about independence? What did your parents prepare for you?</p> <p>Tseetheni (another learner)</p> <p>Tseetheni death is part of life. Apart from independence there are also some days that we celebrate. What are they?</p> <p>How do you celebrate Christmas?</p>	<p>It is people who made this country to be okay.</p> <p>In the past people use to fight but now they are independent. Like this year we were first at home and in the afternoon we went to the independence celebration and then afterwards we had a party.</p> <p>It is like when somebody has a birthday.</p> <p>They prepare for us some sweets, niknaks, and then they took us to Oshakati and afterwards to Windhoek. And then we came back home.</p> <p>We did not celebrate it well. We went to attend a funeral but on a way the car got broken and then we walk. We just got food and then we went back home.</p> <p>Wedding Baptism Christmas They (adults) prepare macaroni, chicken and others food.</p>	
11:13	<p>Up to there. Thank you for your answers. They are all correct. Today we are going to learn about holidays.</p> <p>I know that you know a bit about</p>		Teacher writes the topic on the chalkboard.

<p>holidays. I will just add a bit. What is a holiday? A holiday is a day when we celebrate important things done in the past. Who can remember an important event that happened in the past? Venasius!  Venasius, you must stand up if you do not know the answer.  Natangwe tell us!</p> <p>Religious holidays are Christian holidays. There are many religious here as there are also many churches. Which other churches are here except Catholic, Anglican or Lutheran?</p> <p>Most Namibians are Christians. Is there any one who is not a Christian here?</p> <p>Days that are regarded by Oshiveva as holidays are not holidays (perhaps in Namibia).  Maggy put a poster on the writing board and explains that 25 December is Christmas day. Which day is Good Friday?  Which one is ascension day?  Where did Jesus go?  What did Jesus do on good Friday?  Ooh, when was Jesus born? When did Jesus resurrects?  We do not do any work during holidays all that we do is to enjoy. Or do you go to school during holidays? Like on Christmas days?</p> <p>Now we are going to talk about national holidays. New year's eve: when is new year's eve?</p> <p>Yes, thank you very much Emerenciane. New year's eve is always on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January.  Which day is independence day?</p>	<p>New year  Kassinga  Venasius: Kept quiet</p> <p>It is when Jesus died.</p> <p>'Oshiveva'  Church for Literacy</p> <p>Yes, I attend 'Oshiveva'</p> <p>Is Jesus' death.</p> <p>In heaven  No reply  Jesus was born on 25 December.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>Roosa: 25  Victoria: Sunday  Emerenciane: 1 January</p> <p>21 March</p>	<p>Oshiveva refer to any other church not included in the three mentioned churches. Church for literacy refers to literacy classes offered in villages.</p>
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	<p>Say the date as well as the month. The year is of course 1990. I want you to tell me, is there anybody who was born by then in this class? Yes, you were not born by then but we always celebrate that day. Now we are independent. We can walk even during the night. In the past before independence if you walk during the night, what will happen to you? Yes, you will be killed. From the day of independence we are ruled by our own leaders but in the past we were ruled by foreigners.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>You will be killed.</p>	
11:31	<p>(Poster)</p> <p><b>Workers' day Africa day</b> <b>Kassinga day Heroes' day</b> <b>Independence day</b></p>	<p>One learner reads Is when there is no work. Important things.</p>	
11:40	<p>Now I want one learner to read what I have written in this poster. Now tell me what is a public holiday? What are the kinds of holidays do we have? Patrick stands up. Patrick you do not know? Can somebody help him please? Is Victoria the only person in this class?</p>	<p>Patrick: Weekdays. Victoria: Good Friday; Christmas day.</p>	<p>A learner read without understanding and then a poster was taken away.</p>
11:50	<p>I think you did not understand well. I will repeat what I taught. You must pay attention because if you don't I will become angry with you. Now, listen! (Teacher repeats the lesson) Hilja Banjamen Teopolina We have two kinds of holidays. Religious and National holidays. Hilka I am about to beat you. 'Iiveva' also have certain days that they celebrate but those are not official. <b>Revision</b> When was Jesus born?</p>	<p>No answer No answer It is when there is no work.</p> <p>24 December Venacius: 1 May Class: No Hosea: 21 May Class: No 21 March 1990</p>	

<p>12:00</p> <p>12:20</p>	<p>When did Namibia became independence? Give me the day, month and year.</p> <p>When is new years' day?</p> <p>Now I want you to take out your Oshindonga exercises books. I want you to do individual work not in groups. These three groups should draw Jesus on the cross. Next to the picture write sentences related to the drawing. The other three groups should draw the flag of this country. Below your drawing write three places where one can find flags. Write the date and draw nicely. Do not walk around the class and do not leave your space without telling me where you are going. Lahja, distribute the crayons.</p> <p><b>END OF LESSON ONE</b></p>	<p>1 January</p>	<p>How many sentences? Which skill/s was the teacher assessing?</p>
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**Lesson 2**  
**Date:** 30 March 2006  
**Topic:** Months of a year  
**Basic competencies:** To know the months of a year

