South African Journal of Education

Vol 23(4) 313 – 318

The inception phase of a case study of outcomes-based education assessment policy in the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area of C2005

Di Wilmot
Education Department, Rhodes University, P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140 South Africa
d.wilmot@ru.ac.za

This article describes the Inception Phase (January to December 2002) of an ongoing research project focused on the Grade 9 Learning Area of Human and Social Sciences of Curriculum 2005. The case study involves a dynamic interaction between a university lecturer, playing the role of 'outside facilitator', and the History and Geography teachers at two independent schools. The article describes how teachers in a given context respond to outcomes-based education assessment policy, and the tools and processes they use to develop the deep understanding inferred by policy (Republic of South Africa, 2000) to implement change in a meaningful way. The article consists of three sections. The first contextualises significant events which foregrounded and provided the impetus for the research project. It provides an overview of the theory informing the research and the goals of the research. The second analyses in narrative form the various stages of the Inception Phase. It describes a process of curriculum development which has involved the development of criterion-referenced assessment rubrics, a Learner and Curriculum Profile, and an audit of current assessment practices in History and Geography at the two schools. The article illuminates the time and effort necessary for creative and systemic curriculum innovation. The final section synthesizes the information gathered.

Introduction

The articulation of a new vision for education in South Africa in the White Paper on Education and Training (Republic of South Africa, 1995) has resulted in the development of a plethora of new education policies, all with the explicit purpose of reconstructing and transforming the legacy of the past. These encompass new priorities including, *inter alia*, achieving redress, equity, quality and democracy in education. Of significance to this case study is the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE), the vehicle seen as appropriate for achieving transformation, which is currently being implemented through a national curriculum (C2005) in the compulsory phase of schooling. In 2002, the implementation of C2005 started in Grade 9, the exit level of the General Education and Training (GET) band of the National Qualifications Framework. During the same year, a new national assessment system, leading to the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), was introduced.

C2005 has been described in policy documents as a "paradigm shift" because it represents a radical departure from the previous curriculum in terms of: theoretical underpinnings; structure and organization; teaching and learning processes; and assessment (Department of Education, 1997:1; Western Province Department of Education, 2000: 32). C2005 advocates a shift from a system based largely on the tenets of positivist epistemology and behaviourist learning theory to one located within the ambit of constructivist epistemology and learner-centred education. Key features of the new framework include:

- a view of learning as a complex and ongoing process of knowledge construction and meaning-making in which learners are actively engaged;
- a view of teaching/learning as an interactive process in which the role of the teacher is to facilitate, mediate and scaffold; and
- a broader notion of assessment as a process involving the gathering of evidence of learning from different sources using a variety of techniques; assessment serving multiple purposes, the primary purpose being that of supporting and promoting learning.

Integral to curriculum transformation processes has been the development of OBE assessment policy (Republic of South Africa, 1998) and a new national assessment system for the GET band. OBE assessment policy advocates a shift in assessment which mirrors contemporary international trends (Davis, 1998; Gipps, 1996; Shepard, 2000). The Grade 9 assessment model (Department of Education, 2002), advocates a shift to school-based teacher assessment with continuous assessment (CASS) constituting 75% of the final mark. It places greater responsibility and accountability on teachers for their learners' educational attainments. At present state control of schooling is significant in Grade 12, the matriculation level. The implementation of a centralised national curriculum and new national assessment system in Grade 9 ushers in a new era of increased state control at an earlier stage of schooling than at present.

The assessment model offers exciting possibilities for maximizing learning through the use of diverse assessment procedures and techniques; however, the mechanics of OBE assessment are complex. An ability to plan, develop and implement criterion-referenced assessment together with descriptive rubrics which link to curriculum goals and learning outcomes, and democratize assessment procedures through the use of self-, peer- and teacher-assessment assume a high level of teacher competence both as curriculum developers and assessors. The introduction of a new national assessment (the GETC) at the end of Grade 9, as a high stakes assessment, sets in motion a change process which, in some schools, had until now been ignored. The potential power of assessment as the engine for transformation should not be ignored. The National Department of Education's decision to postpone the GET certification process until the end of 2004 in order to, *inter alia*, "build capacity within the system; prepare teachers and learners for the assessment of outcomes; trial and develop recording and reporting procedures" (IEB Circular No 41/2002) provides a valuable window period for Grade 9 teachers and learners.

