THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INFORMAL AND FORMAL ASSESSMENT IN GRADE 9 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

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DECLARATION

I, FAZILA BANOO RAOOF, solemnly declare this dissertation entitled: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INFORMAL AND FORMAL ASSESSMENT IN GRADE 9 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE is original and the result of my own work. It has never, on any previous occasion, been presented in part or whole to any institution or Board for the award of any degree. I further declare that all information used and quoted has been duly acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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SUMMARY

Keywords:
assessment, informal assessment, formal assessment, continuous assessment, constructivism, scaffolding and *English First Additional Language.*

Learning and assessment are inextricably intertwined, since assessment not only measures learning, but future learning is also dependent on assessment. The purpose of this two phase sequential mixed-methods study was to examine the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms in order to gain a better understanding of teachers' assessment practises. Argued from a constructivist point of view, the study endorses continuous assessment (CASS), which balances informal and formal assessment.

In order to direct the study towards the stated purpose, the researcher embarked on a literature study to contextualise English as First Additional Language against the background of educational developments in South Africa since 1994 and to examine assessment of English First Additional Language in an OBE framework. The literature study was followed by an empirical study.

By applying a sequential mixed-methods research design, 66 conveniently sampled EFAL teachers in the Johannesburg-North District of the Gauteng Department of Education participated in the quantitative phase of the empirical study. By means of a survey as strategy of inquiry, these teachers completed a questionnaire. Six randomly selected teachers from the initial sample participated in the qualitative phase of the empirical study which followed a case study strategy of inquiry and consisted of individual interviews and observations.

The empirical research findings revealed that the sampled teachers experienced the official Departmental documents as regulatory, overwhelming and ambiguous and that they gave more attention to formal assessment than informal assessment. Due to this emphasis on formal assessment, the teachers felt uncertain about the purposes of informal assessment which, as a consequence, was considered as less important than

formal assessment. A preference of conventional assessment methods was also disclosed which implied that the sampled teachers were not willing to experiment with alternative assessment methods. In conclusion, the researcher discovered that although CASS was implemented in the sampled teachers' classrooms, learner-centred teaching founded on constructivism with the aim of encouraging scaffolding, was not high on the teachers' teaching agendas.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Du Toit and Du Toit (2004:8) describe learning as a process of active involvement by learners in the gathering of information and the construction of meaning on their own, or with the assistance of peers or the teacher. In order to determine the level of progress made by learners in terms of information gathering and knowledge construction, their learning needs to be monitored and evaluated. In this sense, assessment is linked to learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007:3). Metaphorically, assessment is the window through which the learning of curriculum content and skills can be observed, since it shows the extent of learning and reflects on the feedback that should be used to support further learning (Earl, 2003:89).

In the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), it is suggested that "… assessment should be used as an on-going integral part of the learning and teaching process" (Department of Education (DoE), 2007:7) to measure what has been learnt in order to improve teaching and learning. Hence, the NCS embraces the notion that assessment should be used to review lessons and to support the development of learners; thereby endorsing the view that assessment is related to teaching and learning (DoE, 2007:8). In addition, the NCS also regards teachers as primary role players accountable for learners' attainment of the targeted outcomes and infers that learners should be seen as partners in their assessment (DoE, 2007:9). Assessment is thus viewed as an important tool in the teaching and learning process.

Continuous assessment (CASS) or school based assessment (SBA), is an assessment model which is used by the NCS to integrate assessment into teaching and learning in order to reinforce learning by providing support to learners and by encouraging improvements in the teaching and learning process (Pretorius, 1998:82-84; DoE, 2003b:29; DoE, 2007:10). The terms CASS and SBA could be used interchangeably since it comprises of informal and sometimes unplanned assessment activities as well as formal and planned assessment within the school context. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2007:32) school-based

assessment is “any assessment activity, instrument or programme where the design, development, administration, marking, recording and reporting has been initiated, directed, planned, organized, controlled and managed by the school”. Understood in this way, preference is given to the term CASS for the purpose of this study, because CASS can be compared to a building construction where the builder conducts inspections at every stage of the construction before the final building inspection is conducted at the completion of the project (Chapman & King, 2005:xxi).

Related to the NCS, the purpose of CASS is to provide feedback for the on-going or formative development and monitoring of learners’ progress before they are assessed finally at the completion of a particular task. CASS is administered through formal assessments which are conceived of during the planning of teaching, learning and assessments for the grade, in order to evaluate the extent and the rate of learners’ competencies, and through informal assessments which involve the daily monitoring of learners’ progress during class lessons using a variety of teaching methodologies and learning techniques (DoE, 2002a:5; DoE, 2003a:15; DoE, 2007:7). Though it is stipulated that formative assessment should be integral to teaching and learning, be on-going and be administered whenever an opportunity arises (DoE, 2003a:29), the NCS policy on assessment merely gives guidelines on the number of formal assessments and indicates that informal and formal assessment should be administered (DoE, 2005:5, 14). Whilst the frequency of the formal assessment component of CASS might not be a problem, the frequency of informal assessment could vary, since there are no prescriptions in policy documents about its nature, levels or quality; other than stating that it must be used daily (DoE, 2007:7). In this regard, teachers who are of the opinion that informal assessment is important in promoting learning could use it more frequently where learners are observed and assisted to achieve the outcomes of specified tasks (Kraker, 2005:7). However, teachers who do not see the relevance of informal assessment in terms of scaffolding learning would regard it as of little significance and just administer formal assessment to fulfil policy requirements. In addition, teachers who feel accountable for learner performance might focus their teaching on aspects related to assessment tasks without engaging in informal assessment as a means of clarifying learners’ understanding of the learning material (Carless, 2007:176). Thus, teachers’ perception of the role and purposes of assessment in the classroom impact on their

assessment practices in terms of the nature, levels, quality and frequency of both informal and formal assessment. This is underscored by Vandeyar and Killen (2007:102) who suggest that teachers' assessment practices are, to a certain extent, determined by their perceptions of the purposes of assessment. This notion also problematizes simplistic views of the relationships between teaching, learning and assessment.

In addition to teacher perceptions, assessment practices are also governed by teachers' knowledge and skills to implement informal and formal assessment. Since 1997, teachers were confronted by education reforms in the forms of a new educational approach (Outcomes-based Education (OBE)), a new curriculum (Curriculum 2005 (C2005)) and continuous curriculum revision and refinement processes (Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)). This resulted in the fact that teachers were, (and still are), easily confused and overwhelmed by loads of information, recommendations and requirements they need to adopt and adapt to, which also impact on their assessment practices (Reyneke, 2008:46; Warnich, 2007:6). Schlebusch and Thobedi (2005: 306-319) and Mohlala (2005:1) also confirm that teachers battle with the implementation of "new approaches to assessment", (which includes their understanding and skills related to informal assessment), since training received by teachers is rated as insufficient and is not complemented by follow-up sessions by district facilitators.

An added factor impacting on teachers' assessment practices can be related to policy matters. The General Education and Training Band (GET) of the NCS is reliant on school-based assessment for grading (Dada *et al.,* 2009:39) from Grade 1 to Grade 8. In the senior phase of schooling, which includes Grade 9, only 25% of the assessment comprises of an examination which could be set by the schools or a common paper set by district officials. Continuous assessment done by the schools constitutes 75% of the learners' final result. The lack of standardization of the assessment requirements in the senior phase of the GET Band brought about by the high weighting of 75% of the CASS, is intended to promote varied assessment practices, but is firmly founded on formal assessment. Ultimately, such practices

could influence learners' quality of learning and their acquired competences negatively.

Yet another factor that influences teachers' assessment practices is the reality of the classroom. Bron (2008:10) mentions that teachers must face the realities of large learner numbers and heterogeneous learners from different cultural backgrounds and abilities, which consequently, encourage reliance on assessment in the form of formal assessment since it is easy to administer for providing evidence of learner performance.

From the above line of reasoning, it is evident that a variety of factors contribute towards teachers' assessment preferences. Furthermore, in correspondence with other national education sectors (*cf.* Coetzee-van Rooy & Serfontein, 2001), it appears as if teachers' assessment practices are primarily manifested in the use of formal assessment. Based on Stiggins's (2002:761) appeal for a balanced assessment system, no research focusing on the interplay between informal and formal assessment to enable a better understanding of teachers' assessment practices, could be found in the South African context.

1.2 PURPOSE STATEMENT

Derived from the above discussion, the purpose of this proposed two phase sequential mixed-methods study centred on the examination of the interplay between informal and formal assessment in selected classrooms in order to gain a better understanding of teachers' assessment practices. Due to her position as English learning area facilitator, the researcher was particularly interested to focus on the assessment practices of teachers teaching English. Therefore, the assessment practices of English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers teaching Grade 9 learners in secondary public schools in the Johannesburg-North District of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) was investigated.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed to gaining a deeper understanding of assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms by examining teachers' assessment practices with the intent to uncover

the interplay between informal and formal assessment. Therefore, the study was guided by a range of questions.

1.3.1 Primary research question

Derived from the aforementioned outline and purpose statement, the primary research question of the study was delineated as follows:

How does the interplay between informal and formal assessment as practised in Grade 9 English First Additional Language classrooms present itself?

1.3.2 Secondary research questions and objectives of the study

Secondary research questions originating from the aforementioned primary research question included:

- What educational developments characterised South African education since 1994?
- What is the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum?
- How should assessment be understood within a constructivist framework?
- What are the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education?
- What is the relation between the informal and formal assessment practices of Grade 9 EFAL teachers?

Following the respective secondary research questions, the related objectives of the study were expressed as follows:

- To provide an overview of educational developments that characterised South African education since 1994.
- To determine the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum.
- To present a theoretical outline of assessment within a constructivist framework.
- To pursue the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education.

- To determine and deliberate on the relation between informal and formal assessment practices of Grade 9 EFAL teachers.

1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework includes a variety of terms that were used as basis in addressing the purpose of the study. The following terms were identified to direct the researcher's thinking: *assessment* and specifically the differentiation between in*formal* and *formal* assessment as well as the notion of *continuous* assessment. In addition, the term *interplay* needed to be clarified since it is significant for this study, as well as terms such as *EFAL*, *constructivism* and *scaffolding.*

1.4.1 Assessment

Assessment, according to Pretorius (1998:83), is a comprehensive term which comprises of assessment practices starting with the planning of assessment and the implementation of such plans in teaching and learning as a means of gauging the level or pace of learner progress. Assessment thus includes measurement, marking, recording and reporting. In addition, assessment involves the gathering of information about learners' achievement of learning outcomes with regard to knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in order to promote further learning (DoE, 2003a:15). While it is acknowledged that fine nuances exist in distinguishing among the different purposes of assessment, a restricted distinction can be made between informal / formative / daily assessment / assessment for learning on the one hand, and formal / summative / assessment of learning on the other hand. Whilst formal assessment evaluates learner progress, informal assessment monitors learner progress (DoE, 2007:7).

1.4.2 Informal assessment

Informal assessment is assessment that is used to gather information about learners on the spur of the moment to strengthen teaching and learning (NIED, 1999:7). The NCS sees the importance of informal assessment in providing immediate feedback to learners (DoE, 2007:8) whereas Kirton *et al.* (2007:607) maintain that formative assessment (read informal assessment) involves constant feedback provided to learners.

1.4.3 Formal assessment

Formal assessment is assessment which is planned in advance by the teacher and aligned to the outcomes or skills prescribed in the curriculum. Formal assessments are usually graded and recorded (NIED, 1999:7). This study was concerned about teachers' formal assessment practices in relation to their informal assessment practices.

1.4.4 Continuous assessment

Continuous assessment (CASS) is emphasized by the NCS, especially with regard to the formative development of learners (DoE, 2003a:7, 8, & 10). CASS is an assessment model which integrates assessment into teaching and learning (DoE, 2002b:8). It is on-going and constitutes informal and formal assessments. Thus, continuous assessment, which is composed of formal and informal assessment, supports teaching and learning (DoE, 2002b: 8; NIED, 1999:7).

1.4.5 Interplay

Interplay refers to "a point where interaction occurs between two systems" (Thompson, 1995:710). This study examined Grade 9 EFAL teachers' assessment practices to determine the interaction between their informal and formal assessments.

1.4.6 English First Additional language

In the South African context, English is a connecting language, since it is the predominant language of books, newspapers and of the mass media (DoE, 2004:5). In 2012, 514 601 out of 592 704 Grade 12 learners wrote examinations in the subject: English (DBE, 2012:59/60), indicating that in most schools in South Africa, English is either the medium for teaching and learning (implying that it is also the learners' Home language) or is taken as First Additional language.

1.4.7 Constructivism

Constructivists believe that learning involves the learner constructing his/her own thinking or conceptual understanding and finding his/her own solutions to problems with the help of the teacher and peers when there is a common goal in learning

(Berk & Winsler, 1995:132; Stiggins, 2002:759). Constructivism sees learners as learning through different learning styles, which are seen "as different ways in which people perceive, process, understand and remember experiences" (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003:10). Since knowledge is constructed by the individual according to his/her personal experience, it is subjectively constructed (Booker, 2007:353). Therefore, the NCS emphasizes the importance of the adoption of a variety of instructional methodologies (DoE, 2007:7, 9) in order to accommodate learner differences, but also propagates constructivist teaching and learning where learner progress should constantly be monitored, where on-going feedback to learners is encouraged, where assessments are used to determine what learners already know and where teachers assess smaller groups of learners on a daily basis (DoE, 2007:10, DoE; 2003b:15, 28).

1.4.8 Scaffolding

Vygotsky (1978), a leading constructivist, saw the importance of social interaction in learning. He used the term 'scaffolding' to explain the extent of assistance that is rendered to learners in their cognitive development (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:107). This study endorsed Vygotsky's view that education, and thus assessment, should provide support or scaffolding opportunities to learners by means of teacher or peer assistance to ensure that tasks are successfully accomplished (Berk & Winsler, 1995:26).

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research Paradigm

The research in this study was philosophically founded on Pragmatism. The study focused on gathering literature and quantitative and qualitative data in order to examine teachers' assessment practices in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms to come to a better understanding of the interplay between informal and formal assessment. When research views knowledge as unshakeable and objective, then the positivist stance is adopted and when knowledge is seen as multi-faceted and subjective, then the anti-positivist stance is pursued (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007:31-32). This study's adoption of the positivist stance involved the analysis of quantitative data concerning the use of informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL

classrooms. In addition, the study's adoption of the interpretivist stance helped the researcher to reach multiple understandings and thus multiple conclusions (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007:37) about how assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms is practised.

1.5.2 Research design

The positivist stance adopts the quantitative research approach which "…asks specific, narrow questions, collects numeric data from participants, analyses these numbers using statistics and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner" (Creswell, 2005:39). On the other hand, the interpretivist stance adopts the qualitative research approach which considers words to be the data to be interpreted in many ways (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94). In the interpretative approach, the attempt is not to establish facts, but to arrive at conclusions based on the experiences of a particular group of people within a specific context (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:64).

This study used a combination of the quantitative and the qualitative research approaches in order to add greater strength to the findings (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007:34). For this purpose, a sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2009:14), and more specifically a sequential explanatory strategy (Creswell, 2009:211) was applied. The sequential explanatory strategy is a multistrand design which involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in order to answer the research question posed by the particular research. In addition, this strategy allows the researcher to obtain a general picture of the research problem by means of the quantitative approach and to refine, explain or extend the general picture by following a qualitative approach (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:264). The motivation for the use of the mixed method design was to strengthen the credibility of the research results that a single method of design would not have yielded (Spratt *et al.*, 2004:6).

In this research, the practices of informal and formal assessment used by Grade 9 EFAL teachers were quantitatively determined after which the obtained results were explored in-depth by following a qualitative approach. Hence, there was a specific order in the collection and interpretation of the quantitative and the qualitative data.

1.5.3 Strategy of inquiry

Creswell (2009:11) describes research methods or strategies of inquiry as “types of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs or models that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design”.

A survey as a non-experimental strategy of inquiry was used to conduct the quantitative part of the study. The survey is a method of data collection to explain the nature of a phenomenon (Maree & Pietersen, 2007a:155), which in this study, was the nature of informal and formal assessment practised by Grade 9 EFAL teachers. The survey design took cognisance of the survey process such as the sampling strategy and the size of the sample, the minimum response rate that would be acceptable and the data collection method (Maree & Pietersen, 2007a:155). The survey was selected as a strategy of inquiry for the quantitative part of the study, since it is versatile, efficient and permits generalizability (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:233).

The research method for the qualitative part of the research was a case study. While Niewenhuis (2007b:75) points out that the term “case study” has multiple meanings, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:135) indicate that the purpose of a case study is to examine an individual, programme, or event in-depth or explore processes, activities and events. A case study requires that the researcher spend time with participants in their environment in order to observe some aspect of their behaviour (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:64). In this study, the researcher made use of a multiple case study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:135) since different Grade 9 EFAL teachers formed part of the study.

The quantitative and qualitative data were independently collected with a time of three months to promote the element of reliability in terms of an accurate reflection of the interplay between informal and formal assessment as practised by Grade 9 EFAL teachers.

1.5.4 Data collection methods

The term ‘method’ bears reference to the specific techniques the researcher utilizes in order to gather and collect data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:35; Fraenkel & Wallen,

2008:110). Instrumentation for conducting the quantitative part of this study in the form of a survey, consisted of a self-developed, group-administered questionnaire which took approximately 25 to 30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire included closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions comprised of a variation of questions (Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:161-165) which enabled the researcher to examine the nature of assessment practised by Grade 9 EFAL teachers. For the open-ended questions, respondents were asked to raise their opinions, to explain processes and to relate their experiences regarding their assessment practices.

The two types of data sources for the case study were individual interviews with selected teachers and lesson observations conducted by the same teachers. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:140), “interviews can provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds”. For the purpose of this study, individual interviews with a duration of between 20 and 30 minutes which were typified as semi-structured, standardized open-ended interviews were used to collect data. Interview questions were prepared by the researcher beforehand, to ensure consistency. However, the interviews included semi-structured questions to allow the pre-determined questions to “define the line of inquiry” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:87). The second data source for the case study consisted of observations of a lesson presented by the selected research participants in order to gain a better understanding of the interplay between informal and formal assessment as practised by Grade 9 EFAL teachers. The researcher acted as “observer as participant” and observations took place by means of a pre-planned checklist which reflected anecdotal notes (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:85) of what was observed in terms of the nature and usage of informal and formal assessment by the selected teachers.

1.5.5 Population and Sampling

All the Grade 9 EFAL teachers, teaching in secondary public schools in the Johannesburg-North District of the Gauteng Department of Education, formed the potential participants in this research.

Since the researcher is based as EFAL facilitator in the mentioned district, and for logistical reasons such as accessibility, non-probability, convenience sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:177) seemed appropriate for selecting respondents for the quantitative survey. Though this type of sampling does not guarantee representativeness of a population, it allows for the accommodation of a population which is easily and conveniently available (Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:177); which, in the case of this study were the Grade 9 EFAL teachers of the mentioned GDE district. The survey was conducted by distributing the questionnaires to all Grade 9 EFAL teachers in the district, which was 66 in total, during a scheduled cluster meeting.

After the first stage of the research, all the secondary public schools in the district were categorized according to their situatedness: township and suburban (ex-Model C) schools. The rationale for categorizing the different schools into these two groups was that township schools are usually typified as disadvantaged in terms of material and human resources as opposed to ex-Model C schools. Furthermore, this categorization allowed the researcher the opportunity to examine the interplay between informal and formal assessment in two very different sets of teachers and learners. Each category of schools was listed in alphabetical order and numbered. By applying systematic, non-proportional probability sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 122; Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:174) six schools were selected. Henceforth, six teachers teaching EFAL to Grade 9 learners from each of the selected schools and who completed the questionnaire were selected by means of simple random sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 120; Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:172-173) to be interviewed and observed. Eventually, four Township teachers and two ex-Model C teachers formed part of the qualitative study.

1.5.6 Data collection process

The data were collected within the boundaries of the Johannesburg-North District of the Gauteng Department of Education. All Grade 9 EFAL teachers in schools within this district were initially involved in the first stage of the research while all of these teachers stood an equal chance to form part of the second phase of the research. Provision was made to conduct the research at a time which was convenient to the research participants without disrupting the normal business of teaching and

learning. The research design, being sequential in nature (see 1.5.2 above) comprised of the following stages of data collection:

- Obtaining permission in writing from Departmental Officials to conduct the research amongst Grade 9 EFAL teachers at a cluster meeting and in the schools/classrooms that have been selected.
- Completion of the questionnaire by Grade 9 EFAL teachers.
- Systematic selection of six schools from two pre-determined categories: township schools and ex-Model C schools.
- Obtaining permission from the principals of the six selected schools to include teachers in the study at school level.
- Random selection of six teachers teaching Grade 9 EFAL to be interviewed and observed.
- Individual interviews with the selected teachers.
- Observation of one lesson presented by the randomly selected teachers.

1.5.7 Role of the researcher

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:344) describe the role of the researcher as "a relationship acquired by and ascribed to the researcher in interactive data collection". The researcher was alert that her position might impact on the research results. The researcher was especially thoughtful with regard to the observations in terms of observer bias and the effect of the observer within a particular situation (McMillan & Shumacher, 2006:211). Furthermore, the researcher's position as English learning area facilitator was also taken into account as it was argued that teachers might feel intimidated during individual interviews.

1.5.8 Data analysis and interpretation

Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the frequency and percentages reflected by the data collected for the quantitative part of the study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:30), descriptive statistics summarize the general nature of the data.

According to Schumacher and McMillan *(*1993:482), data analysis in qualitative research already commences when data are gathered. In the case of this study,

qualitative data analysis was interpretative in nature since the researcher tried to arrive at conclusions by gaining knowledge and understanding from research participants' views, responses, attitudes and feelings. The researcher constantly engaged with the collected interview data and by following the suggestions made by Nieuwenhuis (2007c:100), information was transcribed after which codes were assigned to the transcribed raw data. Thereafter, the codes were clustered into *a priori* categories.

The results obtained through the observation checklist during a lesson presentation were analysed by identifying emerging patterns related to the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms.

1.5.9 Quality criteria

For the development of the data collection instruments, the researcher focused on reliability by obtaining "consistent and stable measurement of data" (Welman *et al.*, 2005:9) and on validity to ensure that the research was "representative of what the researcher is investigating" (Welman *et al.*, 2005:9). By conducting a pilot study with a similar group of teachers prior to the actual research, the research instruments were audited for reliability and validity.

This study used triangulation which is the adoption of more than one research approach, methodology and instrumentation to ensure the trustworthiness of the data that were collected (Leedy, 1993:143). According to De Vos (2005:361) triangulation allows the researcher to take multiple measures of the same phenomenon, and to have confidence in the research results.

1.5.10 Ethical Considerations

This study considered a host of ethical matters which included the following:

- Ethical clearance from the ethical committee of the North-West University to conduct the research was obtained.
- Informed consent was obtained from the senior manager of the Johannesburg North District to conduct this research as well as by the six principals of the six selected public schools to use the sample from their schools.

- An informed consent form was designed and given to participants to assure them of the adherence of this study to ethical behaviour. The purpose of the research, the identity of the researcher and her contact details appeared on this form, together with the ethical principles to be observed.
- Protection from harm. Participants were assured of their physical and emotional security and were reminded that should they wish to, they could at any time during data collection suspend their involvement if they felt any physical or emotional strain as a result of their involvement in this study.
- Maintenance of privacy. Participants were assured of the observance of confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher pledged to keep in the strictest of confidence any confidential information that could be divulged by participants.
- Coercion. Participants were made aware that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could stop their participation at any time that they wished to do so.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Delimitations refer to the restrictions imposed on the study by the researcher (Best & Kahn, 2003:37). This study was confined only to the assessment practices of EFAL classes in Grade 9, because Grade 9 marks the end of the GET band or compulsory education. Also, since language is "...the medium through which all teaching, learning and assessment takes place" (DoE, 2003a:19) and because English is the medium used by most schools and universities for teaching and for learning, this study was confined to the EFAL learning area or field of knowledge (DoE, 2002b:55). In addition, due to practical reasons, the study was confined to a sample from the Johannesburg- North District.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

The results obtained from this research served to reinforce the importance of incorporating both informal and formal assessment in teaching as a means of encouraging the formative development of learners. The implication of the impact of assessment practices on learner performance in EFAL was therefore considered.

1.8 POSSIBLE CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

One of the major challenges that the researcher anticipated was that the teachers might try to impress the researcher because of her position as EFAL facilitator. However, it was also argued that the researcher's position could also be 'softened' in the sense that teachers might

perceive the research for its real worth, namely to improve teaching and learning in EFAL.

1.9 LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH

The report on the research unfolded as follows:

Chapter 1: An orientation to the study.

Chapter 2: Contextualising English as First Additional Language against the background of educational developments in South Africa since 1994.

Chapter 3: Assessment of English First Additional Language in an OBE framework.

Chapter 4: Overview of the empirical study.

Chapter 6: Data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations.

1.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a brief overview of the study was provided to serve as orientation to the study. Aspects that were covered included an outline of the rationale for the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework and the research methodology. Delimitations of the study, its significance and possible contribution as well as possible anticipated challenges were also presented. The chapter was concluded by delineating the structure of the study. In the chapter which follows, English as First Additional Language will be contextualised against the background of educational developments in South Africa since 1994.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXTUALIZING ENGLISH AS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA SINCE 1994

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In attempting to examine the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms, it will be useful to gain an understanding of South African education and the position of English in the school curriculum. Consequently, this chapter will focus on the following two secondary research questions (*cf*. 1.3.2):

- What educational developments characterised South African education since 1994?
- What is the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum?

Hence, this chapter will consider the evolution of the current education system, and subsequently the curriculum, as a result of the realization of democracy in South Africa since 1994. In view of the fact that the first democratic elected South African government opted for an Outcomes-based education (OBE) system, a concise outline of this educational approach will be given. This will be followed by an overview of curriculum changes that characterized South African school education for almost a decade and a half. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion on English as subject in relation to its importance and purpose in the school curriculum.

2.2 EDUCATION REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE 1994 - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

To put the educational developments in South Africa since 1994 into perspective, some remarks about the education system which preceded the current one are necessary.

Several attempts were made in the era of the pre-democratic government to initiate educational reform. Amongst others, these attempts included the Report of the De Lange Commission (HSRC, 1981) which proposed a differentiated education system and an appeal for equal education rights. Other attempts were the Educational

Renewal Strategy (ERS) which, in principle, confirmed the findings of the De Lange Report (Van Zyl & Bondesio, 1992) and the New Curriculum Model for South Africa (CUMSA) which envisaged relevant education to address the country's needs and the rationalisation of the curriculum (Committee of Heads of Education Departments, 1992). Another pioneering endeavour towards education reform was the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) prepared by the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in 1992 (Jansen, 1999a).

Notwithstanding initiatives such as the above, South African education prior to 1994, was characterised by a division based on racial grounds (Msila, 2007:146), a content-based curriculum in which learners passively acquired content as if they were empty vessels to be filled with knowledge (Kraak, 1999:43) and mechanistic learning where learners were merely expected to recall information (Arjun, 1998:24).

Subsequent to South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, the new government was determined to reform the country's education system. Consequently, the government opted for an Outcomes-based education system with the vision that it would also energise social, political and economic changes within the country (Msila, 2007:150). This vision was also supported by the preamble of the South African Constitution which states as its purpose to "Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person" (S.A., 1996a:1).

2.3 A CONCISE OUTLINE OF OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

2.3.1 Orientation

According to Spady (2004:166) OBE centres on essential factors that learners should accomplish at the end of a learning experience. In Spady's (1994:18) terms, outcomes are "high-quality, culminating demonstrations of significant learning in context". Hence, it can be stated that the term *outcomes* denotes a demonstration of learning in the form of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Whereas knowledge encompasses information and explanations that learners gain during teaching and learning, Olivier (2002:37) argues that knowledge is of value only if it is related to skills, competencies, values and attitudes. Skills represent the application of acquired content or information, in other words, the transfer of knowledge into practice (Olivier, 2002:37). Values are the standards that are maintained according

to the status quo and attitudes are the mind-set of the learners as displayed through their behaviour (Olivier, 2002:40; Matshidiso, 2007:31). In conclusion, Malcolm (1999:91) states that outcomes are "demonstrations or performances, not thoughts, understandings, beliefs, attitudes, mental processes; not grades, numbers, averages".

The term *based* refers to the focus of the curriculum. Therefore, *outcomes-based* implies that the focus of planning, teaching, learning and assessment is on the outcomes that learners ought to attain.

All in all, outcomes-based education involves teachers teaching so that learners achieve the curriculum outcomes which have been formulated according to the needs of a particular society (Olivier, 2002:1; Matshidiso, 2007:15). Malcolm (1999: 90) maintains that since skills continue to be developed beyond schooling, outcomes are usually open-ended. Furthermore, outcomes-based education shifts the focus from teaching to learning and from merely giving information to learners, to creating an environment where they are able to use the information that has been provided meaningfully (Meyer, 2000:2). For this reason Donnelly (2007:6) draws attention to the fact that although the attainment of outcomes is important, the manner in which they have been attained is equally important.

Outcomes-based education is thus an approach to the curriculum which is learner-centred, activity-based and hence, achievement-orientated (DoE, 2002d:122). In order to gain a better understanding of OBE, its fundamental elements will be reviewed in the following sub-section.

2.3.2 Constituents on which OBE is founded

To gain a better understanding of OBE, an exploration of the constituents on which it is founded seems sensible. The following constituents will be dealt with in an abridged manner: the OBE paradigm, purposes, premises and principles. The discussion will be concluded by also attending to the philosophies and theories that underpin OBE.

2.3.2.1 The OBE paradigm

Spady (1994:8) suggests that what and whether learners learn should take prominence over when and how they learn. This requires a modification of our thinking about teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, features of OBE accentuate the process of learning and the achievement of results.

2.3.2.2 The purposes of OBE

To ensure learning and accomplishment, an OBE system should have a dual purpose. The first is to establish schools and classrooms which are functionally structured and operational to ensure learning and performance, while the second is to expose learners to knowledge, skills and values to succeed in life (Lombard, 2010:6).

2.3.2.3 OBE premises

According to Spady (1994:10), successful learning relies on the following three assumptions: bearing learner differences in mind, all learners are able to learn and succeed; success stimulates more success and learning environments influence successful learning. By considering all three of these premises, an education system will most probably succeed in producing successful learners.