<p>8:05</p>	<p>Good morning learners! What is on the chalkboard? When you speak loudly. Yes in the flash cards there are months of the year. Do you all know which month you were born? Take this stick and show us the month you were born. Oh, Elizabeth was born in November who else, Bianca, yes which month? December. Come on boys, Lazarus? Oo, you were born in March. Silas which month? September, and the last one, Julia, July now and show the month.</p>	<p>There are names of the months.</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>A learner shows November.</p> <p>December Lazarus shows March Silas shows September</p>	<p>The teacher lists the names of the months on the chalkboard before she starts with the lesson.</p>
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8:16	<p>Now those who have showed us are enough. Others do you know the months you were born in?  Now tell me which month is the ninth month? What must be done if you want to get the ninth month?  Martha which month is the ninth?  No, let us count. One, two, three ... is December the ninth month?  Teopolina which month is the 12<sup>th</sup>?  Teopolina stand up and listen to others. Which month is between January and March? Yes, it is February between May and July?  Which month comes after March, look at the chalkboard the list is there.  Which one after June?  Thank you for that. Hilka do not look through the window any more or do you have a car on the road?  Today we are going to learn about the months of the year. Hilka this must be the last warning. What did I say we are going to learn? How many months are there I a year? Yes I know you can name them in their order.  Now you have read them from the chalkboard. And I am sure that some of you do not know them.  Now, I am going to read them while you listen and later we read together.  Thank you.  Now I am going to read and group one will read with me. Those who have already read please follow in your mind in order to learn how they are read. Are all the groups finish?  Then the last group read with me.</p> <p>Now I want you to close eyes. Do not open them until I tell you to do so.  Now open them, tell me what number (month) is not on the chalkboard.  Tell me the name of the third month.  (The list goes on about four months</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>December</p> <p>No  Quiet</p> <p>February</p> <p>No</p> <p>(several learners named them)</p> <p>No, we know them (chorus)</p> <p>No</p> <p>Third</p>	<p>About five groups read. It is not clear why learners have to read in groups.</p> <p>The teacher took off some names of the months from</p>
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8:45	<p>were missing).</p> <p>Gerhard which one is missing? No, Gerhard which one/ Yes, the ninth one.</p> <p>Now, can one of you tell me how many days are in a year? You need to put together the number of days in all the months Now listen we have 365 days in a year. How many weeks are there in a year? Do not you listen to radios? You must listen to radios to get information. Now, let me tell you, it is 54.</p> <p>The 12 months of the year is divided indifferent seasons, four of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter</li> <li>• Summer</li> <li>• Spring</li> <li>• Autumn</li> </ul> <p>Now I will write them on the chalkboard. Read with me:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) March – May: Autumn</li> <li>2) June – August: Winter</li> <li>3) September - November: Summer</li> <li>4) December – February: Spring</li> </ol> <p>What else did we mention? Now tell me which time is winter? Is it cold or hot? What time is summer? Is it cold or hot? Do you all agree? What about December? Yes, sometimes is hot sometimes is cold. It is cold when what happened? Tell me which months are during winter Simeon? Who can help Simeon? Alina? No anyone who can help Alina? Yes, you are correct. Now I am going to give you work. Victoria sits down properly as a learner. Now someone</p>	<p>The eighth The nineth</p> <p>12 days 120 days</p> <p>Quiet Cold</p> <p>Cold No, hot (in a chorus) Teopolina: sometimes is cold sometimes is hot. When it has rained.</p> <p>Quiet January Another learner: June – August</p>	<p>the chalkboard.</p> <p>Many learners tried but nobody could give a correct answer.</p> <p>(one of the learners who were making noise was beaten)</p> <p>One learner beat another learner with a rope but the teacher did not notice that.</p> <p>(teacher did the same with all the seasons).</p>
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<p>8:55</p> <p>9:10</p>	<p>must clean the chalkboard.</p> <p>I will give the two groups the same work but you are not going to work in groups but alone. Listen, if I give you work you must not walk around but do your work only. Group 1 for Hosea and Group 2 for Klaudia. These two groups I will give you a calendar for March I will put the calendar on the chalkboard and you must take your Oshindonga book and draw the calendar. Remember March has 31 days.</p> <p>The next two groups should write down the names of the 12 months of a year. Write them in Oshindonga not in English. There you can see the months but they are in English so do not copy. Do not talk because you are working alone.</p> <p>The last two groups: How many did I say the months a year are? How many seasons? Can you remember them? Mention them.</p> <p>Now I want you to write those seasons' names and you must also write the months of the season. Do you understand what you need to do? Start writing then. Do not talk. All of you know what you need to do. Do not ask any help. Your parents were supposed to buy you one (pencil) because the school has already given you one.</p> <p>Use a ruler to do your calendar. Write the days of a week, i.e. Monday, Tuesday and so on. You must be quick we are just waiting for your group. Others have already finish. Edwig, if you are finish keep quiet. Everyone who is finish should put her/his book on this chair. Write clearly, good numbers, even if a</p>	<p>12 4 Yes (learners did)</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>I do not have a pen.</p>	<p>The class is said to be grouped in ability groups.</p> <p>Learners wasted a lot of time either because they do not have pens or they are sharpening their pencils.</p> <p>The class became a bit disruptive.</p>
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9:15	<p>person look at your book he will say yes, these learners are in Grade Three not in Grade One.</p> <p>Look at how your friend has done it. Can't you see properly? Look Monday is here, Tuesday is here, now start all over again.</p> <p>You must finish, we want to continue (with a different lesson)</p> <p>Those who are finish take your art books to finish what you did not finish yesterday.</p> <p>Until here, let us go to PE. Those who are not finish they will finish during Art. All of you should come no one should remain in the class.</p> <p><b>END OF LESSON 2</b></p>		Some learners find drawing calendars very challenging.
<p><b>Lesson 3</b>  <b>Date:</b> 06 June 2006  <b>Topic:</b> Pronouns  <b>Basic Competencies:</b> Learners will answer and construct their own sentences in which they use pronouns</p>			
9:50	<p>Pronouns</p> <p>Can someone tell me what pronouns are? Yes Tsheetheni.</p> <p>Gebhard</p> <p>Hosea tells me, do not look at the road I know you do not have a car that is currently running on that road.</p> <p>Yes, all of you are nearly correct. It is a word. A word that show or indicate where a person or a thing is situated. Today we are going to learn about pronouns. Declarative pronouns are in three different types.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those that refer to a person or a thing that is close to the speaker.</li> <li>• Those that refer to a person or a thing that is close the listener.</li> <li>• Those, which refer to a person or a thing that is far from both the speaker and</li> </ul>	<p>Words that show.</p> <p>Words that show where a person is.</p> <p>A word that tell even if a person is somewhere.</p>	Cellphone rung and the teacher went out for that.