Theoretical perspectives

The literature on educational assessment reveals that assessment is in a state of transition globally and, while national contexts differ, pressure for change is being exerted by common forces. The following is significant to this study. Firstly, developments in the field of cognitive science have deepened our understanding of learning. This has helped to legitimize constructivist learning theories which view learning as an active and ongoing process of knowledge construction and meaning-making (Shepard, 2000:6-7). Within this perspective, assessment is at the heart of any educational enterprise. Secondly, the recognition of the potentially positive role of assessment in supporting learning and motivation has brought about a shift to school-based formative assessment involving an increased role for teachers. The literature shows that this has led to a myriad of new and varied 'authentic' tasks and assessment procedures to encourage 'deep' rather than 'thin' knowledge (Black, 1998:45; Davis, 1998:37-41; Shepard, 2000:11; Stobart & Gipps, 1997:15). It has made new demands on teachers in terms of time and management and has given rise to new dilemmas and tensions. More specifically, the issue of reliability and validity of school-based assessment has still not been addressed. For example, in the case of the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) in England, there has been a retreat from coursework because of the perceived subjectivity and lack of rigour associated with teacher assessment (Davis, 1998:6-7). In the case of the Life Sciences curriculum reform initiative, research has shown that testing and norm-referenced assess-

ment still dominate because teachers have a relatively limited understanding of the new theories of assessment (Murray & Wilmot, 2000: 10-11).

A burgeoning body of international evidence reveals the power of assessment as an engine for driving educational reform (Barnes, Clarke & Stephens, 2000:623; Davis, 1998:20; Koretz, Broadfoot & Wolf, 1998:302-305). It alerts us to the potential danger of increased state control through the imposition of centralized state assessment systems that are often overshadowed by political, as opposed to educational, agendas. Assessment is increasingly viewed as an instrument of system reform monitoring or system management. This trend, when viewed together with global economic forces, takes on a new significance in terms of accountability. Education, particularly assessment, is also being forced to respond to the needs of a modern global economy resulting in the integration of historically separate worlds of work and learning. The consequence of this has been the emergence of a new discourse that includes notions of skill, re-skilling, transferability, competence, outcomes and life-long learning (Edwards & Usher, 1994:6-9). This instrumental view of education, as serving the needs of the economy in which accountability is rendered by the measurement of learning outcomes, has evoked powerful critique (Davis, 1998). The extent to which current assessment practices can foster knowledge, understanding and skills, which transfer into adult lives or employment, is questioned. So too is the perceived disjuncture between curriculum goals that seek to promote the development of broad knowledge, understanding and rational autonomy and assessment focused on the attainment of narrow learning outcomes that atomize knowledge and learning (Black, 1998:46; Davis, 1998:45; Stobart & Gipps, 1997:15). The significance of the forces described, when applied to a South African context, in which education is seen as having an important role to play in the broader arena of socio-political and economic transformation, should not be under-estimated. Although beyond the scope of this article, this case study, albeit context specific will nevertheless provide empirical evidence of how issues identified in the international literature manifest themselves in a South African context.

With the political transition in South Africa, the outcomes-based C2005 has been promoted as a dynamic underpinning of our new democracy. Within the particular OBE hybrid adopted in South Africa there is a tension between the values at its core and the manner in which it has been imposed (Lotz-Sisitka, 2003:pers. comm.). As a state-initiated imperative for change, C2005 and its associated assessment model are impositional and instrumental. They impose a particular type of change linked to powerful political agendas of transformation while at the same time their flexible learner-centred methodology opens up more exciting possibilities for curriculum innovation than was previously the case. The extent to which teachers are able to implement C2005 meaningfully within the tension described will depend on whether or not they have a deep understanding of the new theory and then develop the tools to apply it (Van Harmelen & Kuiper, 1996:2; Wilmot, 1998:88; 2000:127).