2.3.2.4 OBE principles

OBE principles represent the enabling conditions for attaining learning success (Spady, 1994:10). These include clarity of focus which denotes well-defined end results at which teaching, learning and assessment are aimed. Designing down is the second principle which includes the formulation of outcomes, the selection of content, teaching and learning strategies and activities, teaching and learning support material and assessment tasks to guide learners towards successful learning. Put differently, designing down implies that outcomes should be used as starting points for curriculum design (Killen, 2009:53). Another principle is to allow for expanded opportunities since not all learners can learn the same things in the same way or in the same time (Spady, 1994). Argued in this way, expanded opportunities will enable the realisation of the ideal that all learners can succeed. The fourth principle is high expectations which involves the continuous guidance and encouragement by teachers to support learners in their learning in order “to achieve

significant outcomes to high standards" (Killen, 2009:54). Spady (2004:1) refers to these four principles as the "power principles" of OBE.

2.3.2.5 The philosophies and theories underpinning OBE

OBE is rooted in the following philosophies: behaviourism, pragmatism, constructivism and critical theory.

Based on behaviourism, OBE appears to be mechanistic and clinical since the focus is on the outcomes or the end product of learning (Hoadley & Jansen, 2006:178). Furthermore, it is argued that the application of knowledge and skills should be evident in observable actions of learners (Ramoroka, 2006:23).

OBE also echoes features of pragmatism when considering the formulation of outcomes according to the needs of society and the alignment of education and training (Ramoroka, 2006:23). It furthermore promotes learning within meaningful contexts and through the demonstration or application of skills (Ramoroka, 2006:23).

Constructivism is a philosophy that emphasizes the construction of meaning and argues that learning occurs through social interaction which involves sharing, mediating and contesting information (Olivier, 2002:130; Gagnon & Collay, 2006:5). OBE also serve as a mechanism to improve the wellbeing of society (Ramoroka, 2006:23).

It is evident that OBE is also based on critical theory which focuses on establishing a just society in terms of equality, tolerance and prosperity. Therefore, learners' values and interpretations must be given recognition (Tripp, 1992:2) to allow them to become active, critical participants in society (Burger, 2008:20).

In terms of its theoretical underpinnings, the following orientations are evident in OBE: progressive education, educational objectives, competency-based education, mastery learning, criterion referenced instruction and educational accountability.

With regard to progressive education, it is clear that OBE projects an escape from traditional education approaches, in the sense that learner-centred methods rather than teacher-led methods to learning are preferred. In terms of the reasoning behind educational objectives which suggests that clearly stated objectives guide

effective teaching and learning (Tyler, 1949), OBE is directed by outcomes, which, when demonstrated by learners, serve as indicators that learning took place. In competency-based education, like OBE, learners are assessed against clearly explained, measurable outcomes (Voorhees, 2001:11). Similar to competency-based education, OBE involves learning through scaffolding where teachers guide learners to accomplish tasks to achieve particular outcomes (DoE, 2007:22). OBE also bears resemblance to the theory of mastery learning. Mastery learning is based on the view that all learners can master learning, provided that the following conditions are met (Guskey, 2001:105, Campos & O'Hern, 2007:28):

- instructions should be systematic;
- assistance should be provided by the teacher to overcome difficulties;
- learners should be given adequate time to master the learning;
- the criteria to master the learning should be clearly defined;
- the learning material should be broken down into smaller learning units, and
- each learning unit should be accompanied by diagnostic assessments at the beginning of the learning unit and a series of assessments to assist learners in overcoming problems.

In criterion referenced instruction, expected learning is stipulated in advance and is used to measure learning results. With regard to OBE, outcomes are also specified to indicate the learning requirements.

In addition to the mentioned constituents of OBE, it can be approached in various ways.

2.3.3 Approaches to OBE

Three approaches to OBE are distinguished. These include the traditional, transitional and transformational approaches (Spady & Marshall, 1991).

Traditional OBE encompasses minor changes to an established content-based curriculum. Content, which remains the most important feature of this approach, is arbitrarily associated with outcomes. Curriculum change can be described as 'pseudo-change', because the outcomes are attained by using traditional teaching,

learning and assessment strategies and methods (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2004:12; Donnelly, 2007:8). With traditional OBE, learning is defined in terms of learners' mastery of the set curriculum (Donnelly, 2007:2).

Transitional OBE refers to curriculum transformation to attain higher order competencies. These competencies include critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills (Donnelly, 2007:2). Changes within the curriculum regarding planning, teaching and assessment are enacted wherever it is possible and practical to do so, and are based on the integration of learning material and life-long learning needs of learners (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2004:12; Donnelly, 2007:2).

Transformational OBE refers to a radical change in the curriculum where the OBE approach is used without restraint (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2004:12). Transformational OBE attempts to integrate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across traditional subjects, with a focus on real-life situations. Teachers teaching within a transformational OBE approach are therefore required to ensure that learners are able to use competencies in real situations (Donnelly, 2007:2). Spady and Marshall (1991:68) outline transformational OBE as collaborative, flexible, trans-disciplinary and an empowerment-oriented approach.

In the next section, the positioning of OBE within South African education will be considered.

2.4 OBE IN RELATION TO SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SINCE 1994

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) has been formulated to bring about political, social, cultural and economic transformation to ensure that justice is maintained for all citizens of South Africa. The adoption of OBE and the articulation of Critical Outcomes served as thrusts to realize these transformational aims within the South African education system (Botha, 2002:362; Matshidiso, 2007:20). Elaborating on the aforementioned, Botha (2002:362) maintains that OBE was embraced because of the reforms that it promised in terms of guaranteeing success to all and endowing learners with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to cope in an evolving world. Critical Outcomes on the other hand, were seen as generic across all fields of learning and propagated, according to the Constitution, the holistic development of learners as individuals and

as participants in society (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:8; DoE, 2002c:1). Initially, Critical Outcomes were described as Critical Cross-field Outcomes (SAQA, 2001) and categorized as Critical and Developmental Outcomes. Whereas the Critical Outcomes represented the essential generic skills across all fields of learning that learners should have attained at the end of a teaching, learning and assessment experience (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2004:14), the Developmental Outcomes referred to skills that were recommended for assisting learners in their personal and professional development globally and within a multicultural society. A further examination of the Critical and Developmental Outcomes also shows the importance attached to the cognitive development of learners (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:561). In terms of South African education, OBE, through the Critical and Developmental Outcomes, not only echoed the aims of the Constitution, but was also regarded as the impetus for developing learners into responsible, active and creative citizens who would benefit the country as a whole. It was believed that through education, learners would attain seven Critical Outcomes that would enable them to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others, and
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation (DoE, 2002d:1).

Likewise, the five Developmental Outcomes would inspire learners to:

- reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;

- participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- explore education and career opportunities, and
- develop entrepreneurial opportunities (DoE, 2002d:1-2).

With regard to OBE approaches, it could be stated that the South African education system theoretically pursued transformational OBE since outcomes were dedicated to social reconstruction, critical thinking and the shaping of behaviour (Reyneke, 2008:28). Concerted efforts were also made to promote integration. This was evident where fields of learning were combined to represent particular learning or knowledge domains such as Languages, where the same critical outcomes were shared by various fields of learning and by aligning teaching, learning and assessment. However, in practice, transformational OBE was not executed due to contextual factors that discouraged constructive change such as large classes, a lack of resources and a lack of teachers' knowledge and skills in implementing transformational practice (Du Toit & Du Toit, 2004:12-13). Consequently, either traditional or transitional OBE or a combination of the two was implemented.

Against the background provided on OBE in the preceding sections, the focus in the next section will be shifted to the South African school curriculum.

2.5 AN OVERVIEW OF CURRICULUM CHANGES THAT CHARACTERIZE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL EDUCATION SINCE 1994

2.5.1 Orientation

Despite severe criticism expressed against OBE in the South African context (Jansen, 1999b:145-156), it served as the cornerstone for the implementation of a new school curriculum which was launched on 27 March 1997 (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002:178). Branded as Curriculum 2005 (C2005), this new curriculum was officially introduced into South African schools in 1998. However, the under-performance of learners in comparison with international standards initiated a review of C2005 (Wilmot, 2005:48). The review committee chaired by Professor Linda Chisholm recommended a revision of C2005 in order to make it easily comprehensible for teachers to use in their classrooms. C2005 was thus amended

and “streamlined” (Chisholm, 2005:193) following a report compiled by a Ministerial Review Committee of C2005 (DoE, 2000). This gave way to the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) (Chisholm, 2003:4). As soon as the amendments to the curriculum became policy in 2002, the revised curriculum became known as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DoE, 2002e). Yet again, the NCS was reviewed in 2009 and was branded as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

In the subsequent subsections, a brief overview of each of these curricula will be given.

2.5.2 C2005

C2005, with its roots firmly anchored in OBE, was instituted to free learners from a previous curriculum which promoted inequity (Hoadley & Jansen, 2006:120). With C2005, it was aimed to fulfil the ideals of educational transformation prevalent in the White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995). It envisioned learners as active participants of “lifelong learning” (DoE, 2002c:4) and it was referred to “as an industry-inspired approach” since it linked vocation and education (Wilmot, 2005:50). The emphasis of the curriculum was on the attainment of outcomes in the form of important life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and skills specific to particular learning areas. The curriculum promoted flexibility in teaching methodologies, learning approaches and assessment strategies in order to ensure that outcomes were met (du Toit & du Toit, 2004:6). C2005 also propagated seamless learning where attempts were made for the continuous and meaningful achievement of outcomes by all learners, irrespective of their learning pace (Kraak, 1999: 46).

Different to its ideal of guaranteeing success to all learners, C2005 produced poor learner performance (Wilmot, 2005:48). According to Wilmot (2005:60-61), weaknesses in the curriculum such as the following were identified:

- The curriculum mainly revolved around the seven critical outcomes and the five developmental outcomes. This preoccupation with outcomes was viewed as curbing the creativity of teachers in designing teaching, learning and assessment to suit the needs of learners.

- C2005 encouraged behaviourism in its teaching and learning, in spite of its propagation of learner-centred teaching strategies and of constructivist educational strategies.
- Content knowledge was without any specifications; consequently there were no guidelines for the sequence, progress and pace of learning and no distinction within a grade of the level at which concepts should be taught and assessed. Moreover, in omitting to specify the content that was to be taught and learnt, it lacked the required framework for learners' conceptual development.
- The total of sixty six specific outcomes with their corresponding assessment criteria were unrealistic to achieve, given the history of education in South Africa.
- Contrary to the high quality of education that C2005 envisaged, the achievement of outcomes was compromised because the content, teaching methodology and assessment that were conducted depended on the level of teacher expertise, the resources that were available, the number of learners per class and their needs.
- C2005 was misinterpreted as discarding the traditional approach to teaching and learning totally. Thus, many teachers adopted the role of mere facilitators and omitted to guide learners closely.

In terms of assessment, discrepancies of the sixty six specific outcomes were evident. While curriculum content was left to the discretion of teachers, subjectivity in terms of relevance and complexity posed challenges to consistent, benchmarked assessment. Whereas the achievement of the outcomes was emphasised, there was little concern about the context in which these outcomes were to be assessed. Thus, outcomes were achieved mechanistically without considering the processes in which they were supposed to be attained and at the expense of gaining expertise peculiar to a learning area (Deacon & Parker, 1999:61). In the OBE paradigm, assessment of performance should be administered daily to encourage learning and to reinforce knowledge and skills. However, in the case of C2005, the apparent dominance of recording and reporting resulted in assessment which was mainly

summative in nature and did not consider the formative development of learners (Jansen, 1999b:153).

Comprising of design features such as assessment criteria, range statements and performance indicators (DoE, 2002e:1), the strong behaviouristic orientation of C2005 towards assessment was also recognizable (Deacon & Barker, 1999:63).

2.5.3 The RNCS/NCS

In 1999 the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, commissioned a review of C2005 (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009:142). This resulted in a review report of C2005, followed by the publication of the RNCS for Grades R to 9, the publication of the NCS for Grades 10 to 12, the training of teachers in these revised curricula and the implementation of the RNCS in the General Education and Training (GET) band and the NCS in the Further Education and Training (FET) band.

According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2002d:3), the revised curriculum envisaged learners who would be inspired by values such as respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. Furthermore, it aspired to create lifelong learners who were confident, independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, and compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as critical and active citizens. Thus, the RNCS/NCS promoted the idea that the attainment of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes by learners would be of pragmatic value which would benefit them in their personal, social and vocational lives (DoE, 2002d:3).

Although C2005 was reviewed, the nature, principles and purposes of OBE were retained (DoE, 2002d:6; Hoadley & Jansen, 2006:178; Hoadley & Jansen, 2009:161,164) while the focus on teaching and learning as propagated by C2005 was also endured in the revised curriculum. As stated by DoE (2002e:6, 7), the RNCS/NCS merely builds on C2005 and amendments attempted to redeem the shortfalls of C2005. It was argued that the implementation of C2005 was been confounded by the following shortfalls (Chisholm *et al*., 2000:vi-vii):

- A skewed curriculum structure and design.
- Language complexity.
- A lack of alignment between the curriculum and assessment policy.

- Insufficient orientation, training and development of teachers.
- Variable quality and unavailability of learning support materials which often resulted in its inadequate use in classrooms.
- Policy overload and limited transfer of learning.
- Shortages of staff and resources to support the implementation of the curriculum.
- Inadequate recognition of the fact that the curriculum was the core business of the Department of Education.

In addition to the efforts made to address the above shortcomings, attention was also given in the RNCS/NCS to specify what teachers should have taught and learners should have learnt in each grade (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009:162; Booyse & Du Plessis, 2008:51, 56). The vagueness in content knowledge and of assessment implementation that prevailed in C2005, were replaced by content and assessment requisites in the revised curriculum. In this regard, the newly established *assessment standards* proved to be more explicit in terms of indicating the depth and breadth at which core knowledge, skills, values and attitudes were to be achieved in a specific grade (Matshidiso, 2007:54). By specifying minimum standards for measuring learner performance, assessment standards were an improvement on the previous *range statements* and *performance indicators*. Furthermore, the revised curriculum required of learners to master stipulated outcomes in learning areas in increasing complexity for each successive grade. The sixty six Specific Outcomes of C2005 were replaced by Learning Outcomes, six for each Learning Area, which incorporated the knowledge, skills and values that learners should have attained (DoE, 2006:7). Each learning outcome for each grade specified the assessment standards or the minimum level of the achievement of an outcome or skill that learners should have attained. The assessment standards therefore also succeeded to indicate progression (Hoadley & Jansen, 2009:164). Within a grade, conceptual and skill progression are evident in a learning area and is referred to as horizontal progression. Where conceptual and skill development is evident in the same learning area from one grade to the next, progression is known as vertical progression (Wilmot, 2005:62). Progression occurs from Grade one to Grade eight and entails a learner moving to the next grade at the end of a year's study.

Promotion on the other hand, refers to learners who successfully complete their Grade nine studies and are ready to enter the FET band (DoE, 2002b:20).

Assessment was regarded by the revised curriculum as “an integral part of teaching and learning” (DoE, 2002b:1) and teachers were encouraged to use multiple ways of assessment. In addition, assessment was supposed to be more structured because of its centrality to curriculum planning. However, assessment in the RNCS/NCS also caused some difficulties for teachers since the curriculum was guided by three documents of which the contents needed to be consolidated. These were The National Curriculum Statement, The Learning Programme Guidelines and The Assessment Guidelines.

2.5.4 CAPS

In July 2009, the Minister of Basic Education appointed a Ministerial Task Team to investigate the challenges and problems experienced in the implementation of the RNCS/NCS. Amongst others, curriculum policy and guideline documents (Dada *et al.*, 2009:18), the transition between grades and phases (Dada *et al*., 2009:40,41), assessment (Dada *et al.,* 2009:29), learning and teaching support materials (Dada *et al,* 2009:51) and teacher training and support (Dada *et al*., 2009:58) formed the scope of the investigation. Although the report produced by the Task Team was comprehensive on each of these areas, assessment received particular attention (Dada *et al.,* 2009:6, 9). Based on the recommendations of the Task Team, decisions were made to be implemented during a five year time frame from 2010 to 2014 (DBE, 2010:1). Changes that were prompted included the following:

- The discontinuation of Learner Portfolios.
- The discontinuation of Common Tasks of Assessment.
- The reduction of projects required for formal assessment to only one per subject.
- The rationalisation to a single teacher file for planning.
- The revision of promotion and progression requirements for all grades.
- The renaming of Learning Programmes and Learning Areas to subjects and the reduction of the number of subjects in the Intermediate Phase from eight to six.

- The prioritizing of English, First Additional Language (EFAL) alongside mother tongue, and the teaching of EFAL as from Grade one.
- Regular external systemic assessments in Grades three, six and nine in Mathematics, Home language and EFAL

Although the term CAPS is colloquially used to refer to the latest revised school curriculum, the curriculum is referred to in official documents as the National Curriculum Statement, Grades R-12 (DBE, 2011b:iii). It comprises of the following: The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for all approved school subjects, the National policy pertaining to programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 and the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12. However, it is clearly stated that the latest revised curriculum consists of "one clear and accessible policy document" (Curriculum News, 2011:14).

In terms of OBE, its terminology was removed from the curriculum. The outcomes and assessment standards of the RNCS/NCS were reworked into general aims of the South African school curriculum (which, inter alia, include the original critical outcomes as specified in C2005 (*cf*. 2.4)) and specific aims for each subject (DBE, 2010:2). Being particularly conscious about progression, topics to be taught and learnt were defined for each grade and term within the context of a subject (DoE, 2002e:6, 7).

With reference to assessment, the number and types of assessment were also spelled out and particular mention was made of the improvement of continuous assessment (DBE, 2011c: 118, 119, 123). Another key introduction in the effort to improve the quality of learner attainment was the Annual National Assessments (ANAs). Airasian and Russell (2008:13) define ANAs as "standardized assessment that is administered, marked and analyzed in the same manner for learners across a country to determine the performance level of all learners in a particular grade". The rationale for introducing the ANAs in South Africa (DBE, 2011b: 49, 50) is specified as to

- provide individual schools with an objective picture of learners' numeracy and literacy competency levels by using nationally benchmarked tests which are aligned with the curriculum;

- provide individual schools with an analysis of the areas of difficulty experienced by learners;
- assist individual schools to design teaching programmes, targeted to improve learning;
- set realistic improvement targets for individual learners and schools, and
- help parents to understand better how their children are performing and how they can assist them to do better.

In Grade 9, the Common Tasks of Assessment (CTAs) which comprised of the standard assessment tasks and the external assessment tasks are replaced by internal school examinations or common examination papers set by departmental officials. The ANAs, which are systemic assessments are implemented in Mathematics, Home language and EFAL to promote the smooth facilitation into Grade 10.

It is further stated that promotion from Grade 9 to Grade 10 will require learners to obtain 40% to pass the First Additional Language and 50% in Home language. The Continuous Assessment (CASS) weighting for Grades 4 - 9 will be 40% in future and the examinations shall comprise of the other 60% (DBE, 2011a:17).

2.6 ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT: ITS IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

2.6.1 Background

Language is the mechanism used to think and to communicate since it “shapes thought” (Davies, 1981:61). Reyneke (2008:4) asserts that Language enables learners to make meaning and thus to acquire knowledge, to express identity, emotions and ideas, to interact with others and to make sense of their world.

In addition to the fact that English is regarded as the predominant language of the international mass media (DoE, 2004:5), Van der Walt (2003:4,19) states that there is a perception amongst many South Africans that English should be accepted as a *lingua franca* for the country since it has the potential to serve national unity. Representing the latter view is Henrard (2003:11), who maintains that English should be officially used within all South African schools. Perceptions such as these are nourished by the fact that English is widely used in government (Du Plessis,

2000:106), the public sector (Alexander, 2001:115), the legal system (Malan, 1998:696), the public broadcaster (Kruger & Kruger, 2001:17) as well as the education system (Verhoef, 1998:193). English is also associated with economic power (Murray, 2002:438). However, Maartens (1998:35) notes that approximately 80% of the population are not proficient in using English. This predicament is underscored by Posel and Zeller (2011:115-126).

2.6.2 The Language in education Policy

The Language in education Policy (SA, 1997:1) recognises the diversity of South Africa's population but also regards such diversity as a national asset. It acknowledges that language contributes in building a non-racial nation, facilitates communication across language barriers and creates an environment of respect for languages. For this reason, the Policy encourages additive multilingualism, which implies that learners must, in addition to sustaining and developing their home language, be exposed to and learn an additional language. The Policy therefore admits that formal education should promote, develop and respect the official languages and other languages mentioned in the Constitution.

According to the Language in education Policy (SA, 1997:2), language teaching should be founded on six aims:

- to promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
- to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education;
- to promote and develop all the official languages;
- to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including languages used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, and South African Sign Language, as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication;
- to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching, and

- to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages.

2.6.3 The NCS and Language teaching and learning

The NCS (DoE, 2002d:4, 8) projects thoughtfulness about human rights and values. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996(a)), the National Education Policy Act (1996(b)) and the National Language in Education Policy (1997), the NCS (DoE, 2002d:4) further subscribes to multilingualism by referring to the fact that South Africa is a multilingual country which requires of learners "to reach high levels of proficiency in at least two languages, and that they are able to communicate in other languages". The following viewpoints regarding Languages as subject are endorsed:

- All eleven official languages are important and equal in teaching and learning.
- Provision is made to offer all official languages on the home level, first additional level and second additional level. On the home language level, learners should be able to use the various types of literacy such as reading, writing, visual and critical literacies. On the first additional level, learners should learn to read, understand, speak and write. On the second additional level, language teaching should primarily be aimed at general communication; hence listening and speaking skills should be emphasised (DoE, 2002d:4; DoE, 2005:11).
- All learners should learn their home language and one additional official language as from Grade 1.
- Learners should be allowed to use their home language alongside the additional language for as long as is possible (DoE, 2002d:5).

The NCS (DoE, 2002d:5) admits that Languages are central to people's lives and justifies this position by indicating that "(w)e communicate and understand our world through language. Language thus shapes our identity and knowledge". Derived from the aforementioned, Languages serve a variety of purposes (DoE, 2002d:5) as stated below:

- a personal purpose - to sustain, develop and transform identities, to sustain relationships in family and community, and for personal growth and pleasure;

- a communicative purpose - to communicate appropriately and effectively in a variety of social contexts;
- an educational purpose - to develop tools for thinking and reasoning and to provide access to information;
- an aesthetic purpose - to create, interpret and play imaginatively with oral, visual and written texts;
- a cultural purpose - to understand and appreciate languages and cultures, and the heritage they carry;
- a political purpose - to assert oneself and challenge others, to persuade others of a particular point of view, to position oneself and others, and to sustain, develop and transform identities;
- a critical purpose - to understand the relationships between language, power and identity, and to challenge uses of these where necessary; to understand the dynamic nature of culture, and to resist persuasion and positioning where necessary.

In an attempt to substantiate the position of Languages within the school curriculum (DoE, 2002d:5/6), it is stated that language teaching:

- develops reading and writing, which are the foundations for other important literacies;
- is the medium for much of other learning in the curriculum, such as Mathematics and Social Sciences;
- encourages intercultural understanding, access to other views, and a critical understanding of the concept of culture;
- stimulates imaginative and creative activity, and thus promotes the goals of arts and culture;
- provides a way of communicating information, and promotes many of the goals of science, technology and environmental education, and
- develops the critical tools necessary to become responsible citizens.

In the framework of the NCS, teaching and learning of Languages are guided by six Learning Outcomes which combine knowledge, skills and values (DoE, 2002d:6). The first four outcomes cover five different language skills - listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing. Outcome five deals with the use of Languages for

cognitive purposes such as thinking and reasoning, which is especially important for the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). This outcome is not included in the curriculum for second additional languages, since its aim is not to prepare learners to use a second additional language as the LOLT. Outcome six deals with the core of language knowledge - sounds, words and grammar - in texts. This knowledge is put into action through the language skills described in the other outcomes. The six Learning Outcomes and their related skills are stipulated as follows (DoE, 2002d:6/7):

- Learning Outcome 1: Listening
  Related skills: Learners will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
- Learning Outcome 2: Speaking
  Related skills: Learners will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.
- Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing
  Related skills: The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.
- Learning Outcome 4: Writing
  Related skills: The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
- Learning Outcome 5: Thinking and Reasoning
  Related skills: The learner will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning.
- Learning Outcome 6: Language Structure and Use
  Related skills: The learner will know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

It is thus evident that teaching and learning as pertaining to Languages in the NCS, promote a multi-faceted dimension. The inextricable link between Language teaching and learning and the Critical and Developmental Outcomes are not only apparent, but learners are encouraged via the Learning Outcomes to develop fully in all forms of interaction using their critical faculties. In fact, Prinsloo and Janks

(2002:33) observe that the Outcomes for Languages in C2005 had a more socio - cultural dimension, whereas the Learning Outcomes for Languages in the NCS focus more on the development of skills. However, a multicultural component of Language teaching and learning is also encapsulated in the principles of the NCS (e.g. social transformation, human rights and social justice). In summary, it can be concluded that the purpose of language teaching and learning in the NCS until the end of the Senior Phase of schooling (Grade 9), is to enable learners "to use their home and first additional language effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes, including learning" (DoE, 2002d:4).

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter shed light on the description of Outcomes-based education and its emergence in South Africa. In addition, the chapter focused on curriculum changes that characterized South African education for almost a decade and a half. In this regard, attention was given to C2005, the RNCS/NCS and CAPS. The chapter concluded with a discussion on English as a subject in relation to its importance and purpose in the school curriculum.

The next chapter will focus on assessment and how it is positioned in terms of EFAL teaching and learning in the NCS.

CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN AN OBE FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Assessment is imperative in any education system. Its role is outlined by SAQA (2001:14 quoting Rowntree (2003)) as follows: "…if we wish to discover the truth about educational systems, we must look into its assessment procedures". With the aforementioned as point of departure, this chapter will look into assessment by particularly attending to the following two secondary research questions (*cf*. 1.3.2):

- How should assessment be understood within a constructivist framework?
- What are the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education?

In order to address the mentioned questions, the chapter will define the term *assessment* by considering a variety of definitions, how assessment relates to measurement and evaluation and by briefly looking at what guides contemporary discourse on assessment. This will be followed by a discussion on the purpose of assessment which focuses on four crucial contributing aspects to this study: the effect of assessment orientations on the purpose of assessment, a differentiation between informal and formal assessment, an explanation of continuous assessment and an outline of the main intentions with assessment. The chapter will continue by examining closely assessment *of, for* and *as* learning and how it possibly relates to informal and formal assessment. Hereafter, constructivism and scaffolding as underlying features of continuous assessment will be attended to, while the notion of constructive alignment will also be entertained. In concluding the chapter, assessment of Grade 9 EFAL will be considered by means of a brief analysis of the applicable policy documents.

3.2 DEFINING ASSESSMENT

3.2.1 The definition of assessment

Defining assessment can be a complex matter since it is guided by a variety of factors which may possibly include tradition, beliefs, intentions and even

understanding. For this reason, it is fair to assume that one's definition of assessment usually reflects a specific orientation towards this phenomenon. When examining the majority of definitions, many usually characterise assessment as either a process or as a product.

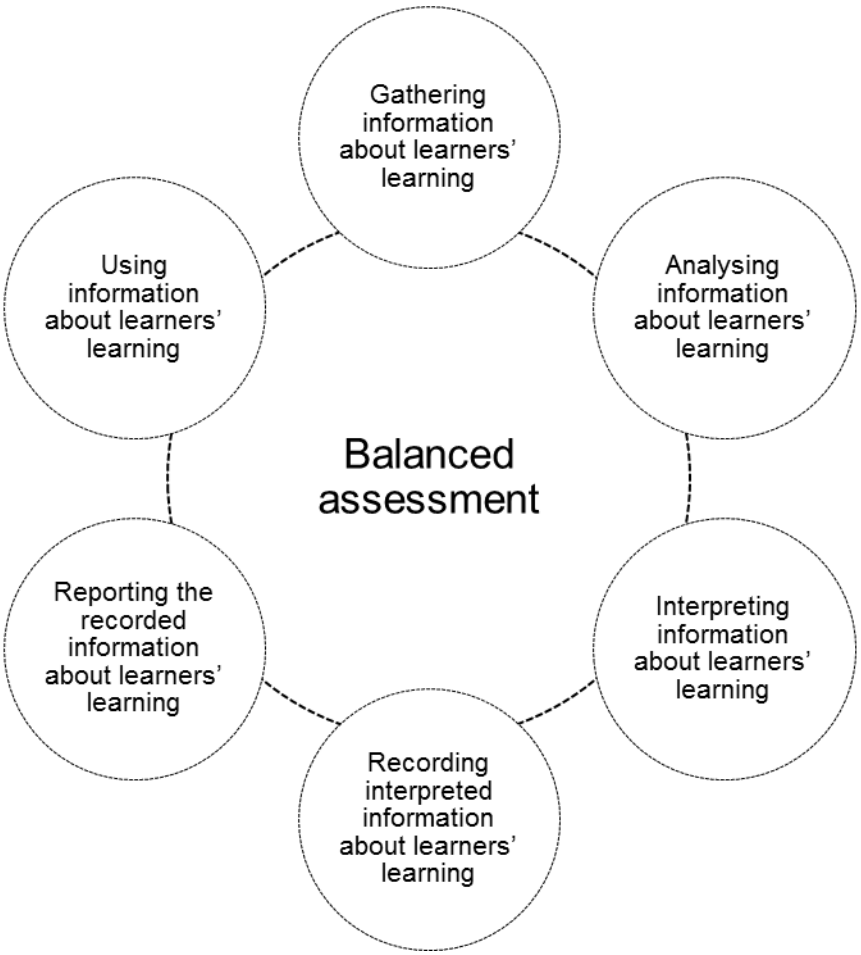
For Reddy (2004:32), the definition of assessment should consider the origin of the term; bearing in mind that assessment is derived from the Latin verb "assidere" which means to "sit beside". Viewed in this way, a definition of assessment connotes that assessment is linked to learning where learners learn through the support and guidance from teachers. This view is shared by Wiggins (1998) who maintains that learners should be the beneficiaries of assessment. Musial *et al*. (2009:5) also underscore this notion by remarking that assessment is akin to coaching. Concluding this process orientation towards assessment, Musial *et a*l. (2009:xvii) define assessment as "…a multidimensional, active process focused on student learning and instructional improvement."