<p>10:02</p>	<p>the listener.  What did I say we are going to learn today? Rauha!  Veronica!  Amon!  I talked about three different types but today we are only going to learn about the 1<sup>st</sup> ones. Those that refer to a person or an object that is close to the speaker. Let me give you some examples.  1) Omuntu <b>nguno</b> omulongi gwandje. (<b>This</b> person is my teacher.)  2) Aanona <b>mbano</b> oyeli mondondo ondintatu B. (<b>These</b> children are in grade three B). (Which children am I talking about?)  3) Veronica <b>nguno</b> oha kudhile? (<b>This</b> Veronica makes noise.)  4) Okambo <b>haka</b> okOshindonga. (<b>This</b> book is for Oshindonga.)  5) Mongulu <b>muka</b> omuna aakadhona oyendji. (In <b>this</b> classroom there are many girls.)</p> <p>How do we call those words?  What did we learned today? I will read these words: nguka, mbuka, ndika, haka, mbano, dhino, shino, shika, ndjika.  I will repeat again. How many are these cards?  Yes, now I want one learner to give me a sentence with a word nguka.  Yes, Ben!  Ben has tried but you should remember that it must be clear in your sentences that what you are talking about is near /close to you.  Hilma.  Yes,  Bianca</p> <p>Maria</p>	<p>Words  Pronouns  Pronouns</p> <p>You are talking about us.</p> <p>Venacius: Nguno</p> <p>Hosea: Haka</p> <p>Muka</p> <p>Nguka  Pronouns</p> <p>Nine</p> <p>Omuntu nguka.</p> <p>Omuntu <b>nguka</b> omule. (<b>This</b> person is tall.)  Uunona <b>mbuka</b> otau dhana. (<b>These</b> children are playing.)  Ehala <b>ndika</b> olya yela. (<b>This</b> place is clean.)</p>	<p>The teacher could have asked the learners to give examples instead.</p> <p>Examples given orally.</p> <p>Examples continue. Now the same examples are given on the chalkboard with learners indicating the pronouns. Several learners got it wrong</p> <p>The teacher posted the nine cards on the chalkboard.</p> <p>Is this a sentence?</p> <p>Learners did</p>
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<p>10:20</p>	<p>Martha</p> <p>Most of your sentences were correct. Now I want to give you work but you must do it on your own. Do not ask help from anyone.</p> <p>I will put the flipchart on the blackboard and fill in the pronouns that are missing.</p> <p>Do not only write the correct answer but write whole sentences. You must write properly I do not want you to write as if you are in offices.</p> <p>Remember we start a sentence with a capital letter and end with what?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Embo ____ olya gupo kulyo lyene.</li> <li>2) Amuhe ____ okuume kandje.</li> <li>3) Ngame _____ otandi ehama ngangoye.</li> </ol>	<p>Okuume <b>mbaka</b> oyiihole. (<b>These</b> friends like each other very much.)</p> <p>A full stop.</p>	<p>with all the words given.</p> <p>Teacher put the flip chart up. Read through the sentences and indicate where there are empty spaces. (Five sentences given).</p> <p>Teacher walks around the class looking at learners' book mainly without saying a word.</p>
<p>10:34</p>	<p>You must write the whole sentences not only the answer. Did you hear me, Patrick. If you are finish take your book to my table or rise up your hand to show me that you are finish.</p> <p>Those sentences are few why are you not finishing? Will you be able to finish today? What have you been doing all the time? You must finish the time is over. How many of you are still not finish? You must finish, you are writing like children in Grade One.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>About seven learners</p>	<p>Looking at learners' books most learners found this exercise difficult and only a few were able to get all the five sentences correct. This was probably because the teacher did not give learners an example of sentences with a missing pronoun.</p>
<p><b>END OF LESSON 3</b></p>			

## **Stimulated recall**

The stimulated recall below was done after lesson 1 (the same day). As indicated in the Method Chapter it was merely done for clarity purposes. The questions were based on what had happened in lesson 1.

Paulina: Why does learners have to stand up when they give a wrong answer?

Maggy: To show respect to others and to me. It is also a punishment so that next time he will follow the lesson

Paulina: Why did you ask if there was someone who was not a Christian?

Maggy: For me to know whether there is someone from a different domination in my class.