Bernstein's theory (1990:183) of how a "privileged text" is produced, transmitted and acquired within a differential pedagogic field is a useful analytical tool for understanding OBE as the privileged text in South African education at the present time. Bernstein claims that the differential pedagogic field consists of:

- producers — the intellectual/research field where the text is developed;
- recontextualisers — the official (i.e the state's agents) and pedagogic (i.e. agents drawn from the universities, teacher educators and schools) who formulate the realisation rules;
- reproducers — the teachers who acquire and transmit the recontextualised text; and
- acquirers — the learners in schools.

According to Bernstein (1990:184-184) there is a complex set of relations between the official and pedagogic within the recontextualising field. His model recognizes the potential or actual source of conflict, resistance and inertia between the political and pedagogical. Depending on the level of autonomy given to the various agencies involved, what is reproduced in schools will arise out of the specific context of the school and the effectiveness of external control over the reproduction of official pedagogic discourse. This model, when applied to South African curriculum initiatives, suggests that if teachers are to engage meaningfully they need to position themselves as recontextualisers in the pedagogic field. In order to achieve this, they need to acquire an understanding of OBE in its fullness so that they can work creatively within the dynamic interplay between conflicting official and pedagogic agencies. This case study will analyse the role of an outside intervention in supporting teachers' acquisition of rich knowledge. This is vital for informing policy given the perceived disjuncture which exists between policy rhetoric and what is happening on the ground at present.

The Norms and Standards for Educators policy (Republic of South Africa, 2000) advocates the development of practical, foundational and reflexive competences which infer a deep, as opposed to superficial, understanding. As a university-based teacher educator, I am aware of the confusion and frustration experienced by many of our post-graduate students who have attended OBE in-service teacher training workshops run by the National and Provincial Departments of Education. From our students' accounts of the workshops one may infer that the National Department of Education's OBE advocacy campaign, located within a cascade model of teacher training based on short-term interventions (one- to five-day workshops), develops shallow or procedural knowledge. This was also evident at a one-day workshop which I attended on Grade 9 assessment policy implementation run by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) for the teachers at the two independent schools participating in this study. My perception, that the well-qualified and experienced teachers of the two schools were keen but ill-equipped to move ahead with the GET curriculum, prompted me to become directly involved in the process. So was born a collaborative research project between myself, a university lecturer playing the role of 'outside facilitator' and the History and Geography teachers at the two schools.

Rationale for the study

Research on policy implementation has provided valuable insights into the many factors, both personal and systemic, which enable or militate against change (Chisholm, 2000; Harley & Parker, 1999; Kgobe, 2001; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999). According to Rogan (2000:119) current efforts to implement C2005 assume that all schools are essentially the same and will therefore benefit from the same kind of training and implementation strategy. He contends that, while policy mandates for change — for example C2005 — are a national affair, the interpretation and implementation of change is a process which is context specific. He claims that "the process of change is an intimate affair that will play out differently in each and every school" (Rogan, 2000:119). We need to understand how teachers working in different contexts — each with their own particular set of problems, challenges and opportunities — respond to change. This necessitates the creation of "test beds" where the implementation of C2005 can be developed and researched (Rogan, 2000:119).

Despite the recognition that a broad spectrum of schools exist in South Africa at present, differing in terms of geographical location, socio-economic background, levels of resourcing and former administrative departments (Kgobe, 2001:3), research has focused primarily on previously disadvantaged schools. The writer accepts that this is important. At the same time, however, it is equally important that studies on policy implementation are done in atypical resource-rich schools. These schools, with their small classes and qualified teachers, represent the environments most conducive to the learner-centred methodology promoted by C2005.