Reflecting a more product orientation towards assessment, SAQA (2001:16) defines assessment as "a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgements about an individual's performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications". Claiming that it should be based on the principles of OBE, the Department of Education (DoE, 2005:5) defines assessment as "…a process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners". McMillan (2007) describes assessment as the gathering, interpretation, and use of information to aid teacher decision-making.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher's definition of assessment is guided by a number of factors. Firstly, the researcher concurs with Stiggins (2002:763) who declares that a balance between the process and product orientations towards assessment is a condition for successful assessment. Secondly, the researcher associates with McAfee and Leong's (2002:46) opinion that assessment is not a linear but a cyclic process. Thirdly, the researcher can align herself with Nair and Pillay's (2006:304) definition of assessment which states that assessment is "any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a learner possesses". Fourthly, the researcher subscribes to the representative components of assessment

as illustrated by Lombard (2010:35) in an attempt to define assessment (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Cyclical components of assessment (Adapted from Lombard, 2010:35)



In addition to the above, understanding of assessment can be further clarified by delving into related concepts such as measurement and evaluation.

3.2.2 Assessment as related to measurement and evaluation

Many view assessment, measurement and evaluation as synonymous. However, Oosterhof (2009:2) suggests that "although the differences among these terms are not absolute differentiation could be useful".

Geyser (2012:102) explains measurement as a "process of determining the characteristic features of specific entities and allocating a number or a score to the result". Measurement thus relies on the assigning of marks or information that can

be expressed in quantifiable terms. As such, measurement allows for the differentiation of learners' performances in quantitative language, which, according to McMillan (2007:9) "can be very formal".

Evaluation combines measures with additional observable information. Oosterhof (2009:3) describes evaluation as "the outcome of measurement after value has been added". Evaluation implies "the making of judgments about quality" (McMillan, 2007:10) and therefore involves the interpretation of learners' measured performance.

Some researchers such as Siebörger and McIntosh (1998:5), regard evaluation as an overarching term to include measurement as well as assessment. Airasian and Russell (2008:10) support this view by indicating that evaluation is "the product of assessment that produces a decision about the value or worth of a performance or activity based on information that has been collected, synthesized and reflected on". Le Grange (2004:466) sees evaluation as "value-driven" and assessment as "corrective in order to motivate further learning". Yet another perspective is provided by Knight (2006) who suggests that assessment is the practice of judgement.

In the context of this study, the researcher acknowledges the various interpretations about the relations among assessment, measurement and evaluation. However, the term "assessment" is preferred since it is evident from the preceding discussion that evaluation deals with judging learners on performance that has already been achieved. Assessment on the other hand, can be seen as future oriented since it involves appraising work which involves crediting positive academic performance and making recommendations about areas in which learners need development (NIED, 1999:2). The term "assessment" is thus strongly embedded in constructivist thinking about teaching and learning.

3.2.3 Contemporary discourse on assessment

Derived from the discussion thus far, defining assessment is shaped by a process or product orientation and by clarifying its relation to measurement and evaluation. In line with the researcher's support of a balanced assessment approach, a brief look at how assessment is influenced and formed by current discourse in the field is necessary.

Traditionally, assessment focused on the measurement and evaluation of learning for grading purposes, for monitoring quality assurance and for reporting learner performance to parents without considering its "pedagogic role" in the process of learning (Bryan & Clegg, 2006:3). Gradually, assessment also became a tool to assist the teacher and learner during teaching to ascertain learner progress (Pretorius, 1998:82). This shift recognizes the developmental function of assessment in terms of the improvement of teaching and learning. It also accepts that teaching, learning and assessment are interdependent for ensuring learner success. Earl (2003:4) mentions that assessment and teaching are reciprocal, since they are used to enhance each other and concludes that while assessment informs the quality of teaching, effective teaching is dependent upon assessment.

Boud and Falchikov (2007:3) assert that assessment and learning are connected since assessment measures the outcomes of learning in terms of the knowledge acquired by learners, the development of their understanding and the skills they gain through learning. McKellar (2002:1) underscores this view by stating that assessment consolidates and strengthens the components of learning.

All in all, contemporary discourse on assessment reveals that it serves to assess learning, that it assists in learning and learner development, and that it helps to diagnose problems in teaching and learning.

3.3 THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

3.3.1 The effect of assessment orientations on the purpose of assessment

Assessment serves a wide variety of purposes. Amongst others, it serves the purpose of certification (Gipps & Stobart, 1993) since it provides information that indicates that a learner satisfied specified criteria to be awarded a qualification. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2004:240), the key purpose of assessment should be "to enhance individual growth and development, to monitor the progress of learners and to facilitate their learning". Whereas the first view corresponds very well with a product orientation towards assessment, the second connects appropriately with a process orientation. In a study conducted by Vandeyar and Killen (2007:102), it is concluded that teachers' assessment practices are, to a great extent, determined by their perception of the purpose of assessment.

This view is underlined by Reyneke (2008:34) who declares “if assessment is to be used for any specific purpose, then it is obvious that it should be properly planned and aligned to that specific purpose”.

In the subsequent sub-sections, the purpose of assessment will be further explored against the background of a differentiation between informal and formal assessment, an explanation of continuous assessment and by highlighting the main intentions with assessment.

3.3.2 Informal and formal assessment

Oosterhof (2009:6) contends that the basic distinction between informal and formal assessment “lies in their spontaneity”. Whereas informal assessment “happens on the spur of the moment” (Oosterhof, 2009:6), formal assessment is “not spontaneous (but is) deliberately scheduled and fully developed in advance” (Oosterhof, 2009:2). Concurring with the aforementioned, Marnewick and Rouhani (2006:272) state that informal assessment “often takes place without the learner being aware of it”. Airasian and Russell (2008:100) use the terms “instructional process decisions” to refer to informal assessment and “instructional planning decisions” to refer to formal assessment. “Instructional process decisions” indicate that during lesson presentation, the teacher engages in on-going assessment using a variety of procedures to determine the impact of instruction on learning (Airasian & Russell, 2008:101). “Instructional planning decisions” on the other hand, are concerned with assessment that is planned and integrated within lesson presentation to gather evidence of learner performance so as to make decisions about teaching and learning.

Oosterhof (2009:2) mentions that although they “are both critical and are complementary” informal and formal assessments differ in the following ways (Oosterhof, 2009:6):

- Informal assessment occurs mostly during teaching and as such it can redirect teaching, whereas formal assessment often requires a “pause in instruction”.
- Informal assessment is most likely to be unsystematic and could lead to faulty conclusions about learner performance.

- Whereas informal assessment is used when more frequent and responsive measures are needed, formal assessment requires more controlled measures.

Expanding on these differences, the following also appears in the literature:

- Informal assessments are subjective and non-standardized, which imply that no specific criteria are set to assess learners' performance as is the case with formal assessment (Brown & Rolfe, 2005:194).
- Informal assessments are naturalistic because they occur in the usual classroom set-up, thus, they do not incite as much stress within learners as formal assessments do (McAlpine, 2002:7).
- Informal assessment is less time consuming than formal assessment and is easily coupled with normal classroom instruction (Brown & Rolfe, 2005:194).
- Teachers are more reliant on informal assessment than on formal assessment to monitor the success of their lesson presentations (Airasian & Russell, 2008: 104).
- Compared to informal assessment, formal assessment provides for a higher degree of transparency and fairness, since learners are informed about the purpose of the assessment, the form the assessment will take, the outcomes and assessment standards that it will cover, its method and the assessment instrument that will be used (McAlpine, 2002:7).
- Opposed to formal assessment, no scores are attached to informal assessment; no comparisons are drawn between learners, nor are these assessments rated against criteria (Brown & Rolfe, 2005:194). The type of recording in informal assessments is purely descriptive to serve "as milestones" in learners' learning (Earl, 2003:105).

3.3.3 Continuous assessment (CASS)

In the context of this study, it should be kept in mind that assessment is rooted in OBE of which the success depends on continuous assessment (Olivier, 2002:69). According to Siebörger and Macintosh (1998:25), continuous assessment "takes place on and off throughout a course or period of learning". Le Grange and Reddy (1998:11) describe continuous assessment as on-going throughout a learning experience.

Continuous assessment gives recognition to the learning of competencies which are in progress (process oriented) as much as to the complete attainment of competencies in the form of the finished product (product oriented) (NIED, 1999:9). Therefore, continuous assessment comprises of both informal and formal assessment tasks. The notion of continuous assessment compels teachers to engage actively with their own assessment practices in order to accomplish balanced assessment (informal and formal assessment). Since continuous assessment is school-based, it could lack uniformity in the ways it is practised (DoE, 2007:32).

Killen (2007:340) considers the following as being the main features of continuous assessment:

- It reduces the importance of formal examinations because they only represent one way of assessment.
- It introduces the idea of assessment for learning in addition to assessment of learning.
- It encourages teachers to assess learners regularly and to use assessment information to inform their teaching.
- It encourages teachers to adapt their teaching practices to match the needs of learners.
- It places value on teachers' informal assessment of learners' progress.
- It encourages the use of a wide variety of assessment tasks.
- It emphasises the transparency of assessment.
- It creates a need for detailed and accurate record keeping of learners' progress.
- It encourages learners to assess their own work.

Awareness of the significance of continuous assessment in teaching and learning is also raised by Marnewick and Rouhani (2006:271) who highlight the following advantages when implementing continuous assessment:

- Awareness of learners' progress is not confined to one or two tests per year.
- Learners are aware of how they are progressing in their learning.
- Learners are not disadvantaged when missing a test due to valid reasons.

- Tests and examinations are no longer considered to be the only assessment strategies for determining learner success.
- It assists learners to correct their weaknesses as they learn.
- It motivates learners to work hard throughout the year.

3.3.4 The main intentions with assessment

Wiliam (1998) draws attention to the fact that the intentions with assessment should reflect the use of the assessment results and should not be confined to the types or forms of assessment. Geyser (2012:92) phrases this understanding as follows: "Assessment purpose … determines the time when the learner will be assessed, as well as the assessor(s), and the methods and the techniques chosen". Caldwell (2008:23) also accentuates the fact that an assessment task should match its purpose. Hence, baseline assessment is not only a type or form of assessment, but its results display a learner's pre-knowledge or entry level. Baseline assessment serves to inform teachers to plan their teaching and learners' learning (Du Toit & Vandeyar, 2004:140). This is underscored by Dreyer (2008:17) who states that baseline assessment informs the teacher where to begin the teaching and learning process. Consequently, assessment is conducted with a baseline purpose in mind or with the intention of determining a learners' pre-knowledge or entry level before commencing with a new learning experience. Understood in this way, and in addition to baseline assessment, assessment usually serves the following main intentions: diagnostic, formative and summative.

3.3.4.1 Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment intends to diagnose learning and teaching difficulties and to institute the necessary support or intervention to facilitate the process of learning. It can be used to determine the degree of mastery by learners and to identify problem areas of teaching methodologies and of learning strategies. Bryan and Clegg (2006: 75) assert that diagnostic assessment "can assist teachers to generate cumulative information about learners' levels of understanding and skill so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly". Kotzé (2004:49) indicates that informal and formal assessments could be used for diagnostic purposes, while De Witt (2008:41) argues that diagnostic assessment is implicit in all observations.

3.3.4.2 Formative assessment

Formative assessment could also include informal or formal assessment tasks. According to Marnewick and Rouhani (2006:269), formative assessment takes place during the learning process and aims to inform the learning experience of each learner. Elwood (2006:218) refers to formative assessment as an "interactive process of learner attainment". Airasian and Russell (2008:124) allege that the term formative assessment denotes the "forming of learning" and could also be described as "instructional assessment" (Airasian & Russell, 2008:100). Irons (2008:23) concurs with the aforementioned when stating that formative assessment "redirects the learner's thinking and the teacher's teaching". O'Brien (2008:1) also mentions the "forming" potential of formative assessment on teachers' teaching practices. Broadfoot (2007:7) states that formative assessment supports learning progression while the improvement of learner motivation and learning, are singled out by McMillan (2007:118) as representing the goals of formative assessment. In an all-encompassing way, Colby-Kelly and Turner (2007:11) describe formative assessment as "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for making substantively grounded decisions or judgements about the product of a learning task in order to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there". However, Campos and O'Hern (2007:25) argue that formative assessment should not be used to allocate marks or to determine grades because these merely label learners into categories and could be counterproductive to the improvement of learning. Killen (2007:339) is of the opinion that the main value of formative assessment is "that it helps learners to identify gaps in their knowledge, understanding or skills and guides them towards closing those gaps". Related to this, Jones and Moreland (2005:193), Bryan and Clegg (2006:64, 81), point to an essential element of formative assessment, namely feedback. However, O'Brien (2008:3) stresses the fact that feedback is only useful if learners are given the opportunity "to reflect on their investigative processes and experiences, and when they are encouraged to explore, experiment, and revise their work".

Based on research evidence by Black and Wiliam (1998:140), they deduce the following about formative assessment:

- Effective implementation of formative assessment could raise learner performance and education standards.
- There is a great need for formative assessment implementation to be improved.
- There are ways to improve formative assessment.

3.3.4.3 Summative assessment

This is formal assessment which is usually given at the end of a learning experience to assess learners' mastery of the application of the knowledge, skills, values and attitude that they have learnt. Reddy (2004:32) asserts that summative assessment is largely concerned with "summing up". The aims of this assessment are to "find out how much content a learner can remember" (Marnewick & Rouhani, 2006:269), to report learner performance and to use the assessment results to determine progression to the following grade or promotion to the next phase (Harlen, 2005:208). Dunn and Mulvenon (2009:8) explain that summative assessment is conducted to establish learner performance against specified performance criteria. In addition, Reddy (2004:33) and Chapman and King (2005:xxi), note that school effectiveness in terms of curriculum delivery, is mostly connected to the results of learner performance in summative assessment.

3.3.5 Concluding remarks

In this study, the focal point centres on the interplay between informal and formal assessment. Drawing especially on the discussions on informal and formal assessment (*cf*. 3.3.2) as well as continuous assessment (*cf*. 3.3.3), formative and summative assessment are seen as complementary since Brown and Smith (1997:15) describe them as "ends of the same continuum". Geyser (2012:94) also mentions that both can add equal value to learning by highlighting the similarities below.

- Both are supposed to be done continuously.
- Both collect evidence of learner competence.
- Both should enhance deep learning.
- Both require feedback; though in different forms.
- Both inform future teaching and learner development.

Derived from the above, it can be concluded that in the context of this study the interplay between informal and formal assessment signifies the harmonizing of formative and summative assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom.

3.4 ASSESSMENT *of, for* AND *as* LEARNING

Closely connected to the discussions on informal and formal assessment (*cf*. 3.3.2), continuous assessment (*cf*. 3.3.3), and the main intentions with assessment (*cf*. 3.3.4), the phenomenon can also be further examined by way of three perspectives. Following the work of, amongst others, Stiggins (2002); Earl (2003) and Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2004), these perspectives distinguish between assessment ***of*** learning, assessment ***for*** learning and assessment ***as*** learning.

3.4.1 Assessment *of* learning

Assessment ***of*** learning implies that learners' engagement with learning is limited to the product of their learning. It focuses on the gathering and interpretation of evidence about learners' attainment of the learning outcomes and assessment standards as specified in the official curriculum documents. Falchikov (2005:60) regards assessment ***of*** learning as "traditional" assessment because it focuses on measurement with norm-referencing as the ultimate purpose. Bryan and Clegg (2006:xviii) describe assessment ***of*** learning as "…an act of measurement that occurs after learning has been completed; not as a fundamental part of teaching and learning itself", while Irons (2008:1) sees it as "a tool to produce "data" in order to gauge what the learner knows". According to Stiggins (2002:7), the major limitations of assessment ***of*** learning are situated in the following factors: "it cannot diagnose student needs during learning, tell students what study tactics are or are not effective, or keep parents informed about how to support the work of their children".

3.4.2 Assessment *for* learning

During assessment ***for*** learning, the focus is on the advancement of learning; meaning that learner growth and development are central, while learners are engaged in the learning process. According to Harlen (2007:119), assessment ***for*** learning assists teachers to determine subsequent steps during the learning process and how to proceed. Assessment ***for*** learning is meant to "scaffold" (*cf*. 3.5.2)

learning. Drawing on the suggestions of Stiggins (2002) and Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2004), five factors appear to impact on assessment aimed at the advancement of learning. These include the sharing of learning targets, questioning, feedback, peer and self-assessment and the formative use of summative assessment. Since all five of these factors are imperative for ensuring a smooth transition between informal and formal assessment, each will be briefly discussed.

3.4.2.1 Sharing learning targets

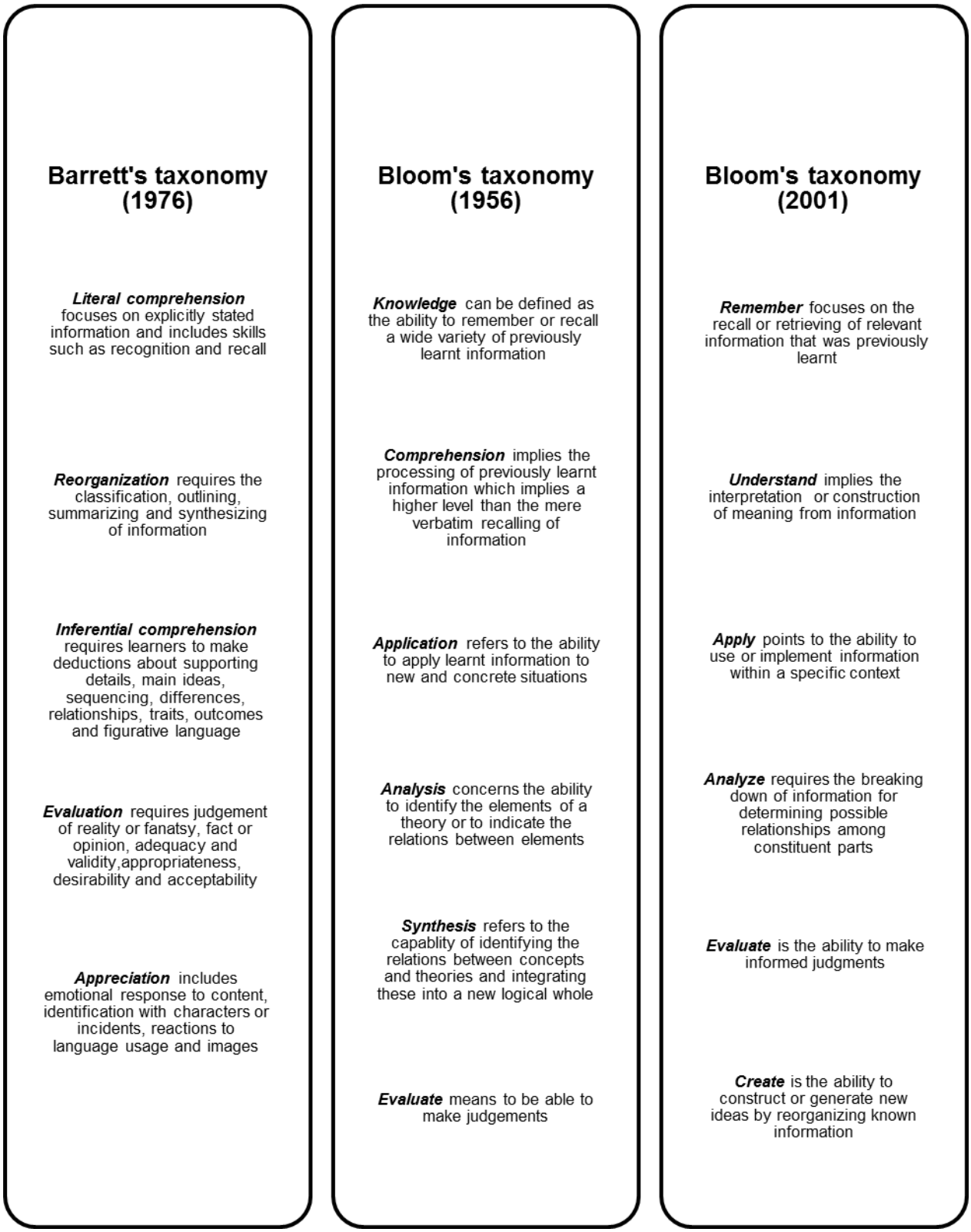
Achievable outcomes need to be communicated to learners in an unambiguous, comprehensible manner to provide them with a clear idea of what will be learned and why. Transparency with regard to learning targets can be seen as an enabling factor to direct learners' attention and to stimulate learners' motivation and participation.

3.4.2.2 Questioning

Two of the prominent features of verbal questioning are that it is direct and instantaneous. It is therefore effective for establishing learners' involvement and for clarifying possible confusion. It could also allow for learner reflection while listening to others' answers.

Amongst the principles for ensuring successful questioning, is cognitive complexity. Whether questions are verbal or written, it is important for teachers to consider the cognitive level of their questions. To assist teachers in formulating and distributing questions over a spectrum that covers different cognitive levels, taxonomies can be useful. Two such taxonomies are Barrett's taxonomy (1976) for comprehension and reading questions which is widely used in Language teaching, and Bloom's taxonomy (1956) of educational objectives which was recently revised (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the mentioned taxonomies.

Figure 3.2: An overview of Barrett's and Bloom's taxonomies



3.4.2.3 Feedback

Feedback provides valuable reciprocal information to learners to improve their learning performance and to teachers to help shape their teaching. Effective feedback relates to the learning outcomes or assessment standards and is valuable in clarifying performance levels.

3.4.2.4 Peer- and self-assessment

Through peer- and self-assessment, assessment criteria become transparent which enable learners to realize the inherent expectations of the learning outcomes or assessment standards. Learners also become aware that there are various ways of tackling tasks which could help them to improve their own performance.

3.4.2.5 The formative use of summative assessment

In an attempt to achieve a positive interplay between informal and formal assessment, summative assessment should become an integral part of the learning process. This could help learners to review their summative performances in a reflective manner and to attend to their weaknesses.

3.4.3 Assessment *as* learning

Assessment ***as*** learning is concerned with learners' ability to critically analyse, monitor and evaluate their own learning. Cultivating learner motivation, reflection and self-assessment is significant in assessment ***as*** learning. Fundamental to assessment ***as*** learning is the development of independent, self-directed learners. Earl (2003:25) contends that through assessment ***as*** learning, learners are stimulated to assess themselves by questioning their success levels and to consider strategies for possible improvement.

In addition to the brief outline provided so far, Table 3.1 provides a summarized comparison among assessment *of, for* and *as* learning.

Table 3.1: A comparison among assessment of, for and as learning (Adapted from Lombard, 2010:50/51)

Assessment of learning	Assessment for learning	Assessment as learning
• Product oriented	• Process oriented	• Process oriented
• Promoting extrinsic motivation	• Promoting intrinsic motivation	• Promoting intrinsic motivation
• Summatively inclined	• Formatively inclined	• Formatively inclined (self-assessment)
• Concerned with the quantity of assessment tasks as prescribed in curriculum and assessment documents	• Concerned with the quality of assessment tasks which emphasise the advancement of learning in relation to learning aims	• Concerned with the quality of assessment tasks to provide learners the opportunities for critical reflection on their own learning
• Determining the status of learning for the purpose of progression	• Determining the status of learning by anticipating needs for future learning	• Determining the status of learning by eliciting metacognitive skills
• Periodic since it concludes a particular learning experience	• On-going since it forms an integral part of teaching and learning	• On-going since it forms an integral part of teaching and learning
• Norm referenced since individual learner performance is gauged by making comparisons with other learners' performance	• Criterion referenced since individual learner performance is gauged against learning aims	• Self- referenced since individual learner performance is gauged against previous or related personal performances
• Promotes superficial learning since the focus is primarily on studied material and the assimilation of facts	• Promotes functional learning since the focus is primarily on learners' engagement with learning material	• Promotes functional learning since the focus is on learners' engagement with personal thinking and learning habits
• Used to report evidence of learner achievement in relation to learning aims	• Used to report evidence of learner progress in relation to learning aims	• Used to foster metacognition through self-monitoring and corrective actions to advance personal learning
• Delayed feedback in the form of marks or symbols which provide little direction to learners in terms of their strengths and weaknesses	• Immediate feedback which is descriptive in nature to provide learners with direction in terms of their strengths and weaknesses	• Immediate, descriptive feedback to provide learners with direction to rethink, adjust and articulate personal learning habits and preferences if necessary
• Provides a summary judgement of learning and understanding and does not allow for corrective actions to eliminate possible barriers to learning	• Diagnostic in nature since it provides insight into learners' learning and understanding and allows for immediate intervention	• Formative in nature since it promotes learners' engagement with their own thinking and learning and the strategies used to support these
• Learner achievement is measured in terms of learner ability	• Learner progress is measured in terms of learner ability and effective teaching	• Learner growth is determined in terms of field independence
• Promotes success for achievers	• Promotes success for all	• Promotes success for all

The information reflected in the above table, alludes to the fact that assessment ***of*** learning is unquestionably formal in nature, while assessment ***for*** and ***as*** learning project a strong preference towards informal assessment.

3.5 CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SCAFFOLDING

Assessment within the constructivist paradigm recognizes scaffolding as a dynamic, contributing factor to learners' performance and learning success. It is therefore necessary to explore these two concepts further.

3.5.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a philosophical perspective based on the views that learners construct meaning from current knowledge structures (Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000:219-222) through active involvement in the learning process (Schunk, 2004:285). Constructivism relies on four principles: establishing links with existing knowledge, building constructs, constructing meaning and acknowledging individual differences.

- Establishing links with existing knowledge implies that learning cannot operate independently without considering previous, personal experiences. According to Burger (2008:21), the construction of knowledge involves the active involvement of the learner to construct meaning according to his/her experiences.
- Building constructs. The understanding of new concepts and the building of knowledge largely depends on assimilation and accommodation (Burger, 2008:21).
- Constructing meaning. The creation of meaning is the responsibility of the learner. Learners negotiate meaning where they make sense of new experiences by comparing them with their existing knowledge (Lorbach & Tobin, 1997:4).
- Acknowledging individual differences. Learners construct meaning on their own, depending on their personal characteristics. The construction of meaning is personal and diversified, thus, the learning of a concept cannot be identical between any two learners. Individual differences and the impact of

social interaction on the individual will determine what meaning is attached to new information (Burger, 2008:22).

Witt *et al.* (1994:179) draw attention to the fact that a prominent figure in education, Jean Piaget, was a leading constructivist. According to Witt *et al.* (1994:179), Piaget believed that knowledge is personally constructed by every learner based on previous experience. Piaget claimed that new knowledge is constructed by means of assimilation and accommodation. *Assimilation* occurs when new information is learnt by relating it to existing knowledge, after which the new information is incorporated into an existing framework without changing that framework. A*ccommodation* on the other hand, occurs when existing thinking structures are transformed to make sense of new information. When the new experience is in conflict with learners' mental framework, they may change their mental framework to accommodate the new experience (Witt *et al.*, 1994:179). Piaget's approach to constructivism is known as "cognitive constructivism" (Booyse, 2010:47).

Another prominent constructivist was Lev Vygotsky. His constructivist theories emphasized the role of social interaction in learning (Vygotsky, 1978:57). Mann (2011:61) concurs with the Vygotskian view that learning is closely related to context and that successful learning is reliant on the active engagement and participation of the learner in the activities of the community in which learning ought to take place. Vygotsky (1978) also argued that language is the most important symbolic tool provided by society and by referring to the interrelation between language and thought, mentioned that learning can best take place when concepts are mediated. Two main principles on which Vygotsky's notion of constructivism is founded are the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the more knowledgeable other (MKO) (Vygotsky, 1962). *The more knowledgeable other (MKO)* refers to someone who has more knowledge or a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner in respect to a certain task, process or concept. *The zone of proximal development (ZPD)* refers to the distance between what the learner can accomplish independently and what he can achieve with the support of the teacher or a peer (O'Brien, 2008: 141). Kraker (2005:30) asserts that the ZPD can easily be associated with informal assessment which occurs in a natural, interactive setting where learners are not compelled to adhere to "norms".

Learner-centeredness and learner engagement are thus central to the notion of constructivism. To stimulate learner engagement in an attempt to realize the interplay between informal and formal assessment, Killen (2007:5, 7-10) suggests that a constructivist classroom should display the following characteristics:

- actively involved learners;
- a democratic climate;
- interactive activities;
- the encouragement of responsible and autonomous learners;
- value is attached to learner questions and interests;
- a large variety of learning materials;
- learners' pre-knowledge is considered;
- provision is made for mediation and guidance by the teacher;
- meaning is negotiated;
- assessment is process as well as product oriented;
- knowledge is viewed as being dynamic, and
- collaboration.

3.5.2 Scaffolding

Balaban (1995:52) describes scaffolding as "the way the adult guides the child's learning via focused questions and positive interactions". According to Oosterhof (2009:272), scaffolding is akin to what is referred to as "shaping" in the behaviourist approach to learning and as such it implies that provision is made to guide and support learners to construct higher levels of understanding (Schunk, 2004:298; Gagnon & Collay, 2006:23). Booyse (2010:73) explains scaffolding as "a strategy which provides a temporary, supportive and adjustable framework for a learner to be enabled to participate in or complete a task/activity that is beyond the learner's reach". Therefore, scaffolding implies that support is provided by the teacher and more able peers to assist learners to achieve knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which they cannot achieve without any aid. Berk and Winsler (1995:26) relate scaffolding to Vygotsky's notion of social constructivism when referring to the importance of the social environment as "scaffold or support system" to initiate and promote learning.

Earl (2003:92) differentiates between verbal and procedural scaffolding. Verbal scaffolding is used in the teaching and learning of content. It could refer to the encouragement of learners to paraphrase parts of the content or that the teacher prompts learners to participate in discussions. Procedural scaffolding is used in the teaching and learning of skills. Procedural scaffolding may take the following form: the teacher teaches and demonstrates a skill, after which the whole class or individual learners engage in its practice. This is followed by providing a new scenario in which learners are required to apply the newly acquired skill.

Related to assessment, it can be concluded that scaffolding can be applied in informal assessment and as written feedback in formal assessment tasks. Viewed in this way, it can be argued that if learning progression is the ultimate aim, scaffolding by means of informal assessment will "help teachers (to) locate learners' current learning status on the continuum along which they are expected to progress" (O'Brien, 2008:142).

3.6 CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT

Corresponding with the constructivist approach to learning is Biggs' (2003) notion of constructive alignment. Biggs (2003:26) asserts that if *what is being taught*, *how it is being taught* and *how it is assessed* are aligned, successful teaching and learning is guaranteed. Based on the premise that the way in which a Learning Area is taught influences the way in which it will be assessed, constructive alignment also has a direct bearing on the teaching, learning and assessment of EFAL. Moreover, when considering SAQA's (2001:7) statement that "assessment needs to be an integral part of a learning programme's teaching and learning activities", constructive alignment within the context of this study makes perfect sense.