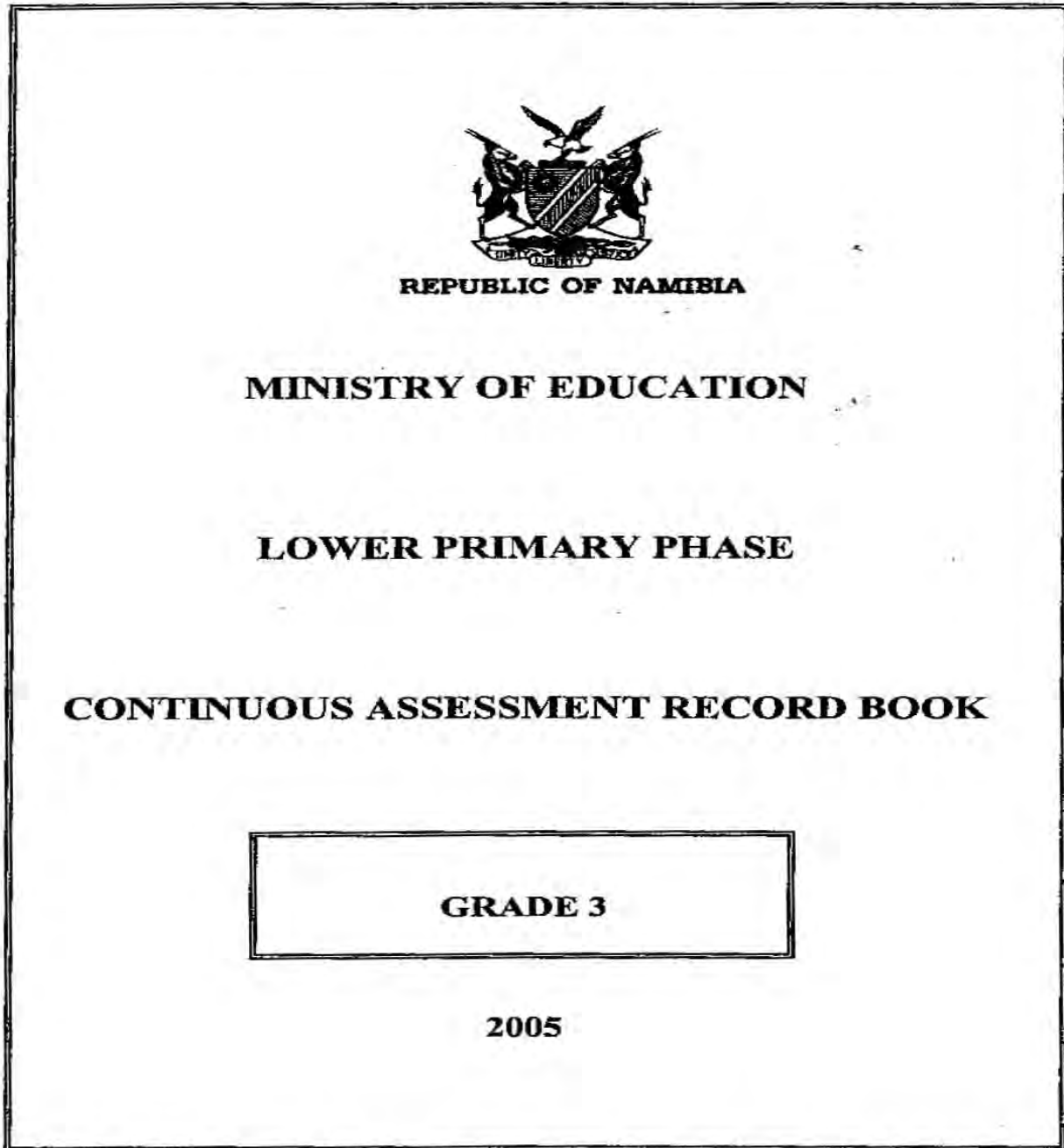
Paulina: Why do you thank some learners who gave correct answers and not all?

Maggy: I mostly thank those who give an answer which others could not give.

Paulina: When you realise that some learners did not understand your lesson you repeated the lesson exactly the same way you taught it before. Why did you do that?

Maggy: Through assessment I saw that learners did not understand. May be the summary was too long to them.

Thank you very much!



## **GUIDELINES ON THE COMPLETION OF ASSESSMENT RECORD FORMS**

The following are examples of record forms to be used for recording summaries of **less structured** and more structured continuous assessment in all the subjects. Please feel free to adapt **these** forms to suit your needs.

### **Number of assessments per year**

Record books for all Lower Primary grades consist of six assessments each: two assessments per term. (See Pilot Curriculum Guide par. 11.1.6)

For the following subjects with a lower time allocation there is only one assessment per term:

- Religious and Moral Education
- Physical Education
- Arts

### **How to assess**

1. Assessment must be part of the lesson planning and clear assessment criteria must be set. During lessons and while learners are carrying on with normal classroom activities, the teacher awards marks according to the 5-point assessment scale for less structured and more structured continuous assessment in all the subjects and for all the various:

- skills (Languages)
- components (Mathematics, Physical Education and Arts) and
- themes/topics/sub-topics (Environmental Studies and Religious and Moral Education)

These marks are recorded on class lists for plus-minus six weeks (half the term) in the two languages, Mathematics and Environmental Studies. In Religious and Moral Education, Physical Education and Arts, less structured continuous assessment is being done throughout the term. The teacher should make sure that there is the same number of marks for each learner in each column on the class list. (Examples of class lists are included.)

**Please note** that more structured (M/S) continuous assessment activities like short tests or quizzes should be spread over the term and written during normal classes. **This means that no Lower Primary Grades 1 to 4 classes will have a "test week" or a "test time table" during which learners are required to study for tests.**

2. In the middle and at the end of the term the teacher summarises marks by calculating and rounding the marks for each of the skills, components and themes/topics/sub-topics. The marks are then written on the assessment record forms in the appropriate columns as full marks 1-5 (without decimal fractions).