Until the start of the collaborative research project in January 2002, the History and Geography teachers at the two independent schools participating in this case study, despite having received

guidelines for the implementation of C2005 from the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), have continued along their own educational course. This is evident, for example, in their non-compliance with the implementation dates of C2005 in Grade 8 in 2001. It was only with the impending implementation of the GETC (IEB Circular No 65/2001) that the teachers took action to implement national curriculum and assessment policy.

The two schools fare well when compared to macro-indicators — for example, infrastructure and equipment, pedagogical conditions and availability and quality of teaching staff — used to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the national school system (Bot & Schindler, 2000:58-65). This is evident in the two schools' excellent libraries, computer and science laboratory facilities; low pupil/teacher ratios; university qualified teaching staff; and the availability of a wide range of learning support materials and teaching aids. Their track record of high matriculation pass rates (100% in 2001 with 24% of candidates attaining an A aggregate and all candidates gaining a university entrance) suggests a strong culture of learning and academic excellence. Efficient and successful, these schools are best described as 'beacon schools' marking high points in the South African educational landscape. Herein lies a paradox: as well-resourced schools, they represent environments most conducive to the new curriculum and its philosophy and, as highly successful schools within the 'old' education framework, those which are most likely to resist change. As such, research efforts ought not to ignore the potential contribution these schools can make to enhancing our understanding of current educational transformation.

The research goals

The purpose of the research is to investigate History and Geography teachers' responses to OBE assessment policy in two independent schools and to analyse how the research intervention informs their acquisition of the deep understanding inferred by policy. The overall goals of the study are broad:

- to describe, analyse and document how teachers in a given context respond to the imposition of a new national assessment policy;
- to identify the extent to which teachers are able to develop an understanding of the possibilities and opportunities offered by policy through developing the deep understanding required;
- to describe and analyse the role of a school-based outside intervention in facilitating and supporting change located within a critically reflexive practice; and
- to analyse the findings and set them in the wider context of educational transformation.

This research focuses on a topical, important and frustrating issue in South African education. Developing an understanding of how teachers respond to the imposition of OBE assessment policy, the difficulties they encounter and how these impact on practice is seen as crucial. Although international research has provided valuable information in this regard, there is an urgent need to develop a solid base of empirical evidence specific to the South African context of educational transformation. Without this, policy makers have no way of gauging the implications of policy on practice. The value of the research will be to document, analyse and provide evidence of how teachers respond to policy and the type of support they need to develop a deep understanding of change. Although it is recognised that this research is a case study located within an atypical South African school context, it will nevertheless inform policy makers in South Africa. Further, it will open up and explore some of the issues identified in the international literature on assessment in a South African context.

Guided by the research goals, this study may best be described as participatory research located within a qualitative paradigm. According to Maykut & Morehouse (1994:174) the purpose of qualitative research is to "accumulate sufficient knowledge to lead to understanding." Given that this research is participatory, together with the contextual factors that have been described, I found myself entering the field with an emerging, flexible and open-ended research design.

Given that I will need to work closely with teachers, it follows that a considerable period of time will need to be spent in the field on a weekly basis for a period of some two years. This, together with the potentially unwieldy amount of data that is likely to be generated, as well as the goals of the study, made me adopt a case study methodology. It is recognised that the study does not seek to establish generalizations about the wider population to which the case belongs. However, some claims may be made for "naturalistic generalizations" (Stake, 1995:85) beyond the immediate study on the basis that other schools of a similar kind will be able to identify with the research story.

The research intervention consists of two interrelated phases spanning a period of two years. The next section describes the Inception Phase (January to December 2002) of an ongoing research project. It illuminates how nine History and Geography teachers, in collaboration with a university-based outsider, worked inter- and intra-departmentally to interpret, implement and trial OBE assessment policy in Grade 9 classes. It provides evidence of how an intervention can facilitate teachers' acquisition of the deep knowledge seen as necessary for meaningful application of policy.