To operationalize Biggs's theory, three guiding questions can be asked:

- What should learners be able to demonstrate at the end of a learning experience?
- Which most suitable teaching and learning activities will enable learner engagement to attain the learning aims?
- How will the successful attainment of the learning aims be determined?

By aligning the Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards, teaching and learning activities and assessment in the planning, designing and implementing of learning experiences in EFAL, the interplay between informal and formal assessment can be realized.

3.7 ASSESSMENT IN EFAL

3.7.1 Contextualizing EFAL assessment within a policy framework

Since the CAPS will only become effective in 2014 for Grade 9, which is the grade on which this study focuses, assessment in EFAL is still guided by the following documents:

- The National Protocol on Assessment for schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R-12) (DoE, 2005).
- The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) for Languages – English First Additional Language (DoE, 2002).
- The National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band (DoE, 2007).
- The National Curriculum Statement Assessment Guidelines for General Education and Training (Intermediate and Senior Phases): Languages.

In view of the fact that this study centres on the interplay between informal and formal assessment in EFAL, a concise discussion on the position of each document on these purposes of assessment follows in the subsequent sub-sections.

3.7.2 The National Protocol on Assessment for schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R-12)

This document suggests that both informal and formal assessment should be used with the aim to provide feedback to learners to enhance their learning experience (DoE, 2005:5). Informal assessment is described as “the daily monitoring of learners’ progress” and observations, discussions, learner-teacher conferences and informal classroom interactions are mentioned as exemplars (DoE, 2005:5). Formal assessment is defined as assessment that provides “teachers with a systematic way of evaluating how well learners are progressing in a grade and in a particular Learning programme/Learning Area/Subject” (DoE, 2005:6). Projects, oral presentations, demonstrations, performances, tests, exams and practical

demonstrations are stated as examples (DoE, 2005:6). The National Protocol on Assessment also alludes to the fact that formal assessment results should be recorded and that an annual formal programme of assessment for each Learning programme/Learning Area/Subject (DoE, 2005:6) which comprises of a formal assessment schedule for a particular year, should be drafted. It is also stated that "not everything that is taught should be assessed formally (DoE, 2005:9). In addition to guidelines for the frequency of recording formal assessment tasks for Grade 9, it is declared that assessment should provide learners with opportunities to "explore the Learning Area in exciting and varied ways" (DoE, 2005:14).

3.7.3 The Revised national Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) for Languages – English First Additional Language

This document does not refer explicitly to informal or formal assessment but uses related concepts such as continuous assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment.

While it is stated that continuous assessment "encourages integration of assessment into teaching and the development of learners through on-going feedback" (DoE, 2002d:122) it is regarded as "the chief method" of assessment in the NCS (DoE, 2002d:115). According to the NCS, continuous assessment is characterized by the following (DoE, 2002d:115):

- it takes place over a period of time and is on-going;
- it supports the growth and development of learners;
- it provides for learning and teaching;
- it allows for integrated assessment;
- it uses strategies that cater for a variety of learner needs, and
- it allows for summative assessment.

Formative assessment is described as assessment used for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning and for informing learners and teachers about learners' progress (DoE, 2002d:114, 122). Constructive feedback is seen as an essential element for enabling learners' growth (DoE, 2002d:114, 115).

The NCS mentions that summative assessment differs from formative assessment as it provides an overall picture of learners' progress at a given point in time (DoE,

2002d:114) and that it focuses more on reporting learners' progress (DoE, 2002d:124). It is further seen as the "accumulation" of assessment results and as such summative assessment requires "careful planning" (DoE, 2002d:115). When conducting summative assessment, the NCS recommends that teachers should apply a variety of methods such as exercises, tasks, projects, and tests to ensure that learners are provided with "a range of opportunities to show what they have learned" (DoE, 2002d:115).

3.7.4 The National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band

The National Policy on Assessment stipulates that informal and formal assessment should be done (SA, 2007:7) and replicates the descriptions and examples of the National Protocol on Assessment (*cf.* 3.7.2) for both instances. In addition, the National Policy states that Learning Outcomes and Assessment standards should be used to guide the planning of assessment tasks as well as the recording and reporting of learner performance (SA, 2007:11). The document also specifies the requirements for formal recorded assessment tasks for Grade 9 per Learning Area (SA, 2007:16). Although it does not clearly discriminate between informal and formal assessment, the document states that teachers' portfolios "should contain the tasks for assessment as well as the planning that informs the development of such tasks as well as the records of assessment of the formal tasks" (SA, 2007:17).

3.7.5 The National Curriculum Statement Assessment Guidelines for General Education and Training (Intermediate and Senior Phases): Languages

In this document, it is stated that continuous assessment comprises of informal and formal assessment which are described as "two different but related" (DoE, 2004:13) assessment activities. Noteworthy is the fact that informal assessment is regarded as "very important" (DoE, 2004:13) but that it is not used for recording purposes. However, teachers may use personal recording measures such as checklists to establish possible barriers learners' may encounter (DoE, 2004:13). The main objectives of informal assessment are "to support teachers in their daily planning and to assist teachers in making professional judgements on learner performance" (DoE, 2004:13). Although the examples provided in this document replicate those of the

National Protocol on Assessment (*cf.* 3.7.2), self-, peer- and group assessment are also added (DoE, 2004:13).

More attention is devoted to formal assessment in this document. Although the description and examples for formal assessment are the same as cited in the National Protocol on Assessment (*cf*. 3.7.2), the number of formal assessment tasks to be recorded for Grade 9 EFAL is specified per term (DoE, 2004:9). While it is mentioned that formal assessment tasks in Languages "must reflect varied forms of assessment and assess a variety of skills", the recording and reporting of formal assessment results are also emphasised (DoE, 2004:14). A comprehensive list of aspects to consider when designing formal assessment tasks in Languages are highlighted in the Assessment Guidelines. These aspects are meant to guide teachers in implementing formal assessment and include the following (DoE, 2004:15-18):

- What is the purpose of the assessment task?
- Does the task truly match the outcome to be measured?
- Is the task a worthwhile use of instructional time?
- Does the assessment use engaging tasks form the "real world"?
- Are the tasks fair and free from bias?
- Will the task be credible?
- Is the task feasible?
- When will the task be done?
- What are the contexts of the school and learners in the Grade?
- Are the instructions that will be given to learners clear?
- How are learners going to be assessed?
- What scoring criteria will be used?
- What forms of assessment will suit the task?

3.7.6 Deduction

From the analysis of the relevant policy document, the prominence of the notion of continuous assessment is evident. Moreover, concepts such as *informal, formal*, *formative* and *summative* assessment are used to exemplify continuous assessment. Although the literature suggests that each of these concepts has its peculiar

meaning, the interchangeable meanings attached to concepts such as informal/formative and formal/summative is also apparent. Another observation is that much more detailed discussions are devoted to formal/summative assessment as opposed to informal/formative assessment. It can be concluded though, that all the documents express confidence in “balanced assessment” (Stiggins, 2004) for ensuring quality learner performance.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with theoretical matters underpinning assessment in order to obtain a better understanding of assessment in EFAL, and more particularly about the interplay between informal and formal assessment. The next chapter will lay the foundation for the empirical research by indicating how it was planned, designed and administered.

CHAPTER FOUR
OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study centred on the examination of the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms in order to gain a better understanding of teachers' assessment practices. In order to address the stated purpose, the researcher formulated the following five secondary research questions:

- What educational developments characterised South African education since 1994?
- What is the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum?
- How should assessment be understood within a constructivist framework?
- What are the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education?
- What is the relation between the informal and formal assessment practices of Grade 9 EFAL teachers?

In an attempt to deal with the first four of these secondary questions, a literature study was conducted. Since the last secondary question, (in relation to the overall purpose of the study), required an investigation of empirical nature, this chapter will provide an overview of the empirical study to indicate the processes and procedures which were followed to gather information relevant to the purpose of the study.

4.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Nieuwenhuis (2007a:48) indicates that a research paradigm serves as "the lens or organizing principles by which reality is interpreted". Given the problem that initiated this study together with its corresponding purpose, the empirical research is guided by two verbs: to *examine* and to *understand*. This implies that this research calls for multiple lenses through which reality (the interplay between informal and formal assessment), can be explained. A "pluralistic approach to derive knowledge about the problem" (Creswell, 2009:10) is thus required. According to Maree and Van der

Westhuizen (2007:31-32) knowledge about the problem can either be viewed as unshakeable and objective or as multi-faceted and subjective. The first instance is usually associated with a positivist view of knowledge (Positivism), while the second relates to an anti-positivist viewpoint. The positivist paradigm declares that knowledge is generated through objective observation and measurement; independent of feelings and opinions (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:6), and is synonymous with the quantitative research design. Burton and Bartlett (2005:22) as well as Bryman (2012:28) contend that the term Interpretivism denotes an anti-positivist or non-positivist view of knowledge. According to the interpretivist paradigm, "human experience, which is the object of behavioural research, cannot be separated from the person who is experiencing it" (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:6) and relates to the qualitative research design. A combination of the two mentioned viewpoints, Positivism and Interpretevism, results in Pragmatism which, according to Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:263), "justifies the combination of different methods within one study".

Derived from the preceding discussion, the researcher argues that this study is founded on **Pragmatism**. To substantiate this argument, the following applicable reasons are mentioned:

- By applying a mixed-methods research design, numerical (quantitative) as well as text (qualitative) data will be collected and analysed to gather multiple understandings and thus multiple conclusions (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007:37; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009:12) about how assessment is practised in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms.
- Consequently, it is envisaged that the above understandings could help in improving EFAL teachers' assessment practices. As such, the study aims at problem resolution.

4.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is synonymous to the plan that the researcher adopts to collect data for a study (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009:118). To enable the researcher to select an appropriate research design, the researcher must decide on a paradigm or philosophical perspective, a strategy of inquiry that is linked to the paradigm and particular research methods that will convert or transform the strategy into practice

(Creswell, 2009:5; Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:70). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:93) “data and methodology are inextricably interdependent”. While numerical data are more dependent on quantitative methodology, verbal data rely more on qualitative methodology. Creswell (2005:39) states that research approached in a quantitative manner “…asks specific, narrow questions, collects numeric data from participants, analyses these numbers using statistics and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner”. On the other hand, qualitative research entails the exploration and the understanding of meanings individuals ascribe to a social phenomenon, emerging procedures, inductive data analysis and interpreting the meaning of collected data (Creswell, 2009:4). Results arising from qualitative research are thus context bound without the researcher imposing interpretations (Thomas, 2009:142; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009:232).

In addition to quantitative and qualitative research designs, Spratt *et al*. (2004:6, 7) make a distinction between mixed-methods research and multi-method studies. In a multi-method study, the researcher makes use of different methods of data collection and analysis within a single research paradigm. For example, the researcher can use interviews and observations to collect data within a qualitative research design. Hence, a multi-method study is a ‘within method’ triangulation where two data gathering instruments are used from the same research methodology to increase the validity of the findings (Betzner, 2008: 31). Research based on a mixed-methods design, utilizes “between methods’ triangulation, involving different paradigms and thus different research methodologies which results in more rigorous research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:14; Betzner, 2008:31). A mixed- methods research design combines qualitative and the quantitative research methods in a single study (Johnson & Onbuegbuzie, 2004:17) and is concerned with the corroboration across different approaches in order to converge the research findings. It is used to better understand a concept and hence to broaden one’s knowledge (Johnson & Onbuegbuzie, 2004:19).

In the case of this study, it was planned to collect both numerical and verbal data. Therefore, the **mixed-methods research design** was adopted since it incorporated both qualitative and the quantitative research methodologies which allowed for the triangulation of data to increase the credibility of the information (Spratt et.al.,

2004:8; Ivankova *et al*., 2007:258). It was argued that the mixed-methods design would add greater strength to the research findings by capitalising on the strengths of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches and by offsetting the weaknesses of each (Spratt et.al., 2004:6; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007: 34; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:14). The mixed-methods design also allowed for an in-depth examination of the research problem from more than one perspective in order to arrive at "a greater intensity of understanding" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009:309) of the assessment practices of EFAL teachers with the emphasis on the interplay between informal and formal assessment.

4.4 STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY

Creswell (2009:11) describes strategies of inquiry as "types of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs or models that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design". He continues to differentiate between three general strategies of inquiry in mixed-methods research: sequential, concurrent and transformative (Creswell, 2009:14, 15). This list is later expanded and refined to the convergent parallel, explanatory, exploratory, embedded, transformative and multiphase designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:68-72).

In the case of this study, a sequential mixed-methods strategy (Creswell, 2009:14), or more specifically, a **sequential explanatory strategy** (Creswell, 2009:211) was applied. By following a sequential strategy of inquiry, the researcher's intentions centred on the elaboration of the findings originating from one method with another method (Creswell, 2009:14). This implied that an initial quantitative approach could be complemented by a qualitative approach or vice versa. In contrast with a sequential exploratory strategy where qualitative data are collected and analysed first, a sequential explanatory strategy is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2009:211). Based on the assertion by Ivankova, et.al. (2007:264) that the purpose of a sequential explanatory strategy of inquiry is "to use qualitative findings to help clarify the quantitative results", this study intended to determine the nature of informal and formal assessment used by Grade 9 EFAL teachers quantitatively, after which the obtained results would be explored in-depth by following a qualitative approach. There was thus a specific order in the collection and interpretation of the

quantitative and the qualitative data. Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected independently with a time lag of three months to promote the element of reliability in terms of an accurate reflection of the interplay between informal and formal assessment as practised by Grade 9 EFAL teachers.

Furthermore, it can be stated that this study embraced a non-experimental approach founded on a **survey** as strategy of inquiry for the quantitative part of the study, to determine the nature of informal and formal assessment practised by Grade 9 EFAL teachers. The choice of the aforementioned strategy of inquiry was informed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:236) who contend that survey research is used to describe the incidence, frequency and distribution of characteristics of a sample and that it is versatile, efficient and permits generalizability.

The strategy of inquiry for the qualitative part of the study was a **case study**. Niewenhuis (2007b:75) points out that the term "case study" has multiple meanings. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:135) indicate that the purpose of a case study is to examine an individual, program, or event in-depth or explore processes, activities and events, while McMillan and Schumacher (2006:333) maintain that a case study "promotes better understanding of a practice or issue and facilitates informed decision making". According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007:64), a case study requires of a researcher to spend time with participants in their environment in order to observe some aspect of their behaviour. In this study, the researcher made use of a multiple (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:135) or collective case (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:345) as it provided insight into a specific theme (the interplay between informal and formal assessment) and how it was approached by different Grade 9 EFAL teachers.

4.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The term *population* refers to the whole target group on which the research is based, while the *sample* is the streamlining of the population in order to select a specific target group for the research. According to Wiersma and Jurs (2009:325), the sample should be as far as possible representative of the population. In the case of this study, the population of the research comprised of Grade 9 classrooms in which English as a first additional language was offered. By implication, this means that

the population for this study included teachers and learners within the mentioned classrooms.

By means of *sampling*, which Nieuwenhuis (2007b:79) describes as the "process used to select a portion of the population for study"; a sample was selected from the population. Plano Clark and Creswell (2010:183) add that sampling is performed by applying *sampling strategies* and differentiate between probability and non-probability sampling strategies. In *probability sampling,* individuals are randomly selected from the population, which means that each individual has an equal chance to be included in the sample (Bryman, 2012:187). When applying *non-probability sampling,* human judgment may affect the selection process; meaning that some members of the population could be more likely to be selected than others (Bryman, 2012:188). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:132-134) mention four types of probability sampling: simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling. With regard to non-probability sampling, the following types are mentioned in the literature: convenience sampling, purposeful sampling, quota sampling, criterion sampling and snowball sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:135-139; Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:79-80).

For the quantitative part of this study, **a non-probability, convenience sampling strategy** (Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:177) was used. Although Maree and Pietersen (2007b:177) warn that this type of sampling does not necessarily provide for the representativeness of a population, it does allow for the accommodation of a conveniently available population. In the case of this study, this choice of sampling strategy was mainly chosen for a logistical reason because it allowed for easy access to potential research participants from the researcher's base as EFAL facilitator. It was further argued that this sampling strategy would allow for the participation of all Grade 9 EFAL teachers, 66 in total, teaching in secondary public schools in the Johannesburg-North District of the Gauteng Department of Education during a scheduled cluster meeting.

With regard to the qualitative part of the study, **systematic, non-proportional probability sampling** (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:122; Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:174) was applied. Through this type of sampling the researcher could gain a

balanced and unbiased perspective on the results obtained from the survey. This sampling strategy was applied by categorizing all the secondary public schools in the district according to their location: township and suburb. This ensured the inclusion of Township as well as ex-Model C (suburb) schools in the sample, since these schools differ in terms of material and human resources. This categorization also allowed the researcher to extend the examination of the interplay between informal and formal assessment to two very different sets of teachers and learners. After categorizing the respective schools, each category of schools was listed in alphabetical order and numbered. Eventually, six public schools, four Township schools and two ex-Model C schools were included in the study. Henceforth, teachers teaching EFAL to Grade 9 learners from each of the selected schools who completed the questionnaire were selected by means of **simple random sampling** (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:120; Maree & Pietersen, 2007b:172-173) to be interviewed and observed during one of their lesson presentations. Although these teachers were selected randomly, the researcher viewed them as "information-rich key informants" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319) who could add value to her understanding of the interplay between informal and formal assessment. One teacher from each of the sampled schools was selected which meant that four teachers teaching in Township schools and two teachers teaching in ex-Model C schools formed part of the qualitative study.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Three instruments were used to collect empirical data for this study. For the quantitative part of the study questionnaires were used, while interviews and observations were utilised to gather qualitative data.

4.6.1 Questionnaires

For the quantitative part of the study, the researcher conducted a survey by means of a self-developed questionnaire. Delport and Roestenburg (2012:186) contend that questionnaires "are probably the most generally used instruments of all" and that they are used "to obtain facts and opinions about a phenomenon from people who are informed on the particular issue". All Grade 9 EFAL teachers present at the particular cluster meeting were required to complete the questionnaire in the

presence of the researcher. According to Delport and Roestenburg (2012:189), this approach is known as a *group-administered questionnaire*. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008:393) consider this approach to collect data as reasonably effective since it not only ensures a high response rate, but also allows the researcher to clarify uncertainties experienced by participants. Yet, Maree and Pietersen (2007a:157) state that one disadvantage of this approach to data collection is that the presence of the researcher can have an influence on participants' responses.

For the purpose of this study, questionnaire items were informed by the literature study and the researcher's experiences regarding assessment in EFAL classrooms. The questionnaire consisted of open and closed questions. Open questions allowed respondents to express their opinions and to gain multiple perspectives on particular matters (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:198). Although these questions allow participants the freedom to express their views, Fraenkel and Wallen (2008:396) draw attention to the fact that they are difficult to code and analyse. On the other hand, Delport and Roestenburg (2012:198) maintain that closed questions can ascertain the degree, frequency and comprehensiveness of a phenomenon quite meaningfully, which is, in the case of this study, the interplay between informal and formal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom. However, Fraenkel and Wallen (2008:396) caution that closed questions could limit the depth of participants' responses.

The questionnaire was constructed in such a way that it would allow respondents between 25 and 30 minutes to complete. It comprised of four sections (see Appendix A). Section A consisted of nine closed questions and dealt with the biographical information of respondents. The seven closed questions in Section B focused on the respondents' assessment backgrounds and assessment support systems. The four-point Likert type questions (Maree & Pietersen, 2007a:167) in Section C were categorised into teaching, learning and assessment, formal assessment and informal assessment to measure respondents' assessment practices and viewpoints on assessment. Section D of the questionnaire covered three open questions to gather data on respondents' assessment orientations and the problems experienced with assessment.

4.6.2 Interviews

Since they allow for direct interaction between the researcher and the participants in the collection of data (Borg *et al*., 1993:113) together with the fact that they are flexible and adaptable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:205), interviews were conducted in the qualitative part of the study. The literature lists various types of interviews. For example, McMillan and Schumacher (2006:351-352) differentiate between informal conversation interviews, standardized open-ended interviews, key informant interviews and career and life history interviews, whilst Nieuwenhuis (2007b:87) lists open-ended, semi-structured and structured interviews. Interviews may also be conducted on an individual basis or in a group. One-to-one interviews are conducted with individual research participants (Greeff, 2012:341) while focus group interviews are used to interview a group of people, rather than individuals (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:360).

In the case of this study, **semi-structured, individual interviews** were used as data collection instruments (see Appendix B). Interviews were conducted with six randomly sampled teachers who completed the questionnaire. Each interview was planned to last between 20 and 30 minutes and took place after schools hours at agreed upon times between the researcher and the participants. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher formulated a set of eight questions which were related to the questions used in the questionnaire. This set of questions enabled the researcher to maintain consistency by asking the same questions to the sampled participants. However, provision was made for probing and clarifying of answers (Mertler & Charles, 2011:113), which according to Borg *et al*. (1993:113), increase the potential of interviews to yield more data. Hence, the pre-formulated interview questions were used to "define the line of inquiry" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:87).

Field notes, or recordings of what the researcher sees, hears, experiences and thinks during the course of data collection (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008: 506), were also used during interview sessions. In the case of this study, field notes primarily served a descriptive purpose (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:121). The field notes were thus used to assist in the reconstruction of verbal interactions and to provide a full account of events during each individual interview session. For example, the field notes enabled the researcher to record participants' non-verbal cues, such as facial

expressions, which served as invaluable information to highlight attitudes and emotions.

4.6.3 Observations

Although McMillan and Schumacher (2006:207) assert that "all techniques of gathering data involve observation of some kind", they also admit that observations refer to "a more specific method of collecting information that is very different from interviews or questionnaires". McMillan and Schumacher (2010:208) describe observations as data collection method as a researcher's "seeing and hearing things and recording these …, rather than relying on subjects' self-report responses to questions and statements". Nieuwenhuis (2007b:83/84) states that an observation is a "systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them". Four types of observations are distinguished: complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:85). Whereas the complete observer looks at a particular situation from a distance, the observer as participant forms part of the situation to be observed without becoming involved or influencing the situation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:85). Participant as observer implies that the observer is immersed in the situation to be observed in order to gain an insider's perspective, while a complete participant immerses in the observation setting without those being observed knowing that they are the subjects of observation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:85). In the case of this study, the researcher and co-observer acted as **observers as participants** since it was aimed to make sense of assessment as part of the classroom dynamics in selected Grade 9 EFAL classrooms without interfering with the setting or participants. To minimize the "observer effect" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008:443), the researcher reminded the teachers and the learners involved, that the purpose was not to evaluate the lesson or the people being observed, but to gain information from the lesson on assessment.

Six observation sessions were conducted during pre-arranged times and lesson presentations in different Grade 9 EFAL classrooms. An observation schedule for each lesson was kept. Planned as structured observations (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:85), the observation schedule was structured as a pre-set checklist on

matters related to the interplay between informal and formal assessment. Items for the checklist emerged from the literature study, the questionnaire and interview used in this study. In addition, the researcher and co-observer engaged in anecdotal records (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b: 85) where brief descriptions were made of whatever was observed (see Appendix C). The researcher also wanted to confirm the interplay between informal and formal assessment by collecting evidence of informal and formal assessment artefacts during the observation sessions. These artefacts included any evidence to prove how informal and formal assessment are practised in the selected Grade 9 EFAL classrooms.

4.7 PRINCIPLES CONSIDERED FOR CONSTRUCTING THE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTRUMENTS

4.7.1 Questionnaires

In accordance with the guidelines provided by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:190-193) and Delport and Roestenburg (2012:192), the following principles guided the construction of the questionnaires:

- Clear instructions to respondents were provided.
- Care was taken that questions were formulated in a brief, unbiased and comprehensible manner.
- It was ensured that each question contained only one idea without suggesting any responses.
- Questions were categorized and sequenced in such a manner as to ensure logical and structured thinking.
- Each question was formulated with the aim of informing the overall purpose of the study.
- The questionnaire was thoroughly prepared, formatted and edited to reflect professionalism.
- By means of a pilot study, all questions of the questionnaire were verified and quality assured.

As was stated in 4.6.1, the questionnaire was handled as a *group-administered questionnaire*. The researcher personally administered the completion of the

questionnaire at a scheduled cluster meeting with 66 Grade 9 EFAL teachers of the Johannesburg-North District of the Gauteng Department of Education. The business of the meeting made provision for the administration of the questionnaire. During the available time, the researcher briefly clarified the purpose of the questionnaire and thereafter informed consent forms were handed to the prospective respondents for completion and submission. The questionnaires were then handed to the respondents and 30 minutes were allowed for completion. Throughout the whole process, the researcher was available to clarify any possible queries. After completion, the questionnaires were returned to the researcher in person.

4.7.2 Interviews

The construction of the set of eight questions that formed the interview guide (*cf*. 4.6.2), was based on the following guidelines provided by Nieuwenhuis (2007b:88-89) and Bryman (2012:473):

- a variety of questions were included and ranged from explanation, experience and value-based questions;
- questions were grouped according to related topic areas;
- care was taken that questions were associated with the purpose of the research;
- it was ensured that the language in which questions were phrased were comprehensible, and
- leading questions were avoided.

Individual interviews of between 20 to 30 minutes were personally conducted by the researcher. Six randomly sampled Grade 9 EFAL teachers from the respondents, who completed the questionnaire, formed the group of interviewees. The interviews took place after school hours at pre-scheduled times. During the administering of the interviews, the researcher was mindful of the following guidelines provided by Greeff (2005:294, 295, 297):

- the place and times of interviews were arranged and confirmed with interviewees;
- care was taken that the interview venue was free from any disturbances and interferences;

- interviewees were welcomed and made to feel at ease before the purpose of the interview was explained;
- the interviewees were reminded about the ethical principles, e.g. the nature of their involvement in the research, that their participation was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time;
- it was clearly explained to interviewees that the interviews would be audio-recorded and that field notes would be made by the researcher to note trends and responses;
- before commencing with the interview, the set of eight questions were given to the participants to familiarise themselves with the nature and order of the questions, and
- while conducting the interviews, the researcher carefully maintained interest in responses by listening attentively without any interruption.

4.7.3 Observations

Corresponding with the views of Nieuwenhuis (2007b:84) and Bryman (2012:275/276), the researcher took the following into account to construct an observation checklist:

- the purpose of the study was maintained as focus in constructing the observation checklist;
- care was taken that factors to be observed did not overlap and were congruent with information required in the questionnaires and interviews, and
- the recording system allowed for easy operation in that provision was made for only two categories (*yes / no*). In addition, provision was made for anecdotal notes to help clarify observations or to assist in interpretations.

Before commencing with the six structured observations, the research participants were briefed on the purpose of the observations and reminded about the ethical principles on which the research was based. Arrangements were made to schedule the observation sessions with the respective teachers. In their capacity of observers as participants, the researcher and co-observer adopted a passive role and relied solely on the observation checklist to guide their observations as they occurred in the selected Grade 9 EFAL classrooms. The presence or absence of factors related to

the interplay between informal and formal assessment were recorded on the checklist and additional anecdotal notes were documented in order to make the observations as complete as possible. After the observation sessions, the researcher reflected on the anecdotal notes to consider their contributory value towards the observed events.

4.8 QUALITY CRITERIA

Any research is subject to measures for ensuring its quality. These measures usually include reliability and validity, which are most commonly used in quantitative research, or credibility and trustworthiness which are associated with qualitative research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:80). Since this study was planned as a mixed-methods design (*cf.* 4.3), it acknowledged all four of the mentioned measures. However, since the qualitative part was guided by the quantitative part of the study, the terms “reliability” and “validity” are used in the discussion which follows.

4.8.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency in terms of the results yielded by the research. This implies that if the questionnaire of this study is administered by another researcher with teachers of similar demographics, the data should project similar results (Salkind, 2003:113; Mertler & Charles, 2011:109). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:188), reliability can be enhanced by establishing uniform conditions for collecting data. To attain this, all respondents should be provided with the same instructions, should have the same time frames for responding to questions, and should be able to understand and interpret questions with ease. In the case of this study, reliability of the questionnaire was ensured by means of a group-administered questionnaire and by conducting a pilot study. In addition, inter-rater reliability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:93 and McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:186) was applied during the collection of observational data since the researcher was accompanied by a co-observer (*cf.* 5.3.4.2).

4.8.2 Validity

Validity refers to whether the collected data measured the outcomes that were set (Salkind, 2003:115). According to Pietersen and Maree (2007:216), validity signifies

the extent to which research instruments measure what it is supposed to measure. With regard to this research, content validity (Pietersen & Maree, 2007:217) was ensured by means of a careful evaluation of the data collection instruments by the researcher and her supervisor. This evaluation was applied to determine the extent to which the instruments covered assessment related matters relevant to the purpose of the study. In addition, content validity of the instruments was also confirmed by the pilot study.

Internal validity or the credibility of the research (De Vos, 2002:351) was ensured by means of triangulation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:99) since the research was approached from a quantitative as well as a qualitative angle. According to Wiersma and Jurs (2009:287), triangulation is a validation mechanism which uses more than one research strategy, thus, implying that a variety of data collection procedures or data sources are used. In this study, triangulation was applied to ensure the accuracy of data and to gain a better understanding (Burton & Bartlett, 2005:28) of the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms.

4.9 PILOT STUDY

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:110) assert that a pilot study or "brief exploratory investigation" is required to try out particular procedures, measurement instruments, methods of analyses or to determine the feasibility of a study. Strydom (2005:206) states that although the pilot study is considered to be "a dress rehearsal of the main investigation", the real research situation "will remain an unknown factor until it is entered".

To ensure the reliability (*cf.* 4.8.1) and validity (*cf.* 4.8.2) of the data collection instruments used in this study, they were "audited". After the preparation of the questionnaire, it was distributed in person for completion by three teachers, teaching Grade 9 EFAL at a school in a neighbouring district. Two of these teachers were also interviewed and provided with the observation checklist. Feedback from the three teachers revealed that the questionnaire items were clear and directed to the purpose of the study. The two teachers, who were interviewed, responded to the questions with ease and their responses suggested that the questions would generate appropriate information required for the study. The checklist items were

checked for compatibility with the items of the other instruments. Since one of the teachers advised that evidence of how informal and formal assessment were practised in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms could add value to the research, these items were included in the observation checklist.