3. All the marks are then added up in the *Total column*. The Average mark is the *Total* divided by the number of columns containing marks. In the *Average* column, the decimal fraction must be indicated, e.g. 3.2). The *Average* mark is then converted into a *Grade* or symbol as follows:

- 5 = A
- 4 = B
- 3 = C
- 2 = D
- 1 = E

4. At the end of each term the teacher makes a summary of the term's marks by adding the two *Totals*. The final average is the last total divided by two and is then again converted into a *Grade* or symbol. There is room for the summaries of assessment for the end of each term on each subject form. These marks must be carefully calculated and controlled by the HOD or school principal. Only the **final grades** are carried over to the school report for parents.

**Please note: Final marks for the end of the year are the summarised marks of the last term only and NOT a summarised mark of the whole year.**

**The Meaning of grades** (See Pilot Curriculum Guide par. 11.6)

In the Lower Primary phase, assessment is Criterion-referenced. This means that, when letter grades are awarded, it is essential that they reflect the learner's actual level of achievement in relation to the Basic Competencies. Letter grades may be awarded directly or indirectly. When a letter grade is awarded directly, the teacher assesses the level of achievement of the competencies and awards the appropriate letter grade. Letter grades are awarded indirectly when a mark is used and then converted to the letter grade. Marks must be related to criteria for assessing learner achievement in the same way as when awarding letter grades directly.

- 5 = Grade A - Achieved Basic Competencies exceptionally well.** This is for outstanding achievement in all main areas of competency.
- 4 = Grade B - Achieved Basic Competencies very well.** The learner is above average in the class, and is more proficient than average in several areas, e.g. showing quicker mastery of some competencies, or being able to apply competencies to unknown situations or contexts, or showing new insight.
- 3 = Grade C - Achieved Basic Competencies.** The learner has mastered the all competencies satisfactorily in known situations and contexts. The large majority of learners should reach this level.
- 2 = Grade D - Partly achieved Basic Competencies.** The learner may not have achieved all the competencies, but with extra help and guidance from the teacher, has sufficient competency to go on to the next grade.

**1 = Grade E - Not achieved the majority of Basic Competencies.** The learner has not been able to reach a minimum level of competency for the year grade, even with extensive help from the teacher and is in need of compensatory teaching.

### **Specific guidelines for the various Subjects**

It is an absolute MUST to consult the syllabuses in the different subjects very well when planning lessons, so you know exactly what should be assessed.

#### **Languages:**

In Languages we teach skills. In each weekly lesson plan, provision should be made to assess the all the different language skills.

- **Listening and Speaking Skills** are combined in the syllabus and in the record forms. However, specific activities should be taught on each of the skills and the two skills should therefore also be separately assessed on the class list.
- In **Reading Skills**, both **prepared reading** (everyday reading lessons) and **unprepared reading** (unknown reading text on the same level) should be assessed.
- In **Writing Skills**, both **creative** and **formal** writing should be assessed.
- **Handwriting** is not being assessed as a separate component, but in all written work in all subjects, it should be regarded as one of the marking and assessment criteria

#### **Mathematics**

In Mathematics we assess all the **components** of the Mathematics syllabus, because all the different components must be included in each weekly lesson plan.

- **Number Concepts** - Each weekly lesson plan deals with certain number concepts. Teachers should make sure that ALL number concepts are being taught and assessed in each assessment period.
- **Measuring** - Each weekly lesson plan deals with certain measurements. Teachers should make sure that all the measurements taught and assessed in each assessment period are filled indicated on the class list, i.e. Length, Mass, Capacity, Money, Time, Geometry

#### **Environmental Studies**

Teachers are guided by year plans in the sequence of themes/topics for thematic integration. However, they are free to follow their own sequence and draw up their own Schemes of Work. Thus, names of themes/topics should be written in the columns under less structured assessment. Please note that, depending on the time spent on each topic/sub-topic, they can be combined for assessment purposes.

#### **Religious Education**

(See notes under Environmental Studies)

#### **Physical Education:**

Please note that you may choose your own sequence of sections in the syllabus.

#### **Arts**

All arts components are assessed once each term.





Namibia. Ministry of basic Education and Culture, (1999). *Towards improving continuous assessment in schools: A policy and information guide* (pp. 21-23). Okahandja: NIED.

## **5. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AT LOWER PRIMARY LEVEL, GRADES 1 - 4**

### **5.1 What continuous assessment methods (types) can be used in Grades 1 - 4?**

Only *informal* continuous assessments and no examinations are allowed in this school phase. A distinction can however be made between *more structured* and *less structured* informal continuous assessments. See paragraph 5.2.

Teachers must link their assessments to the syllabus' objectives and competencies. Illustrations of these links using the assessment methods listed in Table 1 will be provided in teachers' guides for the grades in this phase.

Teachers should use Table 1 as a guide for selecting approaches and continuous assessment methods. ~~In Grades 1-3 the assessment methods should primarily be oral questioning and observation.~~ *Assessment by reading and writing must be implemented progressively as learners acquire the necessary reading and writing skills.* Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, Circular No: Form ED 19/97 (1997, pp. 3-4).

5.2 How many continuous assessments should be recorded for the summative continuous assessment grade?

The Pilot Curriculum Guide For Formal Basic Education (1996, p. 30) recommends that all assessments at the lower primary level consist of *informal continuous assessments*. Two kinds of informal assessments exist in the lower primary phase: (1) *informal more structured* and (2) *informal less structured*.