The Inception Phase

I have outlined significant factors and events that provided the impetus for initiating a collaborative research project and the creation of a "test bed" (Rogan, 2000:119) where the implementation of change can be developed and researched. This section of the article describes the first phase of an ongoing collaborative research project which started in January 2002 and continues until December 2003. Using the metaphor of a journey, this section of the article describes the various stages of the Inception Phase (January to December 2002) and the tools and processes used by the teachers as they constructed a road through new educational terrain.

At our first meeting, the group of nine History and Geography teachers agreed to set aside a lunch hour for a weekly meeting. Since the end of January 2002, the teachers and I have met on a weekly basis. A willingness to find time, even if it meant sacrificing personal time, suggests a high level of commitment and professionalism in the group. During the first meeting, principles of procedure were negotiated and the teachers agreed that these would constitute the ethical framework of the collaborative research project. Joint responsibility and a shared sense of ownership of the process were developed through the election of a teacher as team leader and the writer as developer of a programme which would enable a re-orienting of practice in line with policy. Negotiation, shared responsibility, and co-ownership of the process have helped to engender a spirit of collegiality and mutual trust.

From the outset, the teachers decided that they would continue to follow separate but parallel routes for History and Geography but work collaboratively as a Human and Social Sciences (HSS) team. This approach is congruent with the shift from a 'hard' to 'soft' social science approach evident in the recent curriculum revision processes (Department of Education, 2001) with the articulation of Geography and History strands within this learning area.

Stage One

The first stage of the journey was from January to May 2002. Given that the school term had started when the project began in January 2002, I decided to use the theme or syllabus topic currently being taught in Grade 9 History and Geography classes as the point of departure. The teachers began by explicating their current practice via the construction of a concept map. This showed *what* was being taught, that is, the content, *how* it was being taught, that is, the methodology and *why* it was being taught, that is, the goals in terms of knowledge with understanding, skills and values. This marked the first step in shifting to an explicit pedagogy.

At the same time, the teachers read and analysed curriculum and assessment policy guideline documents (Department of Education, 1997; 2001). I mediated policy by developing summaries to show the relationships of the various constituent parts and how these could be configured to form a more meaningful whole. For example, I used a diagram to illustrate how critical and specific outcomes could be categorised, clustered and linked to domains of learning. Using an exemplar from a teacher's guide I co-authored (Van Harmelen, Wilmot & Hendricks, 2001:46-48), I showed how domains of learning had guided the development of a Learner Profile document against which evidence of learning could be recorded and judged. This helped to make the theory informing policy more accessible to the teachers. It enabled the teachers to use the new theory as a tool for examining their current practices. Working as they did at the theory/practice interface, the teachers enhanced both their practical and foundational competence. Besides developing a shared understanding of what was actually happening in an individual teacher's Grade 9 class/es in the two schools, the concept-mapping task demanded that the teachers explicate, analyse and evaluate their current thinking and practice in relation to policy. The concept maps provided a useful tool for engaging teachers with policy.

Having explicated and explained their current practice, the next step was to re-orient assessment practices in line with policy (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Guided by their concept maps, the teachers developed an assessment task for a section of work shown on their concept maps. Most teachers chose a task they had used previously. One of the History teachers led the team through his assessment task, analysing and explaining what was being asked in terms of knowledge with understanding, skills and values, and he explained how he used the mark allocation shown on the task sheet to assess the learners' responses. Although the teacher could identify, albeit with some difficulty, the criteria against which he would judge the learners' responses, his approach to assessment was intuitive, that is, based on a gut feeling and implicit. Other than a mark allocation, the task sheet offered little guidance to the learners.

Using an assessment pro-forma which I had developed for the task, I modelled the shift from an implicit, mark-driven, point system of assessing to an explicit criterion-referenced assessment approach. The pro-forma showed how the knowledge with understanding, skills and values could be explicated and described using assessment criterion statements and a descriptive rubric. Further, it illustrated how levels of competence could be used in conjunction with a mark system of grading. I also developed a criterion-referenced learner self-assessment sheet and showed how it differed from and complemented teacher assessment. The self-assessment sheet illustrated how the learner could be encouraged to develop meta-cognitive skills, that is, ones which require a learner to think about his/her own learning.