4.10 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Although more applicable to the qualitative part of the study, Creswell (2009:177/178) makes one aware that a researcher should be sensitive towards a range of strategic, ethical and personal issues that may impact on the success of any research. In the case of this study, the researcher considered her personal involvement in the collection of data as a more viable strategy than to rely on fieldworkers for this purpose. Furthermore, the researcher attended meticulously to ethical factors which are discussed in more detail in 4.11. In terms of personal matters, the researcher was well aware of the fact that her position as facilitator for EFAL in the district in which the research was conducted might influence the willingness of the respondents/participants to participate in the research. Moreover, the researcher was also mindful of the fact that respondents/participants could try to impress the researcher with their responses, rather than to provide responses revealing the reality. The researcher was also the key role player in the analyses and interpretation of the collected data.

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Strydom (2012:113) argues that any research should be based on “mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, promises and well-accepted conventions and expectations between all parties involved”. In an attempt to formally define ethics, Strydom (2012:114) concludes that it is “a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students”. Although ethical matters concerning a particular research project should be considered from the onset as well as throughout the study, it is especially central to the data collection process. During the data collection process, it is of paramount importance that research respondents or participants and the sites for research

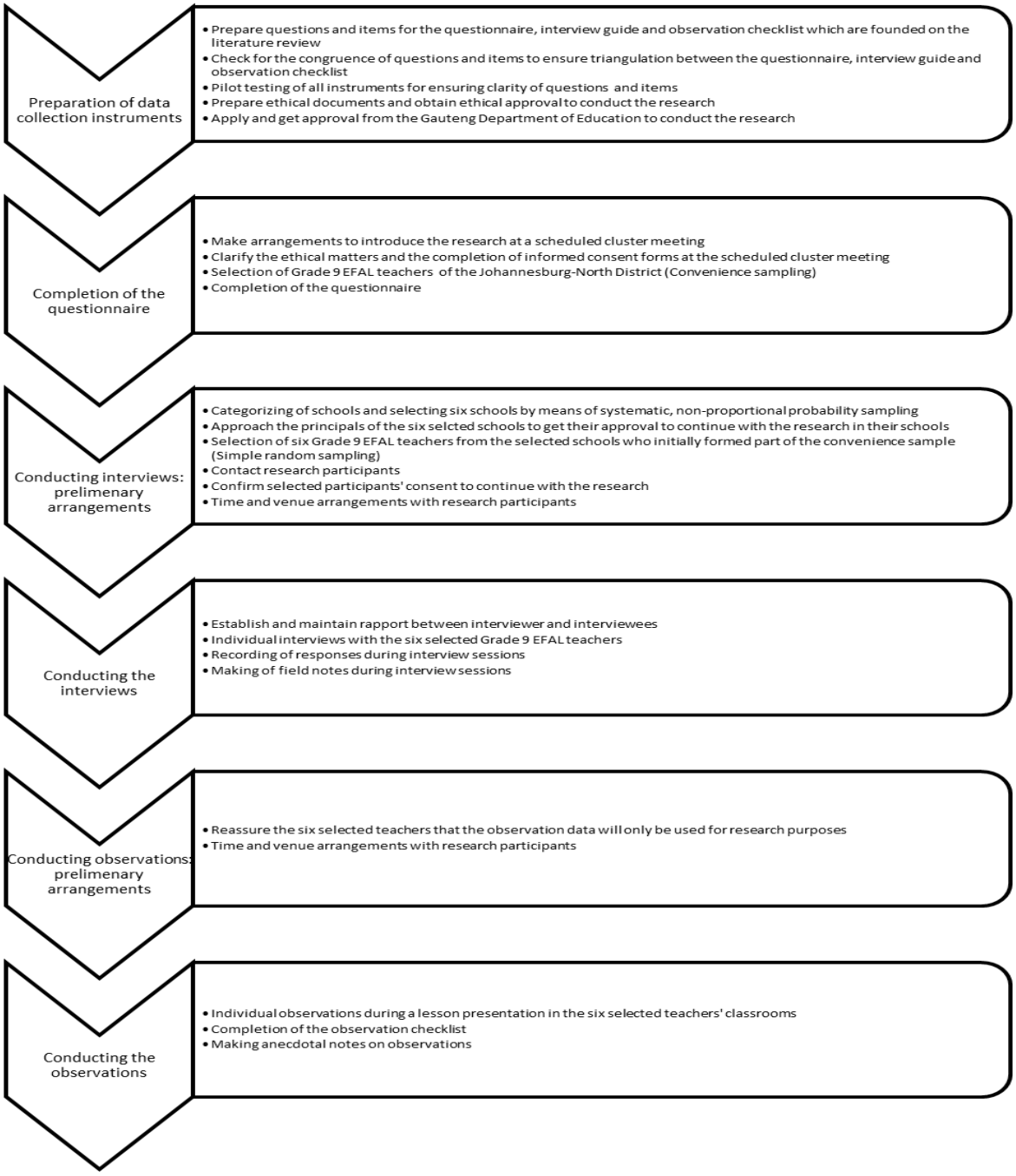
should be treated with the greatest respect. By observing the guidelines provided by Thomas (2009:149/150) and Creswell (2009:90/91), the following procedures were followed to ensure that this research mets standard ethical requirements.

- Consent to conduct the research in the Johannesburg-North District was requested from the Gauteng Department of Education (See Appendices D and E).
- Once approved, arrangements were made with the researcher's superiors for the completion of the questionnaire at a scheduled cluster meeting.
- At the scheduled cluster meeting, the whole group of Grade 9 EFAL teachers (considered to be the potential research respondents/participants), were briefed about the purpose of the research, the expected nature of their involvement and the assurance that the research results would only be used for research purposes. All potential respondents/participants were also informed about the sampling procedure that would be followed for selecting teachers to be interviewed and observed after the completion of the questionnaire.
- Potential research respondents/participants were issued with the consent forms, requesting their informed consent before taking part in the research (see Appendix F). The potential research respondents/participants were assured that their participation was anonymous and voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they wished to do so.
- Potential research respondents/participants were also made aware of the fact that in addition to completing the questionnaire, they could be interviewed and observed. It was also explained that interviews would be tape recorded.
- Once consent was obtained from the potential respondents/participants, the questionnaire was distributed, completed and returned to the researcher.
- Once sampled, the principals of the selected schools were approached for their approval to continue with the research in their schools.
- Thereafter, teachers who were interviewed and observed were approached to confirm their consent to continue with the research.
- The researcher and the teachers who were interviewed and observed, mutually decided on a schedule with dates and times for the interviews and observations.

4.12 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The data collection process is represented in Figure 4.1 below. This process included several stages such as the preparation of the data collection instruments, the completion of the questionnaire, the preliminary arrangements for conducting the interviews, the actual conducting of the interviews, the preliminary arrangements for the observations and performing the observations. Each stage was operationalized by specific actions.

Figure 4.1: A representation of the data collection process



4.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an overview of the empirical study was provided. The research paradigm, design, strategy of inquiry, sampling, data collection instruments and the principles which were considered in developing and administrating the instruments were discussed. In addition, attention was also given to the quality criteria, the pilot study, the role of the researcher, the ethical considerations and the data collection process as elements of the study.

In chapter five which follows, the obtained data will be analysed and interpreted.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Whereas the previous chapter provided an overview of the empirical study to indicate the processes and procedures which were followed to gather information relevant to the purpose of the study, this chapter will report on the data obtained through the questionnaires, interviews and observations. Therefore, this chapter will illuminate the primary research question (*cf*. 1.3.1):

How does the interplay between informal and formal assessment as practised in Grade 9 English First Additional Language classrooms present itself?

Infused in this question, the final secondary research question (*cf.*1.3.2) will also be considered:

- What is the relation between the informal and formal assessment practices of Grade 9 EFAL teachers?

The data analyses and interpretations will be sequenced according to the same order which was followed in the data collection process (*cf.* 1.5.2, 1.5.6, 4.4, and 4.12).

5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.2.1 Background information

In this section the quantitative data as obtained by means of the self-developed, group-administered questionnaire (*cf.* 1.5.4 and 4.6.1), are analysed and interpreted. A total of 66 respondents, selected by means of convenience sampling (*cf.* 1.5.5 and 4.5), completed the questionnaire. The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained in the first phase of the empirical research are presented according to the sections of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). The data obtained by means of the questionnaire are analysed according to frequencies and percentages after which the data are interpreted.

5.2.2 Section A: Biographical information

5.2.2.1 Gender

In Table 5.1 the gender composition of the research respondents is reflected. Noteworthy is the fact that the majority of the respondents (65%) were females which correlates with the general assumption that the South African school sector employs more female teachers than male teachers.

Table 5.1: Gender composition

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	34.8
Female	43	65.2
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.2 Age

Table 5.2 represents the age of the research respondents. The majority of the respondents' age ranged between 40 and 60+ years, with the most (43.9%) being between 40 and 49 years of age. The researcher found the low number of "young" teachers (7.6%) quite alarming since the belief that the education system comprises of more elderly teachers is observable in the data. It is noted that within the context of this study, teachers' age may possibly impact on their assessment practices.

Table 5.2: Respondents' age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 29 years	5	7.6
30 – 39 years	23	34.8
40 – 49 years	29	43.9
50 – 59 years	7	10.7
60 + years	2	3.0
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.3 Overall years of teaching experience

Although the overall years of teaching experience of the research respondents varied, 42.3% has more than 15 years of teaching experience, while 60.6% has more than 10 years' experience. It can therefore be assumed that the majority of the respondents are experts in teaching. Table 5.3 reflects the responses to this question.

Table 5.3: Overall teaching experience

Overall years of teaching experience	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
0 – 5 years	16	24.2
6 – 10 years	10	15.2
11 – 15 years	12	18.3
16 – 20 years	9	13.6
21 – 25 years	14	21.2
26 – 30 years	2	3.0
30 + years	3	4.5
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.4 Teaching experience in EFAL in the GET phase

The data in Table 5.4 reflect that 74.3% of the respondents, who answered the question, have 10 years or less experience in teaching EFAL in the GET phase. This could be attributed to a number of possibilities. Amongst others, these possibilities could include the following: the sampled teachers previously taught EFAL in another phase, or the sampled teachers previously taught another subject, or the sampled teachers taught in cycles (meaning that they accompanied a specific year group throughout their school career after which they started again with the juniors), or the growth in learner numbers compelled more teachers to be involved in the teaching of languages during the past few years.

Table 5.4: EFAL teaching experience in the GET phase

Number of Years	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 5 years	31	47.0
6 – 10 years	18	27.3
11 – 15 years	6	9.1
16 – 20 years	4	6.1
21 –25 years	3	4.5
26 – 30 years	1	1.5
Missing	***3***	***4.5***
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.5 Highest teacher education qualification

According to the data in Table 5.5, the sample group who answered the question, held good teacher education qualifications, with 48.5% having a first degree. Although 34.8% of the respondents do not have a degree, it does not indicate that their qualifications to teach are inferior to the 15.1% who possess a post-degree since a qualification does not necessarily guarantee teaching quality.

Table 5.5: Highest teacher education qualification

Teaching qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate in Education	1	1.5
Diploma in Education	22	33.3
Degree plus Diploma in Education	15	22.7
Degree in Education	17	25.8
Honours Degree in Education	8	12.1
Master Degree in Education	2	3.0
Doctoral Degree in Education	0	0
Missing	***1***	***1.6***
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.6 Highest Qualification in English

The data in Table 5.6 reflect that most of the teachers (56.1%) who answered the question have a three year qualification in English. However, it is also true that 28.8% of the respondents hold an English qualification on a first year higher education level or below. This tendency could affirm one of the possibilities related to teaching experience in EFAL in the GET phase (*cf*. 5.2.2.4), namely that irrespective of their subject qualifications, the growth in learner numbers compelled more teachers to be involved in the teaching of languages during the recent few years.

Table 5.6: Highest qualification in English

English qualification	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Grade 11 and lower	4	6.1
Grade 12	9	13.6
1st year higher education qualification	6	9.1
2nd year higher education qualification	3	4.5
3rd year higher education qualification	37	56.1
Honours Degree	4	6.1
Master's Degree	1	1.5
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Missing	***2***	***3.0***
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.7 Type of school in which respondents teach

Table 5.7 reflects that the majority of the respondents (68.2%) teach in Township schools.

Table 5.7: Type of school

Type of school	Frequency	Percentage
ex- Model C	21	31.8
Township	45	68.2
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.8 Current Post Level

In Table 5.8 it is evident that the majority of the respondents (86.4%) are teachers on Post level one. This means that the majority of the respondents are directly involved in the teaching, learning and assessment of EFAL. These data are also appropriate for the purpose of the study seeing that *teachers* form the core of the survey and that they are also the ones who need to be interviewed and observed.

Table 5.8: Current post level

Post level	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher	57	86.4
Head of Department	8	12.1
Deputy Principal	1	1.5
Principal	0	0
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.2.9 Teaching other EFAL classes in addition to Grade 9s

From the response reflected in Table 5.9, it appears as if 27.3% of the respondents teach EFAL to Grade 9s only. The rest of the respondents indicated that they taught EFAL to other grades as well. The data reflect different variations of grades to which EFAL is taught. However, in the context of this study, (which focuses on EFAL in Grade 9, which forms part of the GET phase), it is noteworthy that a total of 63.9% of the respondents are involved in the teaching of EFAL in the GET phase (Grades 8 and 9).

Table 5.9: Grades to which EFAL is taught

Grades	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 8	17	25.8
Grade 10	9	13.6
Grade 11	2	3.0
Grade 12	2	3.0
None of the abovementioned	18	27.3
Grades 8 & 10	4	6.3
Grades 8 & 11	3	4.5
Grades 10 & 11	1	1.5
Grades 10 & 12	3	4.5
Grades 11 & 12	1	1.5
Grades 10, 11 & 12	3	4.5
Missing	***3***	***4.5***
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.3 Section B: Assessment background and support

Note: Unless where indicated, only the positive responses of respondents are reflected in the data.

5.2.3.1 The inclusion of assessment related modules in formal studies at a higher education institution

The data in Table 5.10 suggest that assessment is included in most higher education qualifications for teacher education since a large percentage (86.4%) of the responses to this question was positive. Yet, two matters demand careful consideration. Firstly, although assessment is treated as part of a formal qualification, its effective implementation is not guaranteed. Secondly, since assessment in the South African schooling system saw many changes over the past years, higher education curricula found it strenuous to keep abreast of such

changes. Consequently, teachers may find that there are “gaps” in their studies concerning assessment.

Table 5.10: Assessment modules included in studies

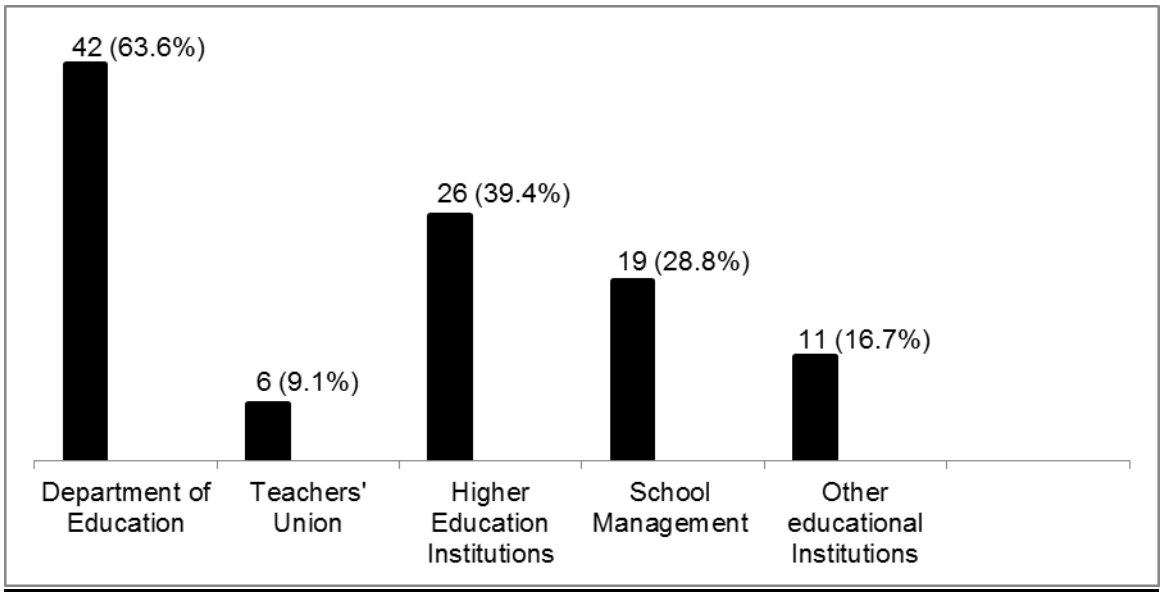
Formal Studies	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Undergraduate studies (e.g. Diploma or degree)	37	56.1
Post-graduate studies (e.g. Hons.)	8	12.1
Further additional studies (e.g. ACE)	12	18.2
Missing	***9***	***13.6***
Total	**66**	**100**

5.2.3.2 Assessment training from other sources

The graph in Figure 5.1 depicts the responses to each of the possible listed sources from which the respondents obtained assessment training. Since the respondents were not limited in their choices, more than one source was selected in some cases. However, it is remarkable that most responses were assigned to the Department of Education which could be seen as an indicator of the Department’s determination to guide and correct teachers’ assessment practices. In spite of this positive trend, the quality of training offered by the Department of Education is sometimes questioned. Many teachers are not always satisfied with the training because they feel it is not on-going and that it does not meet their individual needs. This point is highlighted in the NCS Curriculum review document when it is stated that the training offered by the Department of Education “is often inappropriate because it is a “one size fits all” approach that is used” (Dada, *et al*., 2009:10).

The involvement of Higher Education Institutions in the provision of training is also noticeable, while in-house training provided by School Management is less satisfying. The disappointing involvement of other stakeholders, especially Teachers’ Unions, could indicate that they are not as serious as they pretend to be in generating an effective school system.

Figure 5.1: Other sources of assessment training

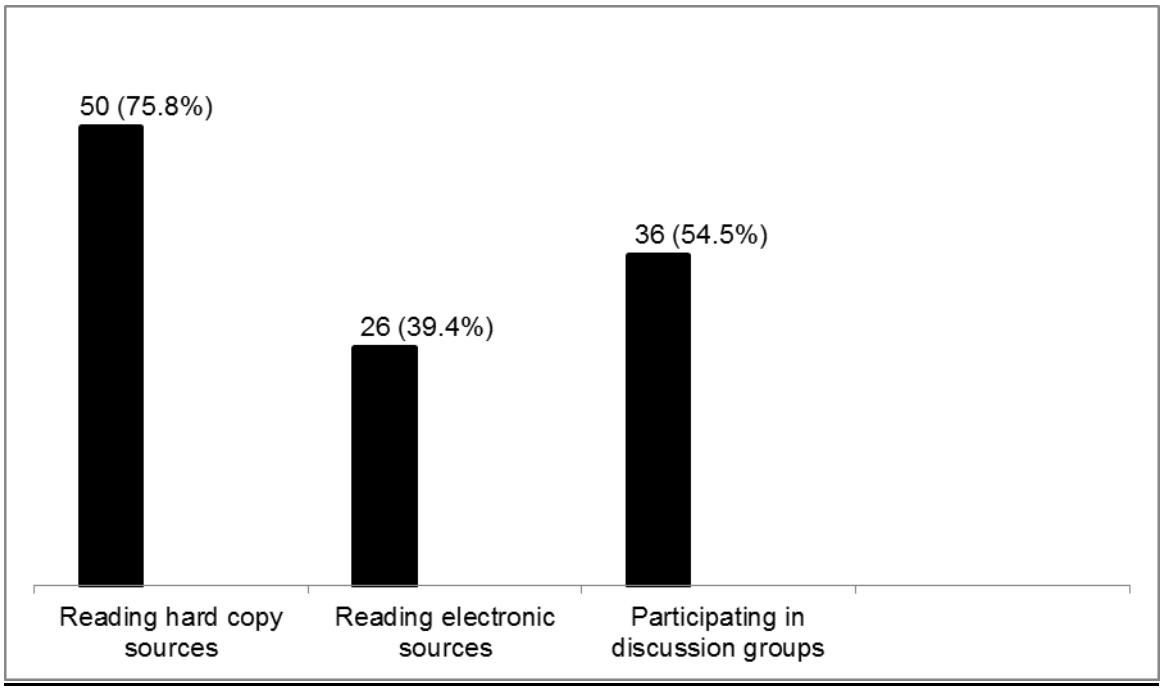


5.2.3.3 Engagement in self-study activities to broaden understanding of assessment

As was the case in 5.2.3.2, respondents were not limited in their choices and more than one self-study activity could have been selected. The data in Figure 5.2 reveal that reading hard copy sources to broaden understanding of assessment is most popular amongst respondents (75.8%). A fair number of respondents or 54.5% indicated that they participate in discussion groups while the reading of electronic sources projected a less favourable number of responses (39.4%).

When considering that teachers are expected to have knowledge and understanding about the content of official documents, such as curriculum documents, the number of positive responses assigned to the engagement with hard copy sources and even electronic sources is disappointing. It could reveal that teachers find these sources difficult to understand; that they lack the willpower to engage with such sources, or that the sources are not easily accessible. With reference to the participation in discussion groups, it appears as if a lot of work still needs to be done in convincing teachers about the advantages of engaging in professional interest groups.

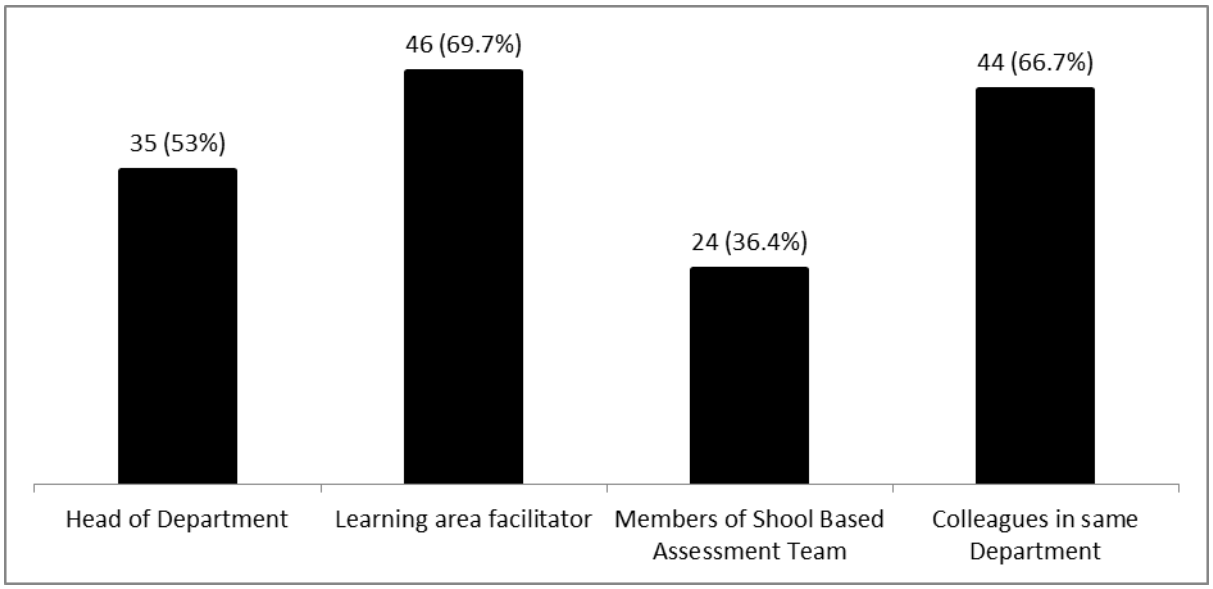
Figure 5.2: Engagement in self-study activities on assessment



5.2.3.4 Support regarding assessment from listed people/parties

In the context of this study, support is to be interpreted as informal assistance and guidance that is rendered when the need arises. The data in Figure 5.3 show that most of the support that teachers obtained was from the Learning Area Facilitators (69.7%) followed by their colleagues teaching in the same department (66.7%). Although Heads of Departments (HODs) apparently also provide support, the positive responses to this category are lower than expected (53%), since one assumes that HODs as "academic leaders" should take a more prominent position in providing support regarding matters such as assessment. Of great concern to the researcher, is the minimal support provided by School Based Assessment Teams (SBATs) in comparison to the other listed people/parties. Since assessment is such a challenging issue, one would expect more involvement of SBATs in terms of guidance. Without substantial evidence, the researcher stands to be corrected, but speculates that many SBATs only exist in name and that they are not functional at the school level.

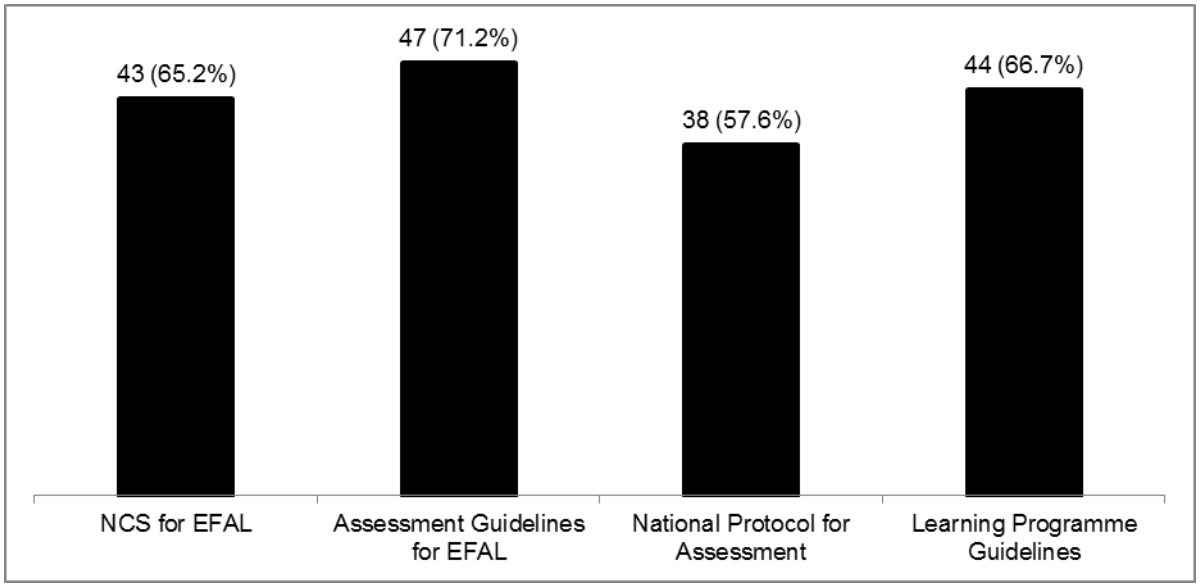
Figure 5.3: Support regarding assessment



5.2.3.5 Personal copies of documents

The responses to this question, as illustrated in Figure 5.4 reveal that most of the respondents do have personal copies of the listed policy documents which have been widely distributed to schools. During school visits by the Learning Area Facilitators for English, one of the requirements is to make policy documents available to teachers. However, due to factors such as staff migration to other schools or to other departments, documents are mislaid. Nevertheless, the researcher is alarmed by the fact that not all respondents are in possession of at least the NCS for EFAL (only 65.2% are in possession of it) and the Assessment Guidelines for EFAL (71.2% have it). What is also worrying is the fact that more or less equivalent percentages of positive responses were delegated to the listed documents (except for the National Protocol on Assessment), which could point to the fact that the negative responses apply to specific schools. This would imply that teachers in certain schools are without the required official documents.

Figure 5.4: Personal copies of documents



5.2.3.6 Rating of listed documents in terms of understanding assessment

Except for the National Protocol on Assessment (43.9%), the larger part of the respondents, as indicated in Table 5.11, suggested that they had a **clear** understanding of the rest of the listed documents. A larger portion of the respondents (19.7%) signalled that they understood the National Protocol on Assessment **vaguely**, while the percentages in this category for the other documents were 15.2% or lower. Although moderately low, the percentage of responses assigned to the *"I don't know"* variable in all cases, reflected that some respondents felt uncertain about their own understanding of the listed documents. This could be due to the following possible reasons: they do not have copies of the documents or they do not really know how to interpret the content. However, when looking at the "vague" and "don't know" responses in combination, the percentages range from 25.7% (Assessment Guidelines for EFAL) to 40.9% (National Protocol on Assessment). The researcher argues that these percentages are unexpectedly high for teachers who are supposed to understand the official requirements of how assessment should be implemented. It is also noteworthy that this questionnaire item attracted a substantial number of non-responses, which might signal an even higher percentage of negative responses towards the clarity of the listed documents.

Table 5.11: Rating of documents in terms of understanding assessment

	NCS for EFAL		Assessment Guidelines for EFAL		National Protocol for Assessment		Learning Programme Guidelines	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Clear	38	57.5	42	63.7	29	43.9	32	48.5
Vague	10	15.2	8	12.1	13	19.7	10	15.2
Don't know	10	15.2	9	13.6	14	21.2	16	24.2
Missing	***8***	***12.1***	***7***	***10.6***	***10***	***15.2***	***8***	***12.1***
Total	**66**	**100**	**66**	**100**	**66**	**100**	**66**	**100**

5.2.3.7 Rating the listed documents in terms of the practicability of assessment

Table 5.12 reflects the responses with regard to respondents' rating of the listed documents in terms of the practicability of assessment. The noticeable parallel between the data obtained for Question 6 (*cf*. 5.2.3.6.) and this question is noteworthy.

Table 5.12: Practicability of documents in terms of assessment

	NCS for EFAL		Assessment Guidelines for EFAL		National Protocol for Assessment		Learning Programme Guidelines	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Problematic	6	9.1	7	10.6	10	15.2	7	10.6
Unproblematic	41	62.1	44	66.7	29	43.9	37	56.1
Don't know	12	18.2	9	13.6	19	28.8	16	24.2
Missing	***7***	***10.6***	***6***	***9.1***	***8***	***12.1***	***6***	***9.1***
Total	**66**	**100**	**66**	**100**	**66**	**100**	**66**	**100**

To illustrate the mentioned parallel, the responses to the "clear" category of Question 6 are compared with the "unproblematic" category of Question 7 in Table 5.13 below. To substantiate the parallel even further, the responses to the "vague" and "don't know" categories of Question 6, almost resembles the responses to the "problematic" and "don't know" categories of Question 7 as depicted in Table 5.14.