Nine ~~selected graded informal more structured~~ continuous assessments, at least two per term, should be graded and recorded for this school phase. These *nine selected graded informal more structured* continuous assessments will contribute to the final continuous assessment grade. Therefore, these nine continuous assessments must be carefully planned and marked according to a marking scheme or memorandum. *Informal more structured* continuous assessments are meant to require a relatively short administration time. For example, the administration time of a quiz should not exceed the common attention span of the learners. In cases of homework and projects, the learners should be taught to spend time in parts where a single part does not exceed their attention span. Teachers must be careful not to make unrealistic demands on the time of their learners.

Evidence of the work produced by good, average and poor learners on the *informal more structured continuous assessments* as well as a description of the assignment and the marking scheme or test memorandum has to be kept at school until the end of February of the next year. Teachers may choose to grade and/or record more than nine continuous assessments, but only nine may contribute to the final summative continuous assessment grade. These *nine selected informal more structured continuous assessments* must be identified in the teacher's assessment plan which is to be developed at the beginning of the school year.

The *informal less structured* continuous assessments are usually made on the spur of the moment or casually on selected class learners for the purpose of providing the teacher and the learners with feedback on the effectiveness of the learning process. This is done by determining what some learners know and/or can demonstrate. ~~Informal less structured, continuous assessments may or may not be recorded.~~

In the lower primary level the information gathered with *less structured continuous assessments* is of great importance as immediate feedback to the teacher and learner. It enables them to continuously monitor the mastery of critical literacy and numeracy skills and understandings. Done over time, less structured continuous assessment gives the teacher a more all around picture of learners' performance which should compliment the information gathered from the *more structured informal continuous assessments*. ~~The information gathered using less structured continuous assessments should be~~

emphasised at lower primary level when the promotability of borderline cases is considered at the end of the school year.

At the end of each term and for each subject, teachers must determine and record an overall grade based on the *less structured continuous assessments* of each learner. This grade gives the teacher the opportunity to consider the development of each learner over the school year. However, you should not use your *less structured continuous assessment* letter grades to punish learners who are misbehaving or not doing what you want them to do. This grade must represent each learner's degree of mastery of the entire year's curriculum. It would not be proper to use the *less structured continuous assessment* letter grade for some other purpose such as punishment.

**It is up to the teacher to decide whether he or she wants to record or not record informal less structured continuous assessments. However, the teacher must be able to determine a grade for each learner in each subject at the end of each term based on the informal less structured continuous assessments that he or she has made on each learner.**

The average of the *less structured continuous assessment* grade and the grades obtained during the term for the *more structured continuous assessments* should be reported to parents at the end of each term. This average should determine the learner's final promotion grade.

### **5.3 What assistance will be provided to teachers regarding continuous assessment at this school level?**

At each grade at lower primary level a Teachers' Manual on Continuous Assessment will be developed and provided to schools. This manual will cover all subjects in a given grade and will contain examples of good practice. It will also give guidance on how assessment types should be designed, how their matching marking schemes should be developed and how marking should be done and recorded for tests and other assessment tasks. Advisory teachers and school management are also expected to assist teachers with the planning and implementation of continuous assessment.

**SCHOOL REOPENS**

Second Trimester: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Third Trimester: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

First Trimester: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

**DAYS ABSENT**

First Trimester: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Trimester: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Trimester: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF PARENT**

First Trimester: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Trimester: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Trimester: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS REPORT**

**TO THE SCHOOL**

**ON THE**

Second Trimester: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Third Trimester: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**SCHOOL REPORT**

*OF*

SURNAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR \_\_\_\_\_ (YEAR)

**SCHOOL**

School Stamp

*Report for  
Grades 1 - 4*



Appendix 8: Teachers' and learners' documents analysed

Appendix 8 (a)

O. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Date: 28, 29, 30  
Grade: 3B

Weekly lesson format

Subject: Nolonga  
Theme: \_\_\_\_\_  
Topic: Omahokololo

Lesson Objectives

Qanana ota kakala  
Yeni okuphela ota  
omahokololo ta pulu  
nawa omahokololo  
ta pulu yakwala  
sha taya hokololo  
omahokololo

Basic Competencies

Qanana ya hokololo  
omahokololo yanangulika  
kenaha gya kwisa

grouping	assessment	material

Day Monday Duration 80 min  
Topic: Omahokololo

Introduction:  
Qanani ota hoka  
lala qanana ehokololo  
lye shimbungu na kwisa

Teaching Activity

Onkati 1. Omulangi  
ota pulu qanana ya  
hokololo ehokololo  
naye oti ta hokololo  
ta  
Onkati 2. Omulangi ta  
pulu qanana ya  
hokololo omahokololo  
lala gawe yeni  
Onkati 3.  
Omulangi ta pulu  
qanana ya chwe  
shimbungu shing  
sha homahokololo