At our subsequent weekly meetings, we discussed the potential strengths and weaknesses of criterion-referenced assessment. This included, *inter alia*, the potential value of criterion-referenced assessment in guiding and supporting learning; the perceived danger of atomising learning; and the issue of time, particularly the time needed to develop criterion-referenced assessment pro-forma. The teachers then set about designing a criterion-referenced assessment pro-forma for the task they had developed. These were presented and evaluated by colleagues working in History and Geography specialist groups.

Since modelling the shift to criterion-referenced assessment in February 2002, the teachers have developed their own criterion-referenced assessment pro-forma together with descriptive rubrics. It has taken a great deal of time and effort on the part of the teachers and has involved considerable scaffolding on my part. Despite this, it has resulted in a shift to criterion-referenced assessment.

Parallel to the development and implementation of criterion-referenced assessment procedures has been the development of a Learner Profile document. Following a focus group discussion, in which the teachers articulated and justified their ideas of History and Geography, both as unique disciplines and as foci in the HSS Learning Area of C2005, the teachers set about developing their own Learner Profile document. The shared vision which resulted from the focus group discussion provided a foundation on which the construction of a more sophisticated Learner Profile document could proceed. The construction process involved setting up a dialogue between myself, the university-based outsider, and a sub-group of teachers. For a period of some months, we played a type of leap-frog game as we built on, extended and refined the original Learner Profile document I had used as an exemplar. The Learner Profile document which resulted from this developmental process represents an amalgam of the teachers' ideas, the learning outcomes of the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area of C2005 and the learning outcomes of Social Sciences Learning Area of the Revised Curriculum.

The teachers have used the Learner Profile document as a master curriculum planning document on which they have ticked the domains of learning covered during the Grade 9 year, and as a checklist against which they have evaluated what was, or was not, covered. Importantly, the Learner Profile document provides tangible evidence of how the teachers have reconciled their own professional beliefs about learning with national curriculum policy. The teachers recognise that further work needs to be done on the Learner Profile, perhaps in the direction of two or three documents. One is needed for profiling individual learning, another for mapping learning in a group format on a class by class basis, and another for mapping and auditing curriculum.

Stage Two

The next stage of the Inception Phase journey began when the teachers returned to school at the beginning of term in May 2002. While completing the implementation of the activities and assessment tasks developed for the topic (Topic 1) being studied in History and Geography, planning got underway for the second topic (Topic 2). Whereas in January, I worked with the teachers' current content-driven practices, while simultaneously developing their understanding of and capacity for change, I now modelled a different approach for Topic 2. To this end, I designed a co-operative learning workshop. Besides modelling effective groupwork strategies, the workshop engaged the teachers in a process of curriculum design, using outcomes as the starting point. This approach mirrored that advocated in the draft revised national policy (Department of Education, 2001) and afforded the teachers an opportunity to get to grips with outcomes-based education curriculum development processes.

Working in specialist subject groups, the teachers workshopped Topic 2. Using their Learner Profile document as a master curriculum planning guide, the two subject specialist groups negotiated an outcomes-based scheme of work. They agreed on appropriate units of work and discussed possible activities and teaching/learning strategies. The co-operative learning workshop was purposely designed to ensure that the teachers could not reach the common goal, namely developing a scheme of work for Topic 2, without a high level of inter-dependency. Limited resources were thus provided and individual teachers were assigned specific roles to ensure accountability and responsibility. Innovative schemes of work were developed. For example, after considerable debate, the Geography teachers shifted from a content-driven approach in which *Running water as a physical force* was the focus of study to an investigation of water within a broader holistic environmental framework that encompassed both biophysical and socio-political dimensions. As a result of the workshop, outcomes-based schemes of work were developed and implemented together with criterion-referenced teacher and learner self-assessment strategies for a variety of tasks including, *inter alia*: a book review; map-reading and interpretation; a poster-making task; a small scale research project; the construction of a time line; and a film review.