Table 5.13: Comparing responses to Questions 6 and 7 (a)

	NCS for EFAL		Assessment Guidelines for EFAL		National Protocol for Assessment		Learning Programme Guidelines	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Clear	38	57.5	42	63.7	29	43.9	32	48.5
Unproblematic	41	62.1	44	66.7	29	43.9	37	56.1

Table 5.14: Comparing responses to Questions 6 and 7 (b)

	NCS for EFAL		Assessment Guidelines for EFAL		National Protocol for Assessment		Learning Programme Guidelines	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Vague	10	15.2	8	12.1	13	19.7	10	15.2
Don't know	10	15.2	9	13.6	14	21.2	16	24.2
Problematic	6	9.1	7	10.6	10	15.2	7	10.6
Don't know	12	18.2	9	13.6	19	28.8	16	24.2

The data for these two questions thus show an interrelation between teachers' rating of their own understanding of the listed documents and their rating of the practicality of the same documents. Moreover, the data of both questions suggest that some teachers may have difficulty in implementing assessment according to the guidelines and stipulations as provided in the listed documents. This tendency may also impact on the interplay between informal and formal assessment.

5.2.4 Section C: Assessment practices and viewpoints

In this section of the questionnaire, a four-point Likert scale (*cf*. 4.6.1), ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was used to determine respondents' opinions regarding

- teaching, learning and assessment (C1),
- formal assessment (C2) and
- informal assessment (C3).

5.2.4.1 Respondents' opinions regarding teaching, learning and assessment

In Table 5.15 the data of this sub-section are presented which is followed by a discussion about the researcher's interpretations.

Table 5.15: Respondents' opinions regarding teaching, learning and assessment

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
C1.Teaching, learning and assessment	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
1. I complement the teaching of content with classroom activities	31	**47**	33	**50**	2	**3**		
2. I monitor learners' classroom activities while in progress and provide support where needed	37	**56.1**	26	**39.4**	3	**4.5**		
3. I use the outcome of learners' classroom activities to guide my teaching practice	24	**36.4**	41	**62.1**	1	**1.5**		
4. I use the outcome of learners' classroom activities to guide their future learning	26	**39.4**	38	**57.6**	2	**3**		
5. I use the outcome of learners' classroom activities to guide my assessment practice	22	**33.3**	40	**60.7**	3	**4.5**	1	**1.5**
6. I complement the teaching of content with homework activities	22	**33.3**	38	**57.6**	5	**7.6**	1	**1.5**
7. I ensure that learners' homework activities are monitored and corrected	26	**39.4**	38	**57.6**	2	**3**		
8. I use the outcome of learners' homework activities to guide my teaching practice	16	**24.2**	44	**66.7**	5	**7.6**	1	**1.5**
9. I use the outcome of learners' homework activities to guide their future learning	12	**18.2**	45	**68.2**	8	**12.1**	1	**1.5**
10. I use the outcome of learners' homework activities to guide my assessment practice	17	**25.8**	36	**54.5**	11	**16.7**	2	**3.0**
11. I complement the teaching of content with frequent formal assessment tasks	21	**31.8**	40	**60.7**	5	**7.5**		
12. I use learners' formal assessment results to guide their future learning	29	**43.9**	33	**50.1**	4	**6**		
13. I use learners' formal assessment results to guide my teaching practice	24	**36.4**	39	**59.1**	3	**4.5**		

Though the majority of the respondents (97%) expressed the opinion that they complemented teaching with classroom activities (C1, 1), 3% disagreed to this statement. From the data it is also possible to deduce that since 50% of the respondents only "agreed" to the statement, teaching was not always complemented with classroom activities. Nevertheless, it appears that in cases where teaching is complemented by classroom activities, such activities are monitored with the provision of support where required (C1, 2) since 56.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to this statement. 62.1% of the respondents agreed that the outcomes of classroom activities guided their teaching practice (C1, 3), while 57.6% and 60.7% agreed that the outcomes of classroom activities were used to guide learners' future learning (C1, 4) and teachers' assessment practices (C1, 5) respectively. Read together with the 3% respondents who disagreed with statement C1, 1, the researcher finds it unsettling that 4.5% of the respondents also disagreed with the statement in C1, 2; another 3% with C1, 4 and a total of 6% with C1, 5. These negative responses not only imply that teaching is not complemented by classrooms activities, but that monitoring and support are not exercised in some classrooms. In addition, it implies that the purposes of classroom activities are not truly valued by these respondents. These negative responses also reveal a pessimistic view about the interplay between informal and formal assessment in such EFAL classrooms.

Although the majority of respondents "agreed" to "strongly agreed" with statements C1, 6 to C1, 10, it was evident from the responses that "agree" carried the highest response rate. Again, this could be indicative of the fact that homework was not always given and that the outcomes of homework were not used at all times to guide teaching, learning and assessment. The researcher is troubled by the fact that a total of 9.1% of the respondents admitted that their teaching was neither complemented by homework (C1, 6) nor guided by the outcomes of learners' homework (C1, 8). Respectively 13.6% and 19.7% of the respondents were of the opinion that the outcomes of homework neither guide learners' future learning nor their assessment. In terms of the purpose of the study, it can be assumed that these negative responses bear evidence of an inadequate understanding or willingness of some EFAL teachers to implement homework as a means to scaffold (*cf*. 1.4.8 and 3.5.2) learning.

The majority of respondents indicated some relation between teaching, learning and assessment when considering formal assessment (C1, 11 to C1, 13). Interesting is the fact that 43.9% and 36.4% of the respondents "strongly agreed" with the statements that formal assessment was used to guide learners' future learning (C1, 12) and that formal assessment results were used to guide their teaching practice (C1, 13). This could point to the fact that these teachers most probably applied assessment *for* learning (*cf*. 3.4.2) in the form of the formative use of summative assessment results (*cf.* 3.4.2.5). Nevertheless, the percentage of teachers (although small), who responded negatively to these two statements (C1, 12 – 6% and C1, 13 – 4.5%) confirms that teaching, learning and assessment were still treated as separate entities in some EFAL classrooms.

5.2.4.2 Respondents' opinions regarding formal assessment

Table 5.16 shows the data collected with regard to the respondents' opinions concerning formal assessment. Based on the collected data, the researcher arrived at the following inferences. Although all the respondents agreed that formal assessment results were recorded and reported (C2, 1), it appeared as if only 51.5% of the sample was absolutely convinced that this should be done (*cf*. 3.7.2 and 3.7.5). This could point to some hesitance about the exact meaning of formal assessment. It is also evident that there is a strong indication (a total of 81.8% responses), that formal assessment provides a true reflection of learners' attainment of the learning outcomes (C2, 2). However, a total of 18.2% of the respondents indicated that formal assessment did not satisfactorily reflect the achievement of learning outcomes. This line of thinking suggests that formal assessment is seen as more important than informal assessment. The same line of thinking is detected in C2, 3 where a total of 65.1% of the respondents indicated that more time should be devoted to formal assessment since it was the only reliable indicator that learning outcomes were achieved. Opposing this view is 34.9% of the responses. When considering the responses to C2, 2 and C2, 3 collectively, the apparent higher value attached to formal assessment is noticeable. Despite this tendency, the researcher finds it comforting that there were at least some teachers arguing that formal assessment was not the only approach to be used to determine learners' attainment of learning outcomes.

Table 5.16: Respondents' opinions regarding formal assessment

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
C2. Formal assessment	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
1. I conceptualize formal assessment as assessment of which the results can be recorded and reported	34	**51.5**	32	**48.5**				
2. I believe that formal assessment provides a true reflection of learners' attainment of the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment standards	17	**25.8**	37	**56**	11	**16.7**	1	**1.5**
3. I believe that more time should be given to formal assessment since it is the only reliable indicator of learner attainment of learning outcomes	17	**25.8**	26	**39.3**	19	**28.8**	4	**6.1**
4. Most of my teaching time is spent in preparing learners for formal assessment tasks	13	**19.7**	37	**56.1**	14	**21.2**	2	**3**
5. I structure formal assessment tasks in such a way that it accommodates progression of learning	17	**25.8**	48	**72.7**	1	**1.5**		
6. I engage learners in corrective and remedial work after each marked formal assessment task	16	**24.2**	47	**71.3**	3	**4.5**		
7. I primarily use formal assessment for learner promotion to the following grade	35	**53**	30	**45.5**	1	**1.5**		
8. Formal assessment prescriptions as stated in official documents interfere with my teaching time	15	**22.7**	35	**53.1**	15	**22.7**	1	**1.5**
9. Formal assessment allows me to cover the curriculum extensively	8	**12.1**	38	**57.6**	20	**30.3**		
10. I believe that formal assessment stimulates superficial learning	9	**13.6**	41	**62.2**	15	**22.7**	1	**1.5**
11. Formal assessment prescriptions as stated in official documents interfere with my learners' language proficiency	12	**18.2**	28	**42.5**	24	**36.3**	2	**3**
12. I favour formal assessment more than informal assessment since it serves as a better yardstick to determine learners' progress	15	**22.7**	36	**54.5**	14	**21.2**	1	**1.5**
13. Frequent formal assessment assists learners with multiple opportunities to show their understanding of learning content	15	**22.7**	39	**59.1**	11	**16.7**	1	**1.5**
14. I provide learners with detailed written feedback during the marking of formal assessment tasks to assist them in their future learning	15	**22.7**	33	**50**	18	**27.2**		

In response to C2, 4 the majority of respondents (56.1%) agreed that most of their teaching time was used to prepare learners for formal assessment, while a total of 24.2% disagreed with this statement. The fact that most respondents chose “agree” and not “strongly agree” could point to the fact that they meant they prepared their learners unintentionally for formal assessment through their everyday teaching. On the other hand, the respondents disagreeing with the statement could have argued that they did not deliberately prepare their learners for formal assessment in the sense of “teaching to the test”. If the two assumptions are correct, it means that the interplay between informal and formal assessment in the sampled teachers’ classrooms, could be regarded as a matter of coincidence.

According to the data, 72.7% of the sampled teachers agreed that they structured formal assessment in such a way that it accommodated progression of learning, while 25.8% strongly agreed with this statement (C2, 5). Only one respondent indicated that this was not done. The fact that the majority of the respondents selected “agree” and not “strongly agree” could again reveal that they were not totally sure as to whether their formal assessment tasks allowed for progression of learning.

The fact that only 24.2% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they engaged their learners in remedial work after marked formal assessment tasks (C2, 6) suggested that these teachers most probably apply assessment *for* learning (*cf*. 3.4.2) and confirms the rather moderate percentage of respondents who used summative assessment results for formative purposes as reflected in C1, 12 (*cf.* 5.2.4.1). Interesting is the fact that almost the same percentages of respondents as in C1, 12 and C1, 13 (*cf.* 5.2.4.1) also responded negatively to this statement (4.5%). This confirms the researcher’s suspicion that teaching, learning and assessment are treated as separate entities in some EFAL classrooms (*cf.* 5.2.4.1).

On the statement in C2, 7, 53% of the respondents opted for “strongly agree” and 45.5% for “agree”. This suggests a clear indication that formal assessment is primarily used for learner promotion to the following grade which is in accordance with what is stipulated in the official Departmental documents (*cf.* 3.7.2 to 3.7.5). However, 22.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and 53.1% agreed that the formal assessment prescriptions as stated in the official documents interfered with

their teaching time (C2, 8). A total of 24.2% of the respondents indicated that they did not regard the prescriptions in the official documents as a problem. This shows that teachers may feel that the official documents are too regulatory. This impression also manifests itself in the responses to C2, 9 where 30.3% of the respondents indicated that formal assessment did not allow them to cover the curriculum extensively; implying that the official documents (which attend mostly to formal assessment), slowed down their teaching.

The fact that 62.2% of the sampled teachers only agreed to the statement that formal assessment stimulated superficial learning (C2, 10), together with the fact that 22.7% respondents disagreed to the same statement, denote that the sampled group of teachers may not be totally convinced that this may indeed be the case. The importance attached to formal assessment, whether it promotes learner development or not, can therefore be deduced from these responses.

A total of 39.3% respondents expressed the opinion that the formal assessment prescriptions as stated in the official documents do not interfere with their learners' language proficiency, while 42.5% agreed and 18.2% strongly agreed with this statement (C2, 11). Compared with the responses to C2, 8, it appears as if the sampled teachers are more positive about the prescriptions in the official documents when considered in terms of enhancing learners' language proficiency than in terms of available teaching time. It can therefore be inferred that the respondents consider the EFAL content as appropriate.

C2, 12 and C2, 2 yielded more or less the same results. 22.7% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that formal assessment served as a better yardstick to determine learners' progress, while 54.5% agreed with the statement and a total of 22.7% disagreed. Compared with C2, 2, the results signify a preference of formal assessment since it is regarded as a better indicator than informal assessment to determine learners' progress. The results of this statement (C2, 12) can also be related to the results obtained in C2, 3 which indicated a higher regard for formal assessment in terms of measuring learners' attainment of the learning outcomes. Moreover, the results of the same set of statements (C2, 12; C2, 2; C2, 3) can show an association with the responses to C2, 13 where 22.7% respondents strongly agreed and 59.1% agreed that frequent formal assessment

could assist learners with multiple opportunities to show their understanding of learning content. Nevertheless, the fact that a number of the sampled teachers opposed these statements signifies that there are teachers who approached assessment in a balanced manner (*cf*. 3.3.3).

In response to C2, 14, 22.7% of the respondents chose “strongly agree”, 50% chose “agree” and 27.2% opted for “disagree”. When the negative results, especially, are compared with those to statement C2, 6 it can be gathered that although the sampled teachers engage their learners in remedial work following marked formal assessment tasks, that engagement is not necessarily based on detailed written feedback to assist learners in their corrections. Scaffolding (*cf*. 1.4.8 and 3.5.2) is thus not properly operationalized and confirms the researcher’s premises as outlined in terms of C1, 6 to C1, 10 (*cf*. 5.2.4.1).

5.2.4.3 Respondents’ opinions regarding informal assessment

Table 5.17 portrays the data obtained with regard to this sub-section of the questionnaire. What follows is an extrapolation of the collected data.

18.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and 56% agreed that they conceptualised informal assessment as assessment of which the results need not be recorded and reported. However, a total of 25.8% of the sampled teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. When these results are compared with the results of C2, 1 (*cf.* 5.2.4.2), it reflects a greater uncertainty about the purpose of informal assessment (*cf.* 1.4.2, 3.3.2, 3.7.2 and 3.7.5) amongst the respondents.

Although 22.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that more time should be devoted to informal assessment since it serves as a reliable and immediate indicator of learner progress, the same percentage indicated that they disagree with this statement (C3, 2). This prompts the researcher to believe that although informal assessment is practised in some EFAL classrooms, there is an equally strong indication that this is not the case in a considerable number of classrooms.

On the statement as to whether respondents believe that informal assessment should complement formal assessment in order to gauge learners’ attainment of the learning outcomes (C3, 3), 34.8% of respondents strongly agreed while 53.1%

agreed. This could reflect the implementation of ways and means to ensure continuous assessment (*cf.* 1.4.4 and 3.3.3). Yet, 12.1% of the respondents disagreed with the statement which shows that CASS is probably not practised in some EFAL classrooms.

With regard to C3, 4 the respondents are seemingly not convinced that informal assessment could stimulate 'deep' learning. Whereas 25.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 53% "agreed" with another 21.2% disagreeing. Related to this statement, responses to C3, 5 reiterate the sampled teachers' preference of formal assessment. A substantial total of 62.1% of the respondents disagreed that they favour informal assessment since it might require less work. From the results of these two statements (C3, 4 and C3, 5), the researcher infers two things: teachers are not very concerned about 'deep' learning and are satisfied when their assessment produces results without putting in too much effort, or teachers are not well-informed about or equipped to implement informal assessment in appropriate ways to stimulate learning.

Although 28.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that they spent a large amount of teaching time on learner engagement with the content (C3, 6), 40.9% indicated that they "strongly agree" that frequent informal assessment assisted learners with multiple opportunities to show their understanding of learning content (C3, 7). This apparent discrepancy may be as a result of the phrasing of these two questions. C3, 6 is more directed at teachers' practice, while C3, 7 may be interpreted as a plain statement. Therefore, the responses may indicate that the sampled teachers are probably aware of the value of informal assessment, but that it is not always implemented.

With reference to four of the five factors that could impact on assessment aimed at the advancement of learning (*cf.* 3.4.2), respondents were required to reply to statements C3, 8 to C3, 14. The four factors suggested are the sharing of learning targets (*cf.* 3.4.2.1), questioning (*cf.* 3.4.2.2), feedback (*cf.* 3.4.2.3) and peer-and self-assessment (*cf.* 3.4.2.4). From the data it appears as if there is a relatively strong indication (45.5% respondents strongly agreed) that learners are informed about their expected learning (C3, 8). In other words, learning targets are probably shared in most instances with the learners. Sharing of learning targets is also

evident from C3, 9 in that a meaningful number of respondents (36.4% strongly agreed), expect their learners to communicate at the end of the lesson what they have learnt. This approach could ensure that content is internalised by learners. Questioning also appears to be realised since 39.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that they prepared key questions before their lessons (C3, 10). Also noteworthy is the fact that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that they promote classroom dialogue by means of learners' questions (C3, 11). With regard to feedback, responses to C3, 12 reflect that 45.5% of the sampled teachers strongly agreed that they provided their learners with immediate verbal feedback. This is in contrast with the lower percentage of respondents (33.3%) who strongly agreed that they identified and responded immediately to learners experiencing difficulty during lesson presentations. This could imply that feedback is mostly given in a verbal manner and not necessarily in written form. 45.5% of the respondents also strongly agreed that they encouraged learners to monitor and check their own work for correctness (C3, 13). Hence, it appears as if a meaningful number of the sampled teachers implement self-assessment. However, a significant lower percentage (19.7%) strongly agreed with the statement that they encouraged learners to check one another's work; meaning that peer-assessment was not as often implemented as self-assessment. Remarkable is the fact that all the mentioned cases (C3, 8 to C3, 14), contain negative responses as well. Noteworthy are the "disagree" responses to C3, 9 (10.6%), and the "disagree" (15.2%) as well as "strongly disagree" (3%) responses to C3, 14 which imply that learners are not required to communicate what they have learnt in their own words and that peer-assessment is almost certainly not practised in these respondents' classrooms.

Table 5.17: Respondents' opinions regarding informal assessment

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
C3. Informal assessment	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
1. I conceptualize informal assessment as assessment of which the results need not be recorded and reported	12	**18.2**	37	**56**	12	**18.2**	5	**7.6**
2. I believe that more time should be given to informal assessment since it serves as a reliable and immediate indicator of learner progress	15	**22.7**	36	**54.6**	14	**21.2**	1	**1.5**
3. I believe that informal assessment should complement formal assessment in order to gauge learners' attainment of the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment standards	23	**34.8**	35	**53.1**	8	**12.1**		
4. I believe that informal assessment stimulates 'deep' learning	17	**25.8**	35	**53**	14	**21.2**		
5. I favour informal assessment more than formal assessment since it requires less work	7	**10.6**	18	**27.3**	34	**51.5**	7	**10.6**
6. I spend a large amount of my teaching time on learner engagement with the learning content	19	**28.8**	40	**60.6**	7	**10.6**		
7. Frequent informal assessment assists learners with multiple opportunities to show their understanding of learning content	27	**40.9**	35	**53.1**	4	**6**		
8. I tell learners at the start of a lesson what they are expected to learn from the lesson since it provides them with a sense of direction	30	**45.5**	30	**45.4**	6	**9.1**		
9. I ask learners at the end of a lesson to communicate what they have learnt in their own words	24	**36.4**	35	**53**	7	**10.6**		
10. I prepare a few core questions before a lesson that I can use to engage learners in the teaching and learning process	26	**39.4**	37	**56.1**	3	**4.5**		
11. I invite learners to ask questions during lessons to promote classroom dialogue	33	**50.0**	30	**45.5**	3	**4.5**		
12. I provide learners with immediate verbal feedback during teaching and learning events	30	**45.5**	33	**50**	3	**4.5**		
13. I encourage learners to monitor and check their own work for correctness	30	**45.5**	32	**48.5**	3	**4.5**	1	**1.5**
14. I encourage learners to check each other's work prior to submitting it for final assessment	13	**19.7**	41	**62.1**	10	**15.2**	2	**3**
15. I identify and respond immediately to learners experiencing difficulty with learning content during my lesson presentations	22	**33.3**	38	**57.6**	5	**7.6**	1	**1.5**

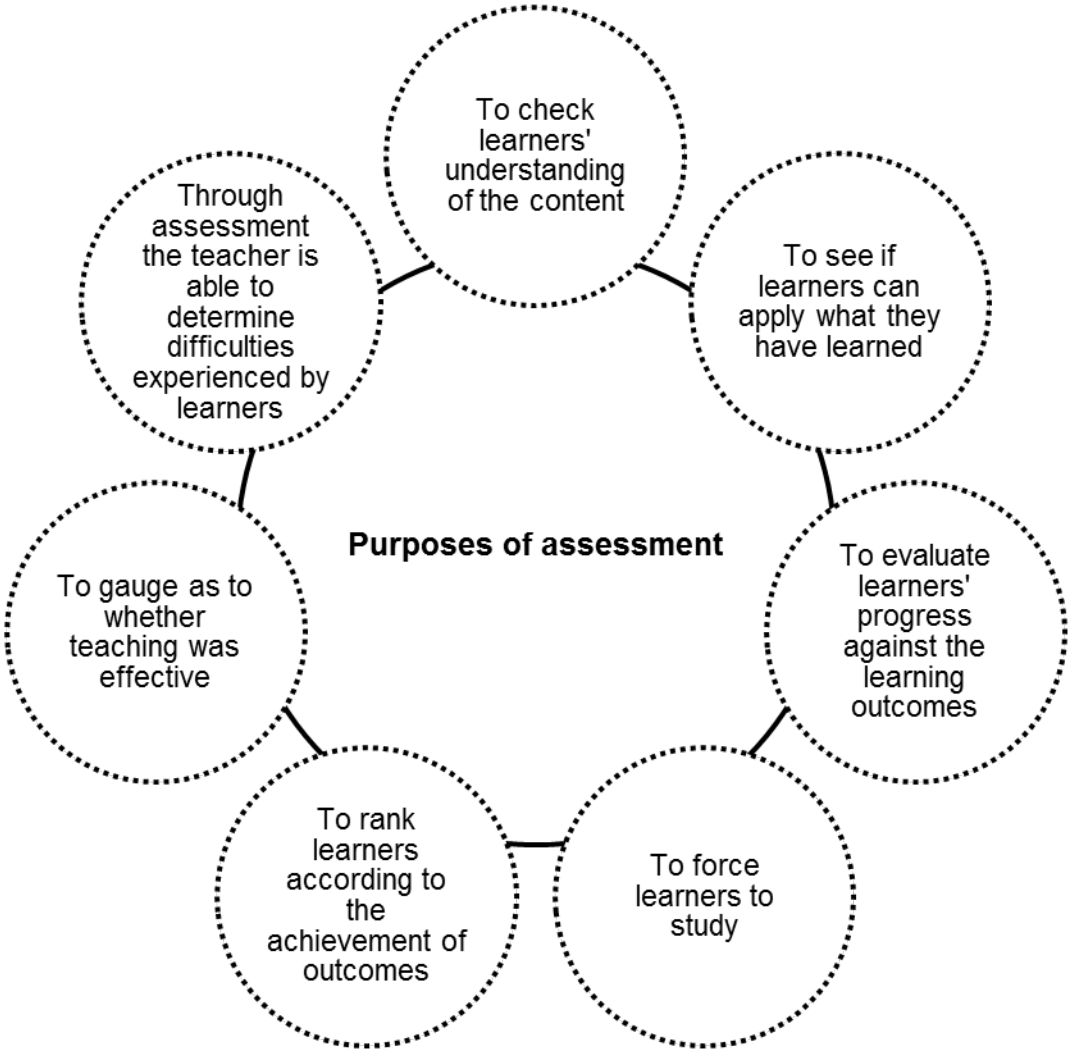
5.2.4 Section D: Assessment orientation and problems

This section of the questionnaire consisted of three open ended questions which focused on the respondents' orientations towards assessment and the problems they experience regarding assessment (*cf*. 4.6.1).

5.2.4.1 Teachers' opinions about the purposes of assessment

Figure 5.5 below reflects a collection of seven prominent factors mentioned by the sampled teachers regarding the purposes of assessment.

Figure 5.5 Factors reflecting respondents' opinions regarding the purposes of assessment

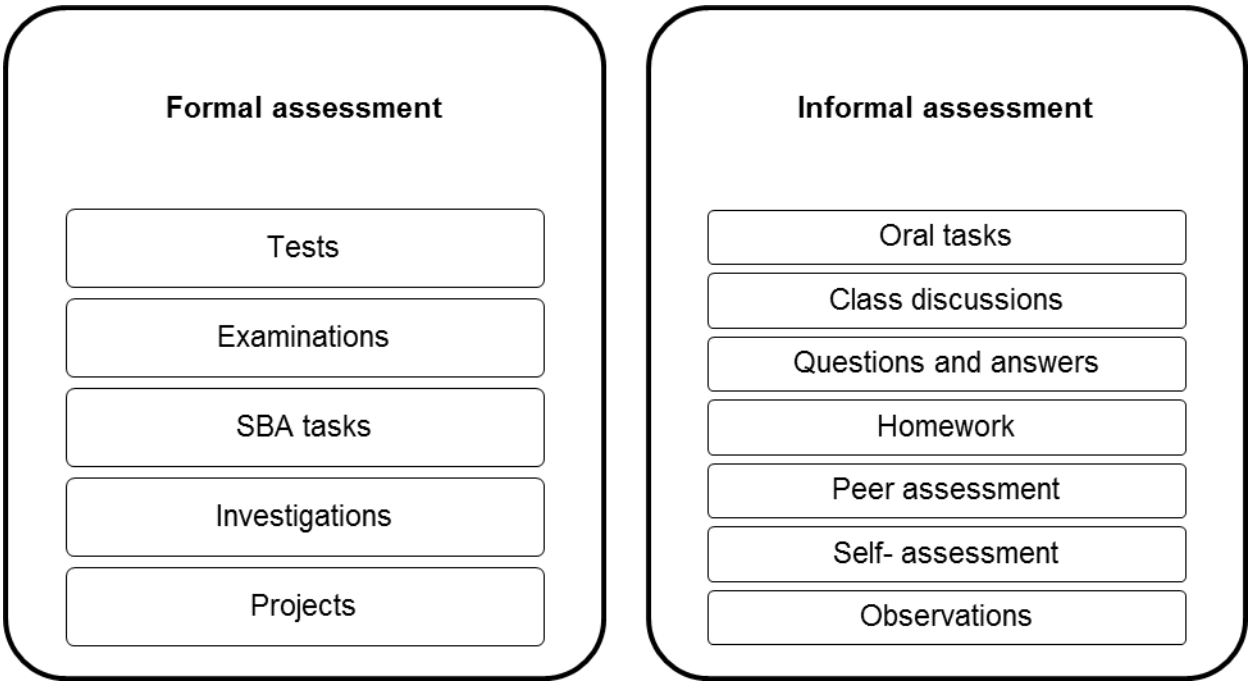


The factors mentioned by the sampled teachers correspond remarkably with the view expressed by the Department of Education when stating that the key purpose of assessment centres on the enhancement of learners' growth, the development and the monitoring of learners' progress and the enabling of the facilitation of learning (DoE, 2004:240) (*cf.* 3.3.1). The apparent appreciation of the interplay between informal assessment and formal assessment is evident from these factors. However, in agreement with Reyneke (2008:34) who declares that "if assessment is to be used for any specific purpose, then it is obvious that it should be properly planned and aligned to that specific purpose" (*cf.* 3.3.1), the researcher is still somewhat uncertain as to what extent the interplay between informal and formal assessment manifests in the respondents' EFAL classrooms.

5.2.4.2 Most frequently used informal and formal assessment methods

In Table 5.18 below, a summary of the most frequently used informal and formal assessment methods by the sampled teachers are shown.

Table 5.18: Most frequently used informal and formal assessment methods



With regard to the assessment methods mentioned by the respondents, it does not appear as if any innovative methods are used by the sampled teachers. This shows the deep-rootedness of conventional assessment methods. Although it is promising that respondents distinguished between typical informal and formal methods, the information obtained in C1, 1, C1, 2, C1,4 and C1,5 (*cf*. 5.2.4.1); C2, 2, C2, 3, C2, 12 and C2, 13 (*cf.* 5.2.4.2) and C3, 5 (*cf.* 5.2.4.3) reflect the sampled teachers' preference for formal assessment methods.

5.2.4.3 Problems most frequently experienced with the implementation of informal and formal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom

A compilation of the most common problems experienced by the sampled teachers with regard to the implementation of informal and formal assessment in their Grade 9 EFAL classrooms is represented in Table 5.19. The researcher believes that these problems are not peculiar to Grade 9 EFAL classrooms but that they are generic in nature. Nevertheless, it appears as if problems experienced with formal assessment can be assigned to official policies (e.g. *too prescriptive; too much emphasis on writing*), personal dilemmas (e.g. *lots of marking to be done by the teacher; delays in giving feedback to learners because classes are too big*) and learner obstacles (e.g. *learners do not finish assessment tasks on time; learners are not willing to conduct oral tasks because of a lack of confidence*). With regard to informal assessment, it appears as if the problems are ostensibly ascribed to personal dilemmas (e.g. *class sizes are too big to check the daily completion of work; lack of resources*) and learner obstacles (e.g. *learners lack skills in marking; learners do not indicate to the teacher the area of difficulty that they experience*). What is remarkable with regard to informal assessment is the fact that no responses indicated problems related to official Departmental documents. This serves as confirmation that these documents are either mute on, or contain little information regarding informal assessment (*cf.* 3.7.2 to 3.7.5).

Table 5.19: Most frequently experienced problems with the implementation of informal and formal assessment

Formal assessment
•Late or no submissions by learners •Time consuming to follow the writing process in creative essays •Some tasks must be completed under controlled conditions. This takes up too much of time •Learners do not finish assessment tasks on time •Lots of marking to be done by the teacher •Difficult to determine a common standard when setting tests since the language proficiency of learners is not in line with the assessment standards for the grade •Common examinations consume too much time to prepare learners •No prescribed textbooks which could be used as reference material •Learners are not fully prepared when assessments are due •Learners approach tasks without doing research or any other form of preparation •Absenteeism during scheduled assessment periods •Delays in giving feedback to learners because classes are too big •Learners not willing to conduct oral tasks because of a lack of confidence •Stressful to weak learners •Mediocre or poor quality of work •Formal assessment does not cater enough for the differentiated needs of learners •Too much emphasis on writing •Too many tasks per term •Too prescriptive
Informal assessment
•Lack of learner commitment because the assessments are not recorded and do not count for promotion. Learning therefore, does not occur. •Class sizes are too big to check the daily completion of work •No time to mark books •Learners not always willing to participate because of the fear of others and because of the lack of confidence to express themselves in English •Incomplete work due to the factor of time •Learners lack skills in marking •Classes are too huge to give individual learners attention •Lack of resources •Poor quality of work by learners •Not a true reflection since learners get the help of peers or siblings •At home no one to check if work is done •Learners do not indicate to teacher the area of difficulty that they experience •Lack of time •Lack of learner discipline and group work becomes an impossibility •Absenteeism

5.2.5 Concluding remarks

Derived from the quantitative part of the empirical research, the researcher arrived at the following preliminary conclusions:

(i) The majority of the respondents were females between the ages of 40 and 49 with an overall average teaching experience of more than 10 years, but with 10 years or less teaching experience in EFAL in the GET phase. They held good teacher education qualifications with the majority who had a three year qualification in English. Most of the respondents taught at Township schools on Post level one and were involved in the teaching of EFAL in the GET phase (*cf*. 5.2.2).