Learning activity

Qanana ota  
hokololo  
  
qanana ota  
hokololo ama  
hokololo gawe  
yeni  
  
qanana ota  
nyandi shing  
ndu

intro group  
story telling

Appendix 8 (a) continue

			grouping	assessment	materials
<p>Tuesday Duration <u>40 min</u></p> <p>topic <u>Ondesheta</u></p> <p>Introduction:  <u>Omulongi ota</u>  <u>pula shanaga</u>  <u>lamapula ashay</u>  <u>lengwa sha pita</u></p>	<p>Teaching activities</p> <p><u>Ankatu 1. Omulongi</u>  <u>ota shanaga itiya</u>  <u>ya omulongi kishi</u>  <u>ya kende kandi yi</u>  <u>leshete ganaga</u>  <u>Ankatu 2. Omulongi</u>  <u>ota leshete ganaga</u>  <u>kegumwe kegumwe</u>  <u>Ankatu 3. Omulongi</u>  <u>ota shanaga ondesheta</u></p>	<p>Learning activities</p> <p><u>Ganaga aya</u>  <u>pulakena nawa</u></p> <p><u>Ganaga ota leshe</u>  <u>kegumwe kegumwe</u></p> <p><u>Ganaga ota shanaga</u>  <u>ondesheta</u></p>			
<p>Wednesday Duration <u>80 min</u></p> <p>Topic <u>Amasiku gamatucha</u></p> <p>Introduction  <u>Atandi pula amapub</u>  <u>hal ya hakalala</u>  <u>nkene ya dhaka</u>  <u>amapubika Amasiku</u>  <u>geni shewe hatu</u>  <u>dhaka</u></p>	<p>Teaching activities</p> <p><u>Ankatu 1. Omulongi</u>  <u>ta fatululie nawa</u>  <u>ganaga kumbinga</u>  <u>umatucha</u>  <u>Ankatu 2. Omulongi</u>  <u>ya pula ganaga ya</u>  <u>leshe amatubika</u>  <u>geli mekalala ota shanaga</u>  <u>shi hashu namatucha</u></p>	<p>Learning activities</p> <p><u>Ganona aya landu</u>  <u>la nawa</u></p> <p><u>Ganona ota thaneke</u></p>	<p>indivi duat</p>	<p>Iwri king</p>	<p>Landu geka</p>
<p>Thursday Duration _____</p> <p>Topic _____</p> <p>Introduction _____</p>	<p>Teaching activities _____</p>	<p>Learning activities _____</p>	<p>indivi duat</p>	<p>drawing</p>	<p>under the Sun</p>
<p>Friday Duration _____</p> <p>Topic _____</p> <p>Introduction _____</p>	<p>Teaching activities _____</p>	<p>Learning activities _____</p>			



20 Musama ndi sholanga  
Luka Okwe mu hoko lolele  
ashine.  
~~Abanghi~~ okwa ni ange  
Yanoko mdo yeima  
vula okumwena.

23 Maci 1208  
Ondjamba ohayi Kulataka.  
Namushesho chali ihina  
hinyak  
Nene ohali liot  
Oshingandja ohashi isa  
sheketa.  
Ombidhi ohayi kuqwa.

24 Maali 2006  
Okamiwena kondjamb  
oha ithamwa Okandjambwa  
Okamiwena keyaka  
ohaka ithamwa Okayaka.

27 Maali 2006  
Ngeme ondish okukahila  
Uusila  
opoya owady oshoka  
ondikiy enawa  
Non djimp odhi enawa  
omnguni  
Nelago oku okudhike pwanwe  
muukulimtu

28 Maali 2006  
Asita otaya hinga ihawuta.  
Umuyangeli otali ihwa  
Oangamba.  
Okngana oka mona omaganano.  
Menge okwafaka omayaga  
29 Mo ngo kamona.  
30 Moko atemba Oondongi  
ohashi noma okatma.

Oshituhi shesoso  
Oshituthi shon

25 Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006

Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006

Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006

Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006

Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006

Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006  
Ma<sup>30</sup> Maalitsa 2006



Appendix 8 (d) continue

acher 1.  
Oshindaga

NAMES

No	Name	Assesment 1		Listening		Total	
		Listening	Spelling	Listening	Spelling	Listening	Spelling
2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
5	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
9	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
10	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
11	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
12	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
13	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
14	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
15	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
17	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
18	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
19	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
20	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
21	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
22	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
23	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
24	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
25	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
26	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
27	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
28	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
29	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
30	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
31	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
32	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
33	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
34	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

First Language (Medium of Instruction)										Grade 3													
First Term										Assessment 1					Assessment 2								
No.	Name	Less Struct.					Total	Average	Grade	Less Struct.					Total	Average	Grade	Total for Ass. 1+2	Average	Grade for term			
		Listening and Speaking	Reading : Prep.+Unprep.	Phonics	Writing: Creat. & Form.	M/S Activity				Listening and Speaking	Reading : Pre+Unprepared	Phonics	Writing: Creat. & Form.	M/S Activity									
1.		2	2	2	2	3	11			2	2	2	2	3	11			22	2	D			
2.		2	3	4	4	2	15			2	3	4	3	3	15			30	3	C			
3.		2	1	1	1	2	7			2	1	1	1	1	6			13	1	D			
4.		4	5	4	3	4	20			4	4	4	5	2	19			39	4	B			
5.		4	4	5	4	5	22			4	4	5	4	5	22			44	4	B			
6.		3	2	2	2	2	11			2	2	2	2	3	11			22	2	D			
7.		2	2	3	4	2	13			3	2	3	2	3	13			26	3	C			
8.		3	4	4	5	4	20			4	4	4	4	3	19			39	4	B			
9.		3	4	3	4	4	18			3	4	3	4	3	17			35	4	B			
10.		1	1	1	1	1	5			2	1	1	1	3	8			13	1	E			
11.		3	3	2	3	3	14			3	3	2	3	3	14			28	3	C			
12.		2	3	4	2	2	13			3	3	4	3	2	15			28	3	C			
13.		4	4	5	5	5	23			5	5	5	4	5	24			47	5	A			
14.		3	3	4	4	3	17			3	3	4	3	3	16			34	3	E			
15.																							
16.		3	5	3	4	4	19			4	5	3	3	4	19			38	3	C			
17.		2	2	2	2	2	10			2	2	2	2	3	11			21	2	D			
18.		3	4	2	2	4	15			3	4	2	2	5	16			33	3	C			
19.		3	4	3	3	3	16			2	4	3	3	3	15			33	3	C			
20.		5	5	5	5	5	25			5	5	4	4	4	22	A		47	5	A			
21.		3	2	2	3	2	12			4	3	2	2	3	14			26	3	C			
22.		2	4	2	2	4	14			3	4	2	2	3	14			28	2	D			
23.		3	3	4	4	3	17			3	3	4	4	4	19			35	4	B			
24.		4	4	5	4	4	21			4	4	5	4	3	20			41	4	B			
25.		3	2	3	2	3	13			3	2	3	3	3	14			27	3	C			
26.		1	1	1	2	2	7			1	1	1	1	1	5			12	1	E			
27.		3	3	3	3	4	16			3	3	3	3	3	15			31	3	C			
28.		5	5	5	5	5	25			5	5	5	5	5	25	A		50	5	A			
29.		2	4	4	4	4	18			4	5	4	4	4	21			39	4	C			
30.		3	4	4	4	3	18			3	4	4	4	3	18			36	4	B			
31.		3	3	2	3	3	14			3	2	2	2	3	12			26	3	C			
32.		5	4	5	4	5	23			5	4	5	5	5	24			47	5	A			
33.		3	3	4	3	4	17			4	3	4	4	3	18			35	3	C			
34.		3	3	3	2	3	14			3	3	3	3	3	15			30	3	C			
35.		3	4	5	3	5	20			3	4	5	5	5	22			42	4	B			