The task briefing sheets and assessment rubrics provide evidence which suggests that assessment for learning, that is, assessment which guides and supports learning — as advocated by policy — is being implemented in Grade 9. Not only have the assessment criteria been made explicit, they have been workshopped with the learners before

starting a given task. In this way the criterion of transparency has been met. Similarly, the criterion of democracy has been met by involving the learners in both self- and peer-assessment procedures.

Stage Three

Given the time required for completing the teaching and learning of Topic 2, the third stage of the research and curriculum development journey started in September 2002 rather than July 2002 as intended. This suggests that creative and systemic curriculum innovation requires considerable time and effort, and the pressure this creates for busy teachers, even in resource-rich schools with small class sizes, should not be underestimated.

The development of an integrated theme for History and Geography was a subject of intense debate. It was also the first time that the teachers in different subjects had engaged in cross-curricula planning. After lengthy discussion, the teachers agreed to develop units of work for a common HSS theme *Soweto 1976.* They set about writing a rationale in which they justified their choice of topic and identified and described the knowledge with understanding, skills, values and attitudes that would be developed in the Grade 9 learners. However, despite the time and effort that was spent on developing units of work, the implementation had to be put on hold during the third school term because of the arrival of the Common Task for Assessment (CTA). Despite the piloting of an integrated theme being cut short by the documentation and requirements of the CTA in October, a platform was laid for a collaborative curriculum planning process in 2003. The development of an integrated theme — *Soweto 1976* — provides evidence which suggests that the teachers are willing to experiment within a HSS 'learning area' framework as opposed to a subject-specific one.

In October 2002, the teachers conducted an audit of the tasks they had assessed for the continuous assessment (CASS) component of the Grade 9 assessment model developed by the National Department of Education (2002). For the purpose of the audit, I designed a sheet on which the teachers could audit their assessment practices. The audit enabled the teachers to analyse and evaluate the range of different assessment tasks they used in Grade 9 in 2002.

CASS portfolios, containing the five best pieces of work assessed during the year, were compiled by the Grade 9 learners in both subjects. The learners were responsible for selecting the work that they felt best demonstrated their achievements. The learners' portfolios provided tangible evidence of what had been done and achieved in Grade 9 in 2002.

Stage Four

In November 2002, the History and Geography teachers at the two schools took the decision to implement and trial the new instrument for assessment — the Common Task for Assessment (CTA) developed by the National Department of Education. While the teachers were generally positive about the new assessment tool (the CTA), with the insights gained through the preceding months of intensive curriculum development, they identified a significant disjuncture between 'rich' knowledge outcomes of national policy documents and the CTA Teacher's Guide on the one hand, and the Section A and B assessment tasks on the other hand. This prompted the writing of a report (Wilmot, 2002) providing a detailed evaluation of the CTA for Human and Social Sciences which was implemented and trialled at the two schools. The report acknowledged that the CTA, as a new instrument for assessment, is exciting and innovative. This said, it also illuminated and explained a number of problems and issues arising out of their experience of implementing the new assessment instrument. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore these. It is hoped that the report will inform the IEB and National Department of Education of the processes and results of piloting the GETC in a particular context and that it will offer a contribution to further discussion and refinement of the CTA.

This section of the article has described the Inception Phase of an ongoing school-based research project. It contains evidence which suggests that the teachers, working intra-departmentally and inter-departmentally and in collaboration with a university-based outsider, have engaged pro-actively and productively with curriculum development processes. From this one may infer a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to the current process of transformation of South African education.