(ii) The larger percentage of the respondents was exposed to assessment as subject in some or other form during their higher education studies; received some assessment training from the Department of Education; read hard copy sources to broaden their understanding of assessment and received support regarding assessment matters from their Learning Area Facilitators. The majority of the respondents indicated that they had personal copies of some or all of the listed policy documents of which they had a fair understanding (*cf.* 5.2.3).

(iii) Most respondents admitted that they complemented their teaching with classroom activities which were predominantly based on the results obtained from formal assessment (*cf.* 5.2.4.1).

(iv) Respondents displayed a somewhat uncertain understanding of the exact meaning of formal assessment but showed convincing evidence that they rated formal assessment as being of higher value than informal assessment. However, many of the respondents indicated their concerns that they found the official Departmental documents with regard to formal assessment too regulatory (*cf.* 5.2.4.2).

(v) Uncertainty about the exact purpose with informal assessment was also revealed. Nevertheless, it appeared as if the sampled teachers attempted implementing continuous assessment by also trying to engage their learners with

the learning content by means of sharing learning targets, questioning, the provision of verbal feedback and self-assessment (*cf.* 5.2.4.3).

(vi) The respondents' opinions regarding the purposes of assessment revolved around the enhancement of learners' growth, the development and the monitoring of learners' progress and the enabling of the facilitation of learning. However, their assessment methods reflected a high sentiment for conventional assessment methods, while factors assigned to official policies, personal dilemmas and learner obstacles appeared to impact negatively on their implementation of informal and formal assessment (*cf.* 5.2.4).

5.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.3.1 Background information

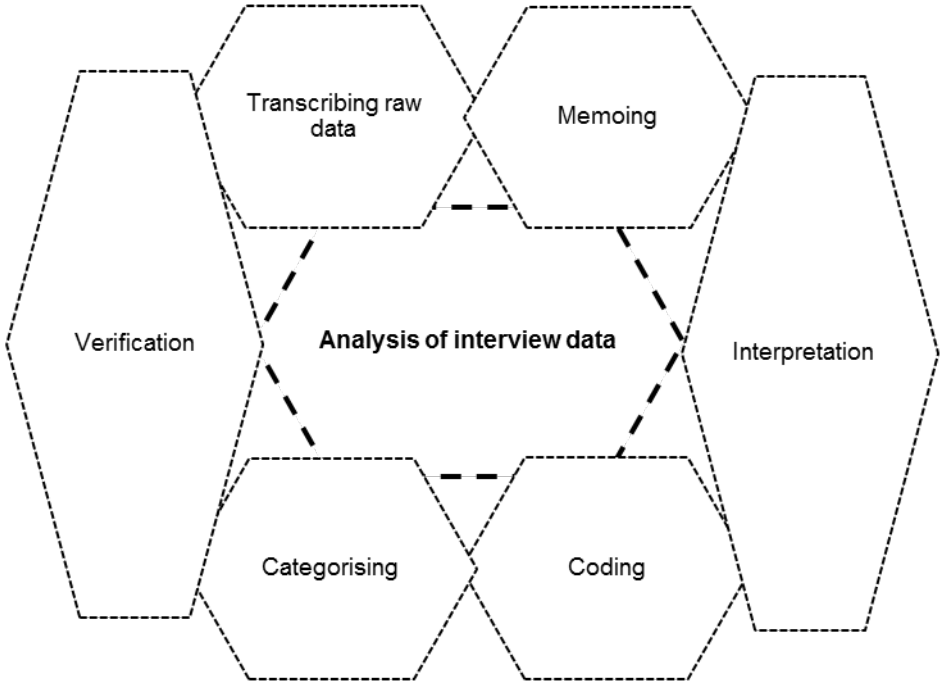
This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data obtained through the use of interviews (*cf.* 1.5.4 and 4.6.2) and observations (*cf.* 1.5.4 and 4.6.3). By means of systematic, non-proportional probability sampling (*cf*. 1.5.5 and 4.5) six secondary public schools were selected. Henceforth, six teachers teaching EFAL to Grade 9 learners from each of the selected schools and who completed the questionnaire were selected by means of simple random sampling (*cf.* 1.5.5 and 4.5) to be interviewed and observed. In the end, four Township teachers and two ex-Model C teachers participated in the qualitative study. The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through the respective two qualitative instruments are presented in the following sections.

5.3.2 Analysis and interpretation of data obtained through interviews

The data obtained through the six individual interviews were transcribed by the researcher after which the researcher engaged with the data by applying two processes. The first of these two processes included memoing (Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:104) where the researcher's additional impressions regarding the transcribed raw data were captured. The second process involved open coding (De Vos, 2005:341), where meaningful segments of the raw transcribed data were clustered together. Finally, related codes were organized and combined into *a priori* categories

(Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:99) which guided the construction of the interview questions. Hence, in contrast with an inductive approach where categories emerge from the analysis of the raw data, a deductive approach was followed since the categories were pre-determined to direct the analysis and interpretation of the raw data. Figure 5.6 illustrates the iterative process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007c: 99) followed by the researcher to analyse the interview data and to eventually arrive at inferences. The dotted lines indicate that the mentioned elements are not necessarily done in a specific linear order (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2012:403) and that they are inter-related.

Figure 5.6: The iterative process of analysing and interpreting the interview data



5.3.2.1 Presentation of coded interview data

Following the responses of the six sampled teachers, the coded forms of the raw transcribed data are presented in Table 5.20. The researcher used the same order in which the questions appeared in the interview guide (Appendix B) to indicate the main elements or codes derived from the respective participants' responses.

Table 5.20: Coded interview data

Type of school	Township	Township	Township	Township	ex-Model C	ex-Model C
School code	A	B	C	D	E	F
Teacher code	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interview questions						
1	• Complicated • Open for interpretation • Not always clear	• Too much information • Not very clear • Lack of specification	• Too many restrictions • Informal assessment is not clearly defined	• Too many policies • Vagueness	• Did not make a careful study of policy documents • Reliant on training sessions and subject meetings	• Not clear • Open to a variety of interpretations
2	• Teacher asks questions • Learners ask questions	• Use baseline assessment • Classwork and homework culminate in formal assessment	• Teacher asks questions to involve learners and to measure their progress	• Use baseline assessment to determine levels of understanding • Ensure all content is covered to enable learners to handle assessments • Classwork is given to allow learners to 'work' with the content	• Examples are used during teaching • Classwork and homework are given	• All three factors are inter-dependent • Once content is taught, it needs to be practised and assessed to be reinforced
3	• To determine whether work is covered • To determine whether learners understood what was taught • To provide feedback about academic performance	• To determine the learners' knowledge • To determine learners' attainment of outcomes • For reporting purposes to parents	• To gauge learners' understanding • To measure learners' progress • To report to parents	• To check learners' progress • To check learners' level of understanding • To check effectiveness of teaching	• To determine effectiveness of teaching and learning • To determine whether learners are ready to move on to new work or next grade	• To determine learners' ability • Informal assessment makes learners controllable; they are kept busy • To determine learners' progression and promotion

Type of school	Township	Township	Township	Township	ex-Model C	ex-Model C
School code	A	B	C	D	E	F
Teacher code	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interview questions						
4	• Informal assessment is done on a daily basis • Forms of informal assessment include verbal questioning and homework • Formal assessment is done in the form of tests or assignments • Informal assessments should prepare learners for formal assessments	• Classwork and homework are given on a daily basis • Formal assessment is done at the end of each month	• Verbal questioning • Class activities • Informal assessment gives an idea as to whether learners are able to be formally assessed	• Questions are given to check prior knowledge • Homework and classwork are given as foundation for formal assessments	• Informal assessment informs formal assessment	• Informal assessment is used for practice before continuing with formal assessment
5	• Creative writing, oral, debates, transactional writing	• Tests	• Tests	• Tests	• Creative and transactional writing, oral tasks, language tests	• Tests
6	• Self and peer assessment	• Peer assessment	• Questioning • Group discussions	• Classwork • Homework • Word puzzles • Group work • Self and peer assessment	• Oral questions • Class discussions • Homework • Self and peer assessment	• Classwork • Homework

Type of school	Township	Township	Township	Township	ex-Model C	ex-Model C
School code	A	B	C	D	E	F
Teacher code	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interview questions						
7	• Late submissions • Copying of tasks • Incomplete attempts • Lack of learner self-discipline and self-direction	• Learner laziness • Books are deliberately left in class or at home • Slow writing • Learners struggle to comprehend examination questions • Late submissions • Non-submissions	• Non-adherence to due dates • Not enough effort is put into work • Incomplete work	• Learners battle to meet deadlines • Too many tasks to cover • Lack of parental interest	• Lack of time to discuss learners' errors • Cannot assess all topics formally because of time constraints	• Too many prescribed formal assessments • Time consuming
8	• Lack of commitment • Not taking guidance seriously	• Learners do not attend classes regularly • Do not complete class- or homework	• Lack of learner participation • Learners are not inquisitive • Big classes • Teacher unable to provide proper guidance	• Class- and homework are not always done • Slow pace of lessons; some learners have difficulty with reading and writing • Time constraints to check informal tasks	• Too much time devoted to planning • Too much time spent on checking homework • Quality of learners' work	• Disciplinary problems • Classwork can become chaotic • Learners mark incorrect things correctly • Learners do not correct their work

5.3.2.2 Interpretation of data according to *a priori* categories

As stated in 5.3.2, *a priori* categories guided the construction of the interview guide. The eight interview questions were associated with and clustered according to the six categories as shown in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21: *A priori* categories according to interview questions

Interview questions	Categories
What is your opinion on how assessment is addressed in the current available policy documents?	Policies
Explain how you harmonize teaching, learning and assessment in your Grade 9 EFAL lesson presentations	Complementing teaching, learning and assessment
Explain the purposes of assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom	Assessment purposes
How do you make provision for congruency between informal and formal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom?	Complementing informal and formal assessment
Mention some formal assessment methods you most frequently use in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom	Assessment methods
Mention some informal assessment methods you most frequently use in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom	
What are the major obstacles you are facing with regards to formal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom?	Assessment problems
What are the major obstacles you are facing with regards to informal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom?	

Corresponding with the mentioned categories as set out in Table 5.21, the coded interview data can be interpreted as set out below.

5.3.2.2.1 Policies (Question 1)

With one teacher (E, 5) admitting that the documents were not even read, it is striking that the majority of the participants reacted on the vagueness of the documents by also indicating that the contents of the documents are open for interpretation. It is also

evident that the participants find the number of documents or the volume of information contained in the documents, overwhelming. One teacher (C, 3) mentioned the fact that informal assessment was not clearly addressed in the documents. It thus appears as if the interviewees' responses concur with the trends observed in 5.2.3.5, 5.2.3.6 and 5.2.3.7 as well as with the concluding remarks concerning Departmental documents in 5.2.5 (ii) and (iv).

5.3.2.2.2 Complementing teaching, learning and assessment (Question 2)

The participants' ideas of harmonizing teaching, learning and assessment, centred mostly on the methods they used. These included questioning, classwork and homework. Baseline assessment was mentioned in two cases (B, 2 and D, 4) which indicate that the participants regard learners' pre-knowledge as an essential element for proceeding with new content. These responses also correlated with the questionnaire responses which revealed that questioning (*cf*. 5.2.4.3 and 5.2.5 (iv)) and classroom activities (*cf.* 5.2.4.1 and 5.2.5 (iii)) were often used by the sampled teachers. As far as homework was concerned, it could be deduced that although it was given in some EFAL classrooms, its purpose in terms of bridging the gap between teaching and assessment was underestimated (*cf*. 5.2.4.1).

5.3.2.2.3 Assessment purposes (Question 3)

The participants' responses reveal a mix between the purposes served by informal and formal assessment. Indicative aspects of the purposes of assessment include phrases such as *checking learners' understanding*, *checking teaching effectiveness, determining learners' readiness to move on with the work, reporting, progression* and *promotion*. However, from the responses it is evident that formal assessment is central to the sampled teachers' assessment practices. This underscores the uncertainty about the purpose of informal assessment amongst the sampled teachers as detected in 5.2.4.3.

5.3.2.2.4 Complementing informal and formal assessment (Question 4)

The responses to this question indicated some methods of informal assessment (questioning, classwork, homework). In addition, it was stated that informal assessment

prepared learners for formal assessment. Consequently, the responses did not clearly indicate how provision for the congruence between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms was made.

5.3.2.2.5 Assessment methods (Questions 5 and 6)

The majority of the participants mentioned that tests were the most frequently used formal assessment method (Question 5). Only in two cases (A, 1 and E, 5), other methods such as creative writing, transactional writing and oral presentations were mentioned.

With regard to informal assessment methods (Question 6), self- and peer assessment were most frequently mentioned followed by questioning, classwork and homework. Only in one case (D, 4) an innovative idea in the form of word puzzles was mentioned.

5.3.2.2.6 Assessment problems (Questions 7 and 8)

The researcher found it interesting that problems related to formal assessment (Question 7) again included factors that could be attributed to official policies (e.g. prescriptions), personal dilemmas (e.g. lack of time), and learner obstacles (e.g. late submissions). This trend is consistent with the findings in 5.2.4.3. However, the participants' responses drew attention to the fact that the occurrences of problems related to learner obstacles are more prominent.

In terms of informal assessment problems, personal dilemmas (e.g. too much time is required), and learner obstacles (e.g. lack of commitment) formed the core to which problems can be ascribed. As was the case in 5.2.4.3, no responses indicated problems related to official Departmental documents with regard to informal assessment.

5.3.3 Concluding remarks

Drawn from the interview data, the following preliminary inferences are made:

(i) Departmental documents address assessment in ways which the research participants find overwhelming and ambiguous.

(ii) The research participants regard questioning, classwork and homework as ways to harmonize teaching, learning and assessment in their Grade 9 EFAL classes.

(iii) Based on some uncertainty about the exact purpose of informal assessment, research participants find it difficult to indicate how informal assessment complements formal assessment. Hence, formal assessment is central to their assessment practices.

(iv) Tests, creative and transactional writing are the most frequently formal assessment methods used by the sampled participants, while self- and peer assessment, questioning, classwork and homework are most often used as informal assessment methods.

(v) The research participants attribute assessment problems to factors related to official policies, personal dilemmas and learner obstacles, with the latter being the most prominent.

5.3.4 Analysis and interpretation of data obtained through observations

The second data source for the qualitative part of the study consisted of observations of a lesson presented by the selected research participants. The researcher acted as "observer as participant". Data for the observations were collected by means of a pre-planned, structured checklist and anecdotal notes (*cf.* 1.5.4 and 4.6.3). The observation checklist also included a section on artefacts which could provide additional proof on how informal and formal assessment were practised in the selected Grade 9 EFAL classrooms. The presence or absence of the listed factors to be observed were simply recorded by marking "yes" or "no" on the checklist. In addition, brief descriptions related to the factors as they appeared were captured, without any reflective notes. In effect, the observed data reflected the reality in the selected Grade 9 EFAL classrooms.

5.3.4.1 Presentation of recorded observation data

In Tables 5.22 to 5.27 the data obtained through the observation checklist (Appendix C) are reflected. Each of the randomly selected teachers was observed by the researcher and a colleague of the researcher who acted as co-observer. The observation checklist was independently completed by the two observers during times that were pre-arranged with each teacher.

Table 5.22: Observation data: A, 1

Observer: Researcher **Type of School:** Township	School Code: A Teacher Code: 1	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The lesson was pre-dominantly teacher-centred but learners were involved by giving responses to opinion-questions.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered The teacher asked about dinosaurs to draw parallels with the subject of the lesson.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties The teacher clarified concepts with the whole class without assisting individual learners.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Oral questions were posed and written questions were given as homework.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No references to learning intentions were made.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Although a variety of questions were used to encourage learners' participation, they were mostly lower order questions.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Some incorrect responses were handled by the teacher. Learners were asked to comment on one another's responses and the class was asked to reach consensus on what the correct answer was.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners marked their own work. Peer assessment was used when learners were encouraged to comment on one another's responses.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Tests in teacher's file.	x	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Class work was given as well as homework.	×	
Observer: Co-observer **Type of School:** Township	School Code: A Teacher Code: 1	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The teacher controlled discussions but encouraged learners' participation.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Reference was made to dinosaurs which linked with the lesson content	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties No time for assisting individual learners.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Verbal questioning was used.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No evidence		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Lower order questions with a few higher order questions were asked.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning The teacher did not tell learners they were wrong but relied on learners to verify the responses of their peers.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners marked their own work.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Tests.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Learners answered the questions on the poem in their books.	×	

Table 5.23: Observation data: B, 2

Observer: Researcher **Type of School:** Township	School Code: B Teacher Code: 2	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred Teacher dominated the lesson. Learners were coerced into participating.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered A series of questions were posed to learners to assess their prior knowledge.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties The teacher assisted individual learners when they were given time to answer questions on their own.	×	
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Oral questions and written work were given.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No outcomes were mentioned to learners.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Only lower level questions were asked. Level of lesson suitable for Grade 7 learners.		×
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Learners were informed when they gave incorrect responses.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners marked one another's work and appraised one another's verbal responses.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Nothing observed.		×
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Learners' books were examined by the observer who found evidence of exercises.	×	

Observer: Co-observer **Type of School:** Township	School Code: B Teacher Code: 2	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The teacher is totally in charge.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Introductory questions related to the previous lesson were asked.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties Some individual learners were encouraged to answer questions.	×	
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Questions posed by the teacher and learner self-activity in the form of written work.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No indication of learners' expected learning.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Only lower order questions were used**.**		×
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning The teacher reacted to learners' responses, whether correct or wrong.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Peer assessment was used.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Nothing observed.		×
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Classroom and homework exercises in books.	×	

Table 5.24: Observation data: C, 3

Observer: Researcher **Type of School:** Township	School Code: C Teacher Code: 3	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred Teacher dominated the lesson. Learners merely responded to his questions.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Content of topic was related to learners' lives.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties No time for assistance as the teacher wanted to proceed with the lesson.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Learners were asked questions orally and were given questions for home work	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners The teacher did not indicate what the learning goals are.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Learners were not asked any questions related to analysis, synthesis or evaluation.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning The teacher asked learners to respond to one another's answers.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment The teacher did not have time to allow for peer or self- assessment.		×
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts No evidence.		×
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Homework.	×	
Observer: Co-observer **Type of School:** Township	School Code: C Teacher Code: 3	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The teacher initiated all discussions. Learners merely responded.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Learners could associate with the learning content.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties Teacher wanted to complete the lesson.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Verbal and written questions were used.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No indication of learning intentions.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction All levels of questions were not used; mostly lower level questions.		×
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Incorrect responses were handled by asking peers to comment on one another's responses.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners commented on their own work.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts The teacher did not have any evidence of formal assessment tasks.		×
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Questions were given as homework.	×	

Table 5.25: Observation data: D, 4

Observer: Researcher Type of School: Township	School Code: D Teacher Code: 4	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred Teacher dominated lesson. Learners take turns to read and the teacher explains**.**		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered The present lesson is linked to the past lesson.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties The class as a whole is assisted.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Oral questions were used.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No learning goals were shared.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Three levels of questions were used.		×
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Learners were praised for good responses. The indigenous language was used alongside English to give feedback to learners.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners corrected their own work.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Tests and creative writing exercises.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Class work.	×	
Observer: Co-observer Type of School: Township	School Code: D Teacher Code: 4	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred Learners were quiet and spoke only when they were required to do so.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Reference was made to earlier texts that were discussed.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties Class in general was assisted.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Verbal questions were used.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No evidence.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Different levels of verbal questions were used to involve the class in discussion.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Verbal feedback in the form of praise.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners marked their own work.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Evidence in teacher files of tests, creative writing.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Class work.	×	

Table 5.26: Observation data: E, 5

Observer: Researcher **Type of School:** ex-Model C	School Code: E Teacher Code: 5	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The teacher initiated all discussions and did not encourage unnecessary learner talking since a few learners were disruptive.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Rules of concord were revised.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties General difficulties were ironed-out. No attention was given to individual learners.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Examples of concord were done orally with the whole class.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners Learners were told clearly what the gist of the lesson entailed.	×	
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction The questions revolved around the first three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning The teacher took the first 8 minutes of lesson to hand out transactional writing tasks which had written feedback. Verbal feedback was given to individual learners.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners were asked to respond to peers' answers.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Evidence in the form of transactional writing.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefact The activity books and notes of learners were up-to-date.	×	

Observer: Co-observer **Type of School:** ex-Model C	School Code: E Teacher Code: 5	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred Teacher was totally in charge**.**		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Previous content was revised.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties No help rendered to individual learners.		×
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Oral discussion with examples.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners The teacher clearly indicated her expectations.	×	
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction A variety of lower order questions were used to invite learner participation.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Learners were told where they went wrong in their exercise. Good work was applauded.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners were asked to react to other's responses.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Evidence of transactional writing.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Learners' work books provided ample evidence of activities.	×	

Table 5.27: Observation data: F, 6

Observer: Researcher **Type of School:** ex-Model C	School Code: F Teacher Code: 6	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The teacher asked questions and learners responded.		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Lesson linked with learners' knowledge of "heart transplants".	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties A developmental exercise was given while the teacher assisted individual learners.	×	
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Oral questions were asked; previous exercises discussed; follow-up questions.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No learning goals were shared.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction Emphasis on higher cognitive questions. Learners were required to compare and contrast two texts and to evaluate the merit of each.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning The teacher explained when a response is incorrect.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Learners correct own work. The teacher reminded learners to add views that others had that they did not consider.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Tests.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Homework and class work are given on a daily basis**.**	×	
Observer: Co-observer **Type of School:** ex-Model C	School Code: F Teacher Code: 6	
Factors observed and notes	**Yes**	**No**
The lesson was learner-centred The teacher controlled the lesson. Learners chorused the answers**.**		×
Learners' prior knowledge was considered Recapping last lesson.	×	
The teacher assisted learners who experienced difficulties Teacher assisted learners in answering challenging questions.	×	
The teacher used some form of informal assessment Verbal questions and written exercise.	×	
Learning goals were shared with learners No goals were mentioned.		×
A variety of verbal questions were used to stimulate classroom interaction All levels of questions were used.	×	
Feedback was given constructively to promote learning Incorrect responses were handled well.	×	
Learners were encouraged to practise self and peer assessment Self-assessment whereby learners corrected their own work was used.	×	
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts Tests.	×	
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts Informal assessment in the form of home and classwork.	×	

5.3.4.2 Interpretation of observation data

In terms of inter-rater reliability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:93 and McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:186), the data obtained by the two independent observers displayed a high level of consistency with regard to each individual case. In what follows, the data are interpreted according to the sequence of the items as it appeared on the checklist.

With no exception the observed lessons were predominantly teacher-centred. **Learner-centredness** only manifested in some obscured ways such as learners responding to questions when asked to do so, or learners taking turns to read. This is in contrast with the notions of constructivism (*cf.* 1.4.7 and 3.5.1) and scaffolding (*cf.* 1.4.8 and 3.5.2) which encourage learner engagement and underpins successful continuous assessment (*cf.* 1.4.4, 3.1 and 3.3.3).

Although **learners' prior knowledge** was taken into account by asking questions about a previous lesson or by considering learner experience, these only appeared to be used to get a lesson going. Learners' prior knowledge was thus isolated from the rest of the lesson. Consequently, the potential of learners' prior knowledge was not fully utilized to serve a constructing or scaffolding purpose. In almost all the observed cases, the teacher did not **assist individual learners who experienced difficulties**. Where assistance was given, it was general and collective in nature without making provision for learners' individual differences. This illustrates a disregard for the acknowledgement of individual learner differences; one of the principles of constructivism (*cf*. 3.5.1).

The observed teachers **used some forms of informal assessment**: verbal questioning, written work and explanations. However, the real effect of these informal forms of assessment on learning was not observed. It can thus be concluded that research on the use of informal assessment methods also warrants long term monitoring in order to determine its effects on learning.

With regard to the **sharing of learning goals**, only one of the observed teachers shared learning expectations with the learners whereas this was not observed in any of the other lessons. This practice is in conflict with one of the elements of *assessment for learning*, which suggests that the sharing of learning goals is an enabling factor for learner participation (*cf.* 3.4.2.1); a factor in which informal assessment is rooted. In all the observed classes verbal questions were asked. However, the **variety of verbal questions** differed from teacher to teacher. In some of the observed classrooms, only lower order questions were asked, while in others, higher order questions were also asked. To this end, some of the observed teachers' questioning practices allude to the

fact that questioning is not used for enabling learners to build constructs or to construct meaning (*cf.* 3.5.1) or as a means of verbal scaffolding (*cf.* 3.5.2).

Feedback to promote learning was either provided verbally by the teacher or in some cases by peers during all the observed lessons. It should be mentioned though, that the feedback centred mainly on the correction of incorrect responses or praise for correct responses. In one case (E, 5) written feedback on submitted work was observed and in another case (D, 4) the teacher complemented feedback provided in English with feedback in an African language. Feedback as an essential element of formative assessment (*cf.* 3.3.4.2) was thus practised in one or other form in the observed classrooms. However, the researcher was not convinced about its usefulness to promote learning (*cf.* 3.3.4.2) since it did not provide opportunities for learners to "explore, experiment and revise their work" (O'Brien, 2008:3).

Although time was considered to be a factor in some of the observed classes (C, 3), learners were encouraged to practise **self- and peer assessment**. Seemingly, there is a preference for self-assessment amongst the observed teachers, which correlates with the questionnaire findings in 5.2.4.3.

With regard to **formal assessment artefacts**, evidence of tests was most frequently observed, followed by some evidence of creative and transactional writing. This is in line with the findings obtained from the interview data (*cf.* 5.3.2.2.5). Classwork and homework presented itself as the most commonly observed **informal assessment artefacts**

5.3.5 Concluding remarks

The following preliminary conclusions are deduced form the observation data:

(i) Though there were some incidences of learner-centredness, the observed lessons did not exploit learners' prior knowledge or classroom activities to such an extent that would provide persuasive testimony of teachers' abilities to implement constructivist and scaffolding approaches.

(ii) Lesson presentations were directed by time and curriculum constraints which resulted in the disregard for individual learner problems, the sharing of clear

learner expectations, the provision of constructive feedback and the implementation of peer assessment.

(iii) The observed teachers preferred established methods of both informal and formal assessment.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative data obtained through questionnaires, interviews and observations were presented, analysed and interpreted. After the interpretation of each of the three sets of data, concluding remarks were made. These served as summaries revealing the most prominent interpretations of each set of data. In the chapter to follow, an overview of the study will be provided, the most important findings will be highlighted and recommendations, based on the findings, will be made.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this two phase sequential mixed-methods study was to examine the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms. Embedded in this purpose, the researcher expected to gain a better understanding of EFAL teachers' assessment practices. In addition to the overall purpose of the study, associated secondary research questions and objectives were formulated. These were operationalized by conducting a literature and empirical study.

In this chapter, an overview of the study will be provided by relating the gathered information to the respective secondary research questions and objectives and ultimate purpose of the study. Thereafter, an inventory of the most prominent findings from the literature study and empirical research will be given, after which recommendations on the findings will be provided. This will be followed by acknowledging the limitations of the research and by making suggestions for further research.

6.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This section presents an overview of the study against the background of the purpose and the related objectives of the study.

6.2.1 Chapter one

The intention of this chapter was to provide an orientation to the study. The study was introduced and justified by reasoning that teachers' assessment preferences mainly hinged on the use of formal assessment methods regardless of the growing demand to implement balanced assessment (*cf.* 1.1). This prompted the researcher's interest to investigate the interplay between informal and formal assessment to come to a better understanding of teachers' assessment practices; especially the assessment practices of Grade 9 EFAL teachers (*cf.* 1.2). Research questions and objectives were then formulated to guide the study (*cf.* 1.3). Hereafter, a number of key terms were identified to serve as conceptual framework on which the study could be theoretically founded (*cf.*

1.4). In section 1.5 of this chapter, an outline of the research methodology was given, after which the delimitations of the study (*cf.* 1.6), its significance and possible contribution (*cf.* 1.7) and possible challenges of the study were considered. The chapter was concluded with a layout of the anticipated chapters (*cf.* 1.9).

6.2.2 Chapter two

By studying the literature and relevant documents of the Department of Education, the following two secondary research questions and their accompanying objectives which directed this chapter were realized.

Secondary research questions:

- What educational developments characterised South African education since 1994?
- What is the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum?

Objectives:

- To provide an overview of educational developments that characterised South African education since 1994.
- To determine the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum.

With regard to educational developments that characterised South African education since 1994, its importance for inclusion was argued along the line of contextualising the study, and particularly current day thinking about assessment. Hence, a brief overview of educational reform initiatives before 1994 was given (*cf.* 2.2), followed by an outline of outcomes-based education (*cf.* 2.3) and OBE in relation to South African education since 1994 (*cf*. 2.4). In section 2.5, curriculum changes characterizing South African school education since 1994 was discussed by highlighting C2005, the RNCS/NCS and CAPS. The rationale for attending to OBE and the curriculum changes was based on the fact that the revised version of the Grade 9 curriculum (CAPS) will only come into effect as from 2014.

For determining the position of English as subject in the South African school curriculum, the importance and purpose of English in the school curriculum was considered (*cf.* 2.6) against the background of the Language in education Policy and the NCS.

6.2.3 Chapter three

Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter was also based on a literature as well as a document study of relevant Departmental policies. The two secondary research questions and their associated objectives which guided this chapter included the following:

Secondary research questions:

- How should assessment be understood within a constructivist framework?
- What are the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education?

Objectives:

- To present a theoretical outline of assessment within a constructivist framework.
- To pursue the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education.