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Class List for Assessment										
Subject: <i>all subjects 2006 First Term Grade: 3c</i>										
	First L.	Second L.	Mathematics	Environmental St	ARTS	Ph. & E.	Religious H.	Total	Position	Remarks
Date of ass. →										
Names: ↓										
	D	D	D	D	C	D	C	D	28	P
	C	D	D	D	C	C	C	D	28	P
	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	30	P
	B	C	C	D	C	D	C	C	17	P
	B	C	B	B	C	C	C	C	6	P
	D	D	D	D	D	C	D	D	28	P
	C	D	D	D	D	C	D	D	28	P
	B	B	B	C	B	C	B	B	5	P
	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	9A	P
	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	24	F
	C	D	D	D	D	C	D	D	26	P
	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	24	P
	A	B	B	B	B	C	B	B	4	P
	C	D	C	D	C	C	C	C	20A	P
										P
	C	C	B	B	B	B	C	B	7	P
	D	E	D	D	C	D	D	D	27	P
	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	14A	P
	C	D	C	D	C	C	D	C	19	P
	A	B	B	B	B	B	C	B	3	P
	C	D	C	C	C	C	B	C	9B	P
	D	C	D	B	C	C	C	D	14B	P
	B	C	D	C	C	B	C	C	12	P
	B	C	D	C	C	B	D	C	11	P
	C	D	C	D	C	D	D	C	21	P
	D	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	29	F
	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	16	P
	A	A	A	B	C	B	A	B	1	P
	C	C	C	C	C	B	B	C	8	P
	V	D	D	C	C	D	D	C	20B	P
	A	B	A	B	B	C	B	B	2	P
	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	15A	P
	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	C	15B	P
	B	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	12	P
	B	D	D	C	D	D	C	D	18	P

## Draft template: Data analysis level 1

Investigating the implementation of continuous assessment in the Lower Primary Phase at a selected school in Namibia.

Appendix 9 (a)

### Interviews

#### A) Teachers' experiences and qualifications

Teacher	Overall teaching experience	Teaching experience in the Lower Primary phase	Qualification
Dineo			
Maggy			
Gabs			

#### B) Teachers' perceptions

Questions	Dineo	Maggy	Gabs
Understanding of assessment			
Value of assessment			
Assessment methods/strategies			
Feedback			

<b>Assessment portfolios</b>			
<b>Assessment records</b>			
<b>Problems in assessment</b>			
<b>Shortcomings of assessment</b>			
<b>Benefits of assessment</b>			
<b>Feeling about current assessment system</b>			

## Lesson observations

Per teacher

<b>Key characteristics of CASS</b>	<b>Lesson 1</b>	<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Lesson 3</b>
<b>To what extent were assessment criteria used?</b>			
<b>What were the purposes of assessment?</b>			
<b>Was the assessment Valid?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess what is taught.</li> <li>• Assess what is in the syllabi.</li> </ul>			
<b>Was assessment integrated in teaching?</b>			
<b>What kinds of questions were asked? (Skills being asked)</b>			
<b>Was marking done during the class?</b>			
<b>Was recording done during the class?</b>			
<b>Context/Environment of assessment</b>			
<b>Assessment strategies used</b>			
<b>To what extent was feedback used?</b>			

### Documentary analysis

Documents	Dineo	Maggy	Gabs
<p><b>Lesson plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is the lesson based on the basic competencies of the syllabus?</i></li> <li>• <i>Was assessment tasks linked to the basic competencies in the syllabus?</i></li> <li>• <i>Were the assessment criteria indicated?</i></li> </ul>			
<p><b>Learners' work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What kinds of activities are given to learners?</i></li> <li>• <i>How often are tasks given?</i></li> </ul>			
<p><b>Continuous assessment Record books</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How are the marks recorded?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is the recording in line with the ministerial policy guidelines?</i></li> </ul>			
<p><b>Term schedule</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Were the marks transferred correctly?</i></li> <li>• <i>Anything strange?</i></li> </ul>			
<p><b>End of term school progress reports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Are the information given to parents clear in terms of progress made by the learners?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are the kinds of remarks given to parents informative?</i></li> </ul>			

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