In order to present a theoretical outline of assessment within a constructivist framework, the chapter commenced with a discussion on assessment (*cf.* 3.2) by defining the concept, relating it to measurement and evaluation and by outlining trends in contemporary discourse on the topic. In the section on the purpose of assessment (*cf.* 3.3), the researcher pondered on the features of and differences between informal, formal, and continuous assessment. The main intentions with assessment (*cf.* 3.3.4), which revolve around baseline, diagnostic, formative and summative were also considered. Hereafter, the researcher reflected on assessment *of, for* and *as* learning (*cf.* 3.4) followed by highlighting the importance of constructivism, scaffolding (*cf.* 3.5) and constructive alignment (*cf.* 3.6) within the context of the study.

In pursuing the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education, assessment in EFAL as it is founded on four fundamental policies, was contemplated in section 3.7.

6.2.4 Chapter four

This chapter was a preparation for the empirical research to answer the last secondary research question, (in relation to the overall purpose of the study):

- What is the relation between the informal and formal assessment practices of Grade 9 EFAL teachers?

Therefore, chapter four provided an overview of the empirical study with regard to the processes and procedures which were followed to gather information relevant to the abovementioned secondary research question and overall purpose of the study.

It was stated that the research was embedded in the Pragmatist paradigm (*cf.* 4.2) and that it followed a mixed-methods research design (*cf.* 4.3). The selection of a sequential explanatory strategy, comprising of a survey for the quantitative part of the study and a case study for the qualitative part, was justified in section 4.4. The population, sampling strategies and sample were discussed (*cf.* 4.5) and the data collection instruments were identified (*cf.* 4.6). The principles that were considered for the construction of the data collection instruments as well as the administration of the instruments formed the focus in section 4.7. Discussions on the adherence to quality criteria (*cf.* 4.8), the pilot study (*cf.* 4.9) and the role of the researcher (*cf.* 4.10) were followed by clarifying the ethical considerations that guided the study (*cf.* 4.11). The chapter was concluded by a visual representation of the data collection process (*cf.* 4.12).

6.2.5 Chapter five

Following the justification of the empirical processes and procedures outlined in chapter four, this chapter was concerned about the analysis and interpretation of the collected data in order to address the primary question of the research in which the last secondary question (see 6.2.4 above) was infused:

How does the interplay between informal and formal assessment as practised in Grade 9 English First Additional Language classrooms present itself?

Since the empirical study followed a sequential explanatory strategy, the quantitative part of the study preceded the qualitative part. By keeping this order, a detailed discussion on the quantitative data analysis and interpretation (*cf.* 5.2) was followed by a similar

discussion which focused on the qualitative data (*cf.* 5.3). In both sections, some background information was provided, after which the data obtained through the respective data collection instruments were analysed and interpreted. Analyses were done by means of narrative explanations which were complemented by visual representations where possible. Concluding remarks regarding the findings emanating from the analysis and interpretation of data attained from each instrument (*cf.* 5.2.5, 5.3.3 and 5.3.5) completed this chapter.

6.3 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

In terms of the attainment of the overall purpose of the study, the literature as well as the empirical study played a part. In this section, the most prominent findings derived from these two sources are highlighted.

6.3.1 Findings originating from the literature study

The literature study provided the context for the empirical study. Hence, the importance of the deductions made from the literature study should not be underestimated, since it could help to illuminate the empirical findings. Related to each of the secondary research questions (*cf.* 1.3.2), findings concerning the literature study include the following:

- With regard to educational developments that characterised South African education since 1994 (1st secondary research question), it could be stated that during the recent years, South African education was characterised by infinite changes, especially on the curricular front. The impact of these changes on teaching, learning and assessment should not be underrated. Considering assessment, it could be assumed that the mentioned educational developments affected teachers' assessment practices, and consequently the interplay between informal and formal assessment.
- Concerning the position of English as subject and as a medium of instruction in the South African school curriculum (2nd secondary research question), the importance of language teaching becomes self-evident. By endorsing multilingualism, the South African school curriculum supports the teaching and learning of at least one additional language, of which English appears to enjoy preference. With regard to assessment, it can thus be anticipated that English as

First Additional Language be assessed in such a manner that learners will be able to use it "effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes" (DoE, 2003a:20).

- The third secondary research question focused on the understanding of assessment within a constructivist framework. By investigating this question, it became clear that the notions of continuous assessment (*cf.* 3.3.3), assessment for learning (*cf.* 3.4.2), balanced assessment (*cf.* 3.7.6) and scaffolding (*cf.* 3.5.2) dominate reasoning about assessment within the constructivist paradigm. In terms of the interplay between informal and formal assessment in EFAL this suggests symmetry between informal and formal assessment.
- With the fourth secondary research question, the researcher wanted to establish the assessment requirements of EFAL as determined by the Department of Basic Education. To enable the researcher to address this question, four documents were studied. In conclusion, it was established that although balanced assessment was in principle recognised and supported, predominantly more attention was given to formal assessment in the documents. With regard to the interplay between informal and formal assessment, this tendency has an obvious influence in that the importance attached to formal assessment in EFAL classrooms could also outweigh the importance attached to informal assessment.

6.3.2 Findings originating from the empirical study

Entrenched in the primary research question (*cf.* 1.3.1), was the final secondary question (*cf.* 1.3.2) which focused on determining the relation between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms. By means of quantitative research in the form of a survey and the use of questionnaires, complemented by qualitative research in the form of a case study and the use of interviews and observations, the researcher attempted to provide answers to these questions. Hence, by means of triangulation, the empirical research revealed the main findings presented below:

- The common profile of the research participants reflected that the majority were females with an average age of 45; an average overall teaching experience of 10 years; an average teaching experience in EFAL in the GET phase of less than 10

years; holding a three year qualification in English and teaching in Township schools. With regard to assessment training, the participants seemed to have an acceptable understanding of what assessment entailed. The majority had access to policy documents of which they had a fair understanding.

- The research participants experienced assessment as outlined in official documents as regulatory, overwhelming and ambiguous (*cf.* 5.2.5 (iv) and 5.3.3 (i)), with a strong emphasis on formal assessment.
- Though questioning, classwork and homework (*cf.* 5.3.3 (ii)) were mentioned as methods used to complement teaching (*cf.* 5.2.5 (iii)), learner-centredness was not fully utilised in the sampled teachers' classrooms (*cf*. 5.3.5 (i)).
- Formal assessment was rated as being more important than informal assessment by the research participants (*cf.* 5.2.5 (iv), 5.2.5 (vi), 5.3.3. (iii) and 5.3.5 (ii)).
- The research participants' responses revealed uncertainty about the exact purposes of informal assessment (*cf.* 5.2.5 (v) and 5.3.3 (iii)).
- There was an apparent preference to use conventional assessment methods amongst the sampled teachers (*cf.* 5.2.5 (vi), 5.3.3 (iv) and 5.3.5 (iii)).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Derived from the findings discussed in 6.3, the researcher recommends the following in order to enhance the scaffolding of learning by focussing on the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 EFAL classrooms.

- Systemic educational changes have an enormous effect on teaching and learning success. It is therefore recommended that future developments and changes which impact directly on teaching and learning, be considered with open-mindedness and be founded on a sound research agenda by the national and provincial Ministries of Basic Education, as well as by the Department of Basic Education before implementation. Cognisance should also be taken of the differences and backgrounds of teachers. Planning and implementation of changes should not only be accompanied by the provision of on-going support in order to assist teachers, but they should also be involved in the processes of change. During the past few years, South Africa in its entirety bore the

consequences of too many ill-considered and too rapid changes in the education arena.

- Official Departmental documents related to teaching, learning and assessment should be piloted before implementation and should be formulated in a clear, specific manner by means of “user-friendly” language to ensure that it is accessible to teachers. Furthermore, opportunities for sharing and brainstorming specific curricular matters, such as assessment, should be facilitated to improve teaching and learning but also assessment.
- The philosophical and theoretical foundations of notions such as “learner-centredness”, “constructivism” and “scaffolding” should be uncovered to reveal their true practical value in terms of successful learning. In addition, the practical implementation of these notions should be demonstrated and practised.
- Departmental policy documents should be revisited to indicate clearly what characterises informal assessment and its importance with regard to successful learning.
- The notion of informal assessment should be intentionally promoted in order to realize learner centredness, scaffolding, creative and critical thinking.
- The Department of Basic Education should initiate guidelines and promote the notion of professional learning communities amongst teachers to improve teachers’ assessment practises.

6.5 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher acknowledges that possible shortcomings in any study could help to improve future research. The identification of deficiencies also draws attention to the fact that the results of research of any nature are only provisional. Hence, the following limitations were identified in respect of this study:

- The researcher made use of a bounded sample, meaning that only EFAL teachers within a certain province (Gauteng) and district (Johannesburg-North) participated in the research. As responses obtained from EFAL teachers residing in another province or district could be different, it is implied that the findings of the research cannot be generalized.

- Since the researcher was known to the research participants, their participation in the research or the responses they provided, could have led to reactivity or the Hawthorne effect to impress the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:98). This could have distorted the findings of the research.
- Although a mixed-methods research design was used, the quantitative part of the empirical research did not made provision for statistical conclusion validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:134) to make the conclusions more vigorous. The application of inferential statistics could have yielded additional and "wealthier" information.
- The researcher realised that her interview skills could be improved by applying prompting to enable interviewees to clarify or elaborate on their responses. Interview skills such as prompting, could have helped to generate more comprehensive data which would have increased the quality of the conclusions.
- The fact that there are more Township schools than ex-Model C schools in the district in which the research was conducted, could have distorted the research results.
- The research was approached by mainly considering teachers' inputs to address the research questions. For verification purposes, the perspectives of learners and learner' work could have enriched the data.
- The attitudes and dispositions of the sampled teachers towards assessment were only implied in their responses and were not explored. By exploring these aspects more in-depth, the research could have indicated that teachers' attitudes and dispositions towards assessment are powerful mechanisms in regulating assessment practises.

6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Once more, this study raised the researcher's awareness about the wide variety of assessment deficiencies in the South African schooling system. It would, therefore, be appropriate to consider research prospects related to the field of assessment. In this regard, the following possibilities are mentioned:

- The current research could be extended to other provinces, districts or subjects to determine how the interplay between informal and formal assessment is manifested in such environments.
- The current research could also be improved by applying another research design, ways of sampling and procedures for collecting data.
- The attitudes and dispositions of teachers towards the interconnectedness between constructivism, scaffolding, assessment and learner performance could be explored.
- An in-depth study could be embarked on, to determine and draw a comparison between the preferential assessment methods of primary school and secondary school teachers. As an alternative, one can also compare ex-Model C schools with Township schools in this regard.
- Research could be done to determine the impact of informal assessment on learners' performance in formal assessment.
- The implementation of Assessment *for* learning and its impact on learners' performance could also be investigated.

6.7 FINAL CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, based on the main findings mentioned in 6.3, it can be concluded that the interplay between informal and formal assessment in the sampled Grade 9 EFAL classrooms can be described as superficial. To substantiate this statement, the researcher argues that although the sampled teachers provided evidence that informal and formal assessment are practised in their classrooms, it is only done to maintain the notion of CASS and not to encourage scaffolding. The interplay between informal and formal assessment in the selected Grade 9 EFAL classrooms, and consequently teachers' assessment practises, are thus not convincingly embedded in Constructivism.

To implement CASS in order to stimulate learning, learner development and the improvement of learner performance, thus poses a challenge to the Department of Basic Education and teachers. The researcher is of the opinion that the acceptance of this challenge with a positive attitude, could co-determine the success of South Africa's education system in the years to come.

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Appendix A

North West University (Vanderbijlpark Campus)

Questionnaire for MEd studies on the topic:
The interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 English First Additional Language (EFAL)

To be completed by teachers who taught English First Additional Language to Grade 9 learners in 2011

Please complete the questionnaire by placing an X in the box of your choice (Sections A to C)
or
by filling in the information in the appropriate spaces (Section D)

Section A: Biographical information

1. Gender

Male	
Female	

2. Age

20 – 29 years	
30 – 39 years	
40 – 49 years	
50 – 59 years	
60 + years	

3. Overall years of teaching experience

0 – 5 years	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 – 25 years	
26 – 30 years	
30 + years	

4. Teaching experience in English First Additional Language in the GET phase

0 – 5 years	
6 – 10 years	
11 – 15 years	
16 – 20 years	
21 – 25 years	
26 – 30 years	
30 + years	

5. Highest teacher education qualification

Certificate in Education	
Diploma in Education	
Degree plus Diploma in Education	
Degree in Education	
Honours Degree in Education	
Master Degree in Education	
Doctoral Degree in Education	

6. Highest qualification in English

Grade 11 and lower	
Grade 12	
1st year higher education qualification	
2nd year higher education qualification	
3rd year higher education qualification	
Honours Degree	
Masters Degree	
Doctoral degree	

7. Type of school in which you teach

Ex Model C school	
Township school	

8. Current post level

Teacher	
Head of Department	
Deputy Principal	
Principal	

9. **With the exception of Grade 9s, to which other grades are you also teaching English First Additional Language?**

Grade 8	
Grade 10	
Grade 11	
Grade 12	
None of the above-mentioned grades	

Section B: Assessment background and support

1. **Did any of your formal studies at a Higher Education Institution include assessment related modules?**

Formal studies	Yes	No
Undergraduate studies (e.g. Diploma or Degree)		
Post-graduate studies (e.g. Hons.)		
Further additional studies (e.g. ACE)		

2. **Did you receive any assessment training from the sources mentioned below?**

Source of training	Yes	No
Department of Education		
Teachers' Union		
Higher Education Institutions		
School management		
Other education stakeholders such as publishers		

3. **Did you engage in any of the following self-study activities to broaden your own understanding of assessment?**

Sources	Yes	No
Reading of hard copy sources such as articles or books		
Reading of electronic sources such as the internet		
Participation in discussion groups / interest groups		

4. **Do you get any form of support regarding assessment from the people/parties listed below?**

People/parties providing assessment support	Yes	No
Head of Department		
Learning area facilitator		
Members of the School Based Assessment Team		

Colleagues teaching in the same Department		

5. Do you have a <u>personal copy</u> of the following documents?

Document	Yes	No
The National Curriculum Statement for English First Additional Language		
Assessment Guidelines for English First Additional Language		
The National Protocol on Assessment		
Learning Programme Guidelines for English Home Language, English First Additional Language and English Second Additional Language		

6. Rate each of the following documents in terms of <u>your own understanding</u> of its content related to assessment

Document	Clear	Vague	I don't know
The National Curriculum Statement for English First Additional Language			
Assessment Guidelines for English First Additional Language			
The National Protocol on Assessment			
Learning Programme Guidelines for English Home Language, English First Additional Language and English Second Additional Language			

7. Rate the <u>practicability (feasibility)</u> of the content related to assessment of each of the following documents

Document	Problematic	Unproblematic	I don't know
The National Curriculum Statement for English First Additional Language			
Assessment Guidelines for English First Additional Language			
The National Protocol on Assessment			
Learning Programme Guidelines for English Home Language, English First Additional Language and English Second Additional Language			

Section C: Assessment practices and viewpoints

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
C1.Teaching, learning and assessment				
1. I complement the teaching of content with classroom activities				
2. I monitor learners' classroom activities while in progress and provide support where needed				
3. I use the outcome of learners' classroom activities to guide my teaching practice				
4. I use the outcome of learners' classroom activities to guide their future learning				
5. I use the outcome of learners' classroom activities to guide my assessment practice				
6. I complement the teaching of content with homework activities				
7. I ensure that learners' homework activities are monitored and corrected				
8. I use the outcome of learners' homework activities to guide my teaching practice				
9. I use the outcome of learners' homework activities to guide their future learning				
10. I use the outcome of learners' homework activities to guide my assessment practice				
11. I complement the teaching of content with frequent formal assessment tasks				
12. I use learners' formal assessment results to guide their future learning				
13. I use learners' formal assessment results to guide my teaching practice				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
C2. Formal assessment				
1. I conceptualize formal assessment as assessment of which the results can be recorded and reported				
2. I believe that formal assessment provides a true reflection of learners' attainment of the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment standards				
3. I believe that more time should be given to formal assessment since it is the only reliable indicator of learner attainment of learning outcomes				
4. Most of my teaching time is spent in preparing learners for formal assessment tasks				
5. I structure formal assessment tasks in such a way that it accommodates progression of learning				
6. I engage learners in corrective and remedial work after each marked formal assessment task				
7. I primarily use formal assessment for learner promotion to the following grade				
8. Formal assessment prescriptions as stated in official documents interfere with my teaching time				
9. Formal assessment allows me to cover the curriculum extensively				
10. I believe that formal assessment stimulates superficial learning				
11. Formal assessment prescriptions as stated in official documents interfere with my learners' language proficiency				
12. I favour formal assessment more than informal assessment since it serves as a better yardstick to determine learners' progress				
13. Frequent formal assessment assists learners with multiple opportunities to show their understanding of learning content				
14. I provide learners with detailed written feedback during the marking of formal assessment tasks to assist them in their future learning				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
C3. Informal assessment				
1. I conceptualize informal assessment as assessment of which the results need not be recorded and reported				
2. I believe that more time should be given to informal assessment since it serves as a reliable and immediate indicator of learner progress				
3. I believe that informal assessment should complement formal assessment in order to gauge learners' attainment of the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment standards				
4. I believe that informal assessment stimulates 'deep' learning				
5. I favour informal assessment more than formal assessment since it requires less work				
6. I spent a large amount of my teaching time on learner engagement with the learning content				
7. Frequent informal assessment assists learners with multiple opportunities to show their understanding of learning content				
8. I tell learners at the start of a lesson what they are expected to learn from the lesson since it provides them with a sense of direction				
9. I ask learners at the end of a lesson to communicate what they have learnt in their own words				
10. I prepare a few core questions before a lesson that I can use to engage learners in the teaching and learning process				
11. I invite learners to ask questions during lessons to promote classroom dialogue				
12. I provide learners with immediate verbal feedback during teaching and learning events				
13. I encourage learners to monitor and check their own work for correctness				
14. I encourage learners to check each other's work prior to submitting it for final assessment				
15. I identify and respond immediately to learners experiencing difficulty with learning content during my lesson presentations				

Section D: Assessment orientation and problems

D1. What, in your opinion, are the purposes of assessment?

D2. List the formal and informal assessment methods you most frequently use in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom.

Formal assessment methods	Informal assessment methods

D3. List the problems you most frequently experience with the implementation of formal and informal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom.

Problems with formal assessment	Problems with informal assessment

Appendix B

Thank you for your time and participation

North West University (Vanderbijlpark Campus)

Interview questions for MEd studies on the topic:
The interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 English First Additional Language (EFAL)

Teachers who taught English First Additional Language to Grade 9 learners in 2011 to be interviewed

Interview question	Purpose of question
1. What is your opinion on how assessment is addressed in the current available policy documents?	To determine respondents' awareness and judgements of assessment related matters in current policy documents
2. Explain how you harmonize teaching, learning and assessment in your Grade 9 EFAL lesson presentations?	To determine how respondents make provision in their lesson presentations to integrate teaching, learning and assessment
3. Explain the purposes of assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom	To determine how respondents perceive the purposes served by assessment
4. How do you make provision for congruency between informal and formal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom?	To determine how respondents harmonize informal and formal assessment
5. Mention some formal assessment methods you most frequently use in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom	To determine whether respondents are able to differentiate between formal and informal assessment methods and to the establish which formal assessment methods are used most frequently
6. Mention some informal assessment methods you most frequently use in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom	To determine whether respondents are able to differentiate between informal and formal assessment methods and to the establish which informal assessment methods are used most frequently
7. What are the major obstacles you are facing with regards to formal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom?	To determine which obstacles respondents are experiencing with the understanding, planning, and conducting of formal assessment
8. What are the major obstacles you are facing with regards to informal assessment in the Grade 9 EFAL classroom?	To determine which obstacles respondents are experiencing with the understanding, planning, and conducting of informal assessment

North West University (Vanderbijlpark Campus)

Classroom observation tool for MEd studies on the topic:
The interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 English First Additional Language (EFAL)

To be completed by an observer and co-observer during lessons of teachers who taught English First Additional Language to Grade 9 learners in 2011

Observer:
Date of observation:
School code:
Teacher code:
Lesson duration:
Number of learners in class:
Lesson topic:

Factors to be observed	Yes	No
The lesson was learner-centred. **Comments**:		
Learners' prior knowledge was considered during the lesson presentation. **Comments:**		
The teacher assisted individual learners who experienced some form of difficulty with sections of the learning content. **Comments:**		
The teacher used some form of informal assessment during the lesson presentation. **Comments:**		
Learning goals were shared with learners. **Comments:**		
A variety of verbal questions were used by the teacher and learners to stimulate classroom interaction. **Comments:**		
Feedback was given in a constructive manner to promote learning. **Comments:**		
Learners were encouraged to practice self and peer assessment. **Comments:**		
Evidence of formal assessment artefacts. **Comments:**		
Evidence of informal assessment artefacts. **Comments:**		

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RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR OFFICES OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. PARTICULARS OF THE RESEARCHER

1.1	**Details of the Researcher**
Surname and Initials:	Raoof F.B.
First Name/s:	Fazila Banoo
Title (Prof / Dr / Mr / Mrs / Ms):	Mrs
Student Number (if relevant):	20480601
ID Number:	6504260044081

1.2	**Private Contact Details**
Home Address	***Postal Address (if different)***
3 Marigold Street	3 Marigold Street
Arcon Park	Arcon Park
Vereeniging	Vereeniging
Postal Code: 1939	***Postal Code:*** 1939
Tel: 016- 4281600	
Cell: 0790304977	
Fax: 011-3398869	
E-mail: FazilaRaoof@gauteng.gov.za	

2. PURPOSE & DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

2.1	**Purpose of the Research (Place cross where appropriate)**
Undergraduate Study - Self	
Postgraduate Study - Self	x
Private Company/Agency – Commissioned by Provincial Government or Department	
Private Research by Independent Researcher	
Non-Governmental Organisation	
National Department of Education	
Commissions and Committees	
Independent Research Agencies	
Statutory Research Agencies	
Higher Education Institutions	

2.2	**Full title of Thesis / Dissertation / Research Project**
The interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 English First Additional Language	

2.3	**Value of the Research to Education (Attach Research Proposal)**
The research will focus on the assessment practices of teachers and thereby highlight the importance of a balance between formal and informal assessment.	

2.4	**Proposed date of completion of study / project and submission of research findings to GDE**
Completion date:	**1 August 2011**
Submission date:	**31 January 2012**

2.5	**Student and Postgraduate Enrolment Particulars (if applicable)**
Name of institution where enrolled:	North- West University
Degree / Qualification:	Master of Education
Faculty and Discipline / Area of Study:	Teaching and Learning

Name of Supervisor / Promoter:	Professor Kobus Lombard

2.6	**Employer (where applicable)**
Name of Organisation:	Gauteng Department of Education
Position in Organisation:	Senior Education Specialist: Languages
Head of Organisation:	Mr. David Masebatlela
Street Address:	2 Reserve Street, Braamfontein
	Johannesburg
Postal Code:	2017
Telephone Number (Code + Ext):	011- 6949356
Fax Number:	011-3398869
E-mail:	David.Masebatlela@gauteng.gov.za

2.7	**PERSAL Number (where applicable)**

1	1	0	0	4	3	0	4

3. PROPOSED RESEARCH METHOD/S

(Please indicate by placing a cross in the appropriate block whether the following modes would be adopted)

3.1 *Questionnaire/s (If Yes, supply copies of each to be used)*

YES	**x**	**NO**	

3.2 *Interview/s (If Yes, provide copies of each schedule)*

YES	**x**	**NO**	

3.3 *Use of official documents*

YES	**x**	**NO**	
If Yes, please specify the document/s: National Protocol on Recording and Reporting, Gazette 29626, copies of learners' assessments (artifacts)			

3.4 ***Workshop/s / Group Discussions (If Yes, Supply details)***

YES		NO	x

3.5 ***Standardised Tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)***

YES		NO	x
If Yes, please specify the test/s to be used and provide a copy/ies			

4. INSTITUTIONS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

4.1 ***Type of Institutions (Please indicate by placing a cross alongside all types of institutions to be researched)***

INSTITUTIONS	Mark with X here
Primary Schools	
Secondary Schools	x
ABET Centres	
ECD Sites	
LSEN Schools	
Further Education & Training Institutions	

Other	

4.2 Number of institution/s involved in the study (Kindly place a sum and the total in the spaces provided)

Type of Institution	Total
Primary Schools	
Secondary Schools	6
ABET Centres	
ECD Sites	
LSEN Schools	
Further Education & Training Institutions	
Other	
GRAND TOTAL	6

4.3 Name/s of institutions to be researched (Please complete on a separate sheet if space is found to be insufficient)

Name/s of Institution/s
Hoërskool Linden
Hoërskool Randpark
Fidelitas Comprehensive School
Zifuneleni Junior Secondary
Progress High
Thaba Jabula Secondary

4.4 District/s where the study is to be conducted. ***(Please indicate by placing a cross alongside the relevant district/s)***

District	
Ekhuruleni North	
Ekhuruleni South	
Gauteng East	
Gauteng North	
Gauteng West	
Johannesburg Central	
Johannesburg East	
Johannesburg North	**x**
Johannesburg South	
Johannesburg West	
Sedibeng East	
Sedibeng West	
Tshwane North	
Tshwane South	
Tshwane West	

If Head Office/s (Please indicate Directorate/s)

NOTE:

If you have not as yet identified your sample/s, a list of the names and addresses of all the institutions and districts under the jurisdiction of the GDE is available from the department at a small fee.

4.5 Number of learners to be involved per school (Please indicate the number by gender)

Grade	*1*		*2*		*3*		*4*		*5*		*6*	
Gender	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**
Number												

Grade	*7*		*8*		*9*		*10*		*11*		*12*	
Gender	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**	**B**	**G**
Number												

4.6 Number of educators/officials involved in the study (Please indicate the number in the relevant column)

Type of staff	***Educators***	***HODs***	***Deputy Principals***	***Principal***	***Lecturers***	***Office Based Officials***
Number	74 (Could include HODs, DP, P teaching Grade 9 (EFAL)					

4.7 Are the participants to be involved in groups or individually?

Participation	
Groups	
Individually	x

4.8 Average period of time each participant will be involved in the test or other research activities (Please indicate time in minutes)

Participant/s	Activity	Time
Grade 9 Educators at cluster meeting	Questionnaire	25 Minutes
Grade 9 Educators in classrooms	Observation of EFAL lesson	+/- 45 minutes

4.9 *Time of day that you propose to conduct your research.*

School Hours	During Break	After School Hours
X (Observation)		X (Questionnaires and interviews)

4.10 *School term/s during which the research would be undertaken*

First Term	Second Term	Third Term
		x

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

Permission may be granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. ***The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.***
2. ***The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.***
3. ***A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.***
4. ***A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the***

principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.

5. ***The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.***
6. ***Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.***
7. ***Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.***
8. ***Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.***
9. ***It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.***
10. ***The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.***
11. ***The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.***
12. ***On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.***
13. ***The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.***
14. ***Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.***

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER	
1. I declare that all statements made by myself in this application are true and accurate.	
2. I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.	
Signature:	
Date:	

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR / PROMOTER / LECTURER	
I declare that: (Name of Researcher) Ms F Raoof	
1. <u>is enrolled at the institution</u> / employed by the organisation to which the undersigned is attached.	
2. The questionnaires / structured interviews / tests meet the criteria of: • ***Educational Accountability*** • ***Proper Research Design*** • ***Sensitivity towards Participants*** • ***Correct Content and Terminology*** • ***Acceptable Grammar*** • ***Absence of Non-essential / Superfluous items***	
Surname:	Lombard
First Name/s:	Kobus
Institution / Organisation:	North West University (Vaal Campus)
Faculty / Department (where relevant):	School of Education Sciences
Telephone:	016 910 3067
Fax:	016 910 3098
E-mail:	Kobus.Lombard@nwu.ac.za
Signature:	
Date:	

N.B. This form (and all other relevant documentation where available) may be completed and forwarded electronically to Diane.Buntting@gauteng.gov.za The last 2 pages of this document must however contain the original signatures of both the researcher and his/her supervisor or promoter. These pages may be faxed to (086 594 1781) or hand delivered (in sealed envelope) to Diane Buntting, Room 509, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg. All enquiries pertaining to the status of research requests can be directed to Diane Buntting on tel. no. 011 843 6503.

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	24 May 2011
Name of Researcher:	Raoof F.B.
Address of Researcher:	3 Marigold Street
	Arcon Park
	Vereeniging
	1939
Telephone Number:	016 428 1600 / 079 030 4977
Fax Number:	011 339 8869
Email address:	FazilaRaoof@gauteng.gov.za
Research Topic:	The interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 English First Additional Language
Number and type of schools:	SIX SECONDARY schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*

INFORMED CONSENT (TEACHERS)

Dear Teacher

I am busy with research for my MEd-degree. I need your assistance to provide me with information to complete the study. This document will provide you with information regarding the project and what your involvement will entail. If you feel comfortable with the contents of the explanation I will appreciate it if you could sign the section indicating your consent to take part in the study.

Kindly note the following before you give consent to participate in the project.
The aim of the research is to determine the interplay between informal and formal assessment in Grade 9 English First Additional Language (EFAL). The purpose of the research is to investigate and address assessment practices in EFAL classrooms in order to possibly improve learners' language competence.

With the assistance of your school principal you were identified to participate in the research, however, your permission is required to take part in the research.

Your participation is required to obtain the inputs of teachers currently teaching Grade 9 EFAL regarding their assessment practices by means of a structured questionnaire. The completion of the questionnaire will take place after school hours and will not take longer than 30 minutes. In addition, you **could** be requested to participate in a one-to-one interview and to be observed during a Grade 9 EFAL lesson presentation for data verification purposes. Please note that the interview will be conducted after school hours and will not take more than 20 minutes while lesson observations will be conducted during normal teaching hours of which the times will be agreed beforehand with you. The intention of the observations is NOT to evaluate your presentations, but only to gather supplementary research information. .

Participation in the research is not compulsory and you may withdraw at any time should you feel uncomfortable. Your inputs will be used for research purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

There are no direct benefits for taking part in the study. However, the findings of the research may in future assist teachers and learners of EFAL.

The research is conducted by a Masters student, F Raoof, under the supervision of Prof BJJ Lombard from the School of Educational Sciences, North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). If you have any questions or queries you can contact Prof Lombard at 016 910 3067 (work).

CONSENT:

I……. (full name) have read and understand the nature of my participation in the project and agree to participate.

Signature:…… Date:……