The description has foregrounded the practical activities in which the teachers have been involved. To this end it has shown how the teachers, supported by an outside facilitator, have worked towards aligning their practices with national education policy. There has however, been more to the process than this. The teachers have also engaged with change on a theoretical level. This has been facilitated through a process of modelling new theoretical approaches, reading and attending workshops on the theory which informs change. In addition to national policy documents, the teachers have read articles on a variety of educational topics, *inter alia*: learner-centred education and constructivism (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hinchey, 1998; Moll, 1998; Wortham, 2001); critical thinking (Fisher, 1990; White & Gunstone, 1992); and assessment (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000; Pahad, 1999; Shepard, 2000). This has facilitated the interrogation of their own thinking and practice of education, and it has been a catalyst for the development of reflexivity so enabling them to refine their practices and develop new ones.

Conclusion

This article has described the Inception Phase of a case study on the Grade 9 Human and Social Sciences Learning Area of C2005. It has involved a dynamic interplay between a university lecturer, playing the role of 'outside facilitator', and the History and Geography teachers at two independent schools. It has described how the university lecturer provided points of reference to national education policy and to the literature and practices of constructivist knowledge and outcomes-based education.

The article has analysed, in narrative form, the unfolding and ongoing process of school-based curriculum development in Grade 9. It has explained the development of criterion-referenced assessment rubrics, a Learner Profile document, and an audit of current assessment practices in History and Geography at two schools. This article contains evidence which suggests that creative and systemic curriculum innovation requires considerable time and effort and the pressure this creates for busy teachers, even in resource-rich schools with small class sizes, should not be underestimated.

References

Barnes M, Clarke D & Stephens M 2000. Assessment: The engine of systemic curricular reform? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 32:623-650.

Black P 1998. *Testing: Friend of foe? The theory and practice of assessment and testing.* London: Falmer.

Bot M & Schindler J 2001. Macro-indicators 1998: An update. In: Kgobe MP (ed.). *Transformation of the South African Schooling System: Education 2000 Plus Report*. Braamfontein: Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Management.

Chisholm L 2000. *Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005.* Pretoria: Government Printer.

Darling-Hammond L 1997. *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Department of Education 1997. *Curriculum 2005: Lifelong learning for the 21st century.* Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Education 2001. *Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9 (Schools).* Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Education 2002. *Guidelines for the assessment of learners in Grade 9 in 2002.* [Online] Available url: http://education.pwv.gov.za/DoE_Sites/Curriculum

Edwards R & Usher R 1994. Disciplining the subject: The power of competence. *Studies in the Education of Adults,* 26:1-14.

Fisher R 1990. *Teaching children to think.* London: Stanley Thornes.

Gipps C 1996. Assessment for the new millenium. Inaugural Lecture. London: University of London.

Harley & Parker B 1999. Integrating differences: Implication of an outcomes-based National Qualifications Framework for the roles and competencies of teachers. In: Jansen JD & Christie P (eds). *Changing curriculum*. Cape Town: Juta.

Hinchey P 1998. *Finding freedom in the classroom: A practical guide to critical theory*. New York: Peter Lang.

Independent Examinations Board Circular to Principals No. 65/2001, 15 November 2001.

Independent Examinations Board Circular to Principals No. 41/2002, 18 July 2002.

Jansen JD & Christie P (eds) 1999. *Changing curriculum*. Cape Town: Juta.

Kgobe MP 2001. *Transformation of the South African Schooling System: Education 2000 Plus Report*. Braamfontein: Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Management.

Luckett K & Sutherland L 2000. Assessment practices that improve teaching and learning. In: Makoni S (ed.). *Improving teaching and learning in higher education: A handbook for Southern Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Mayut PS & Morehouse R 1994. *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophical and practical guide*. London: Falmer.

Moll I 2002. Clarifying constructivism in a context of curriculum change. *Journal of Education*, 27:5-31.

Murray S & Wilmot D 2000. Final Evaluation Report. Namibian Life Science Project. Education Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Pahad M 1999. Outcomes-based assessment: The need for a common vision of what counts and how to count it. In: Jansen JD & Christie P (eds). *Changing curriculum*. Cape Town: Juta.

Republic of South Africa 1995. Ministries of Education and Training. *White Paper on Education and Training. Government Gazette, Vol. 357 No. 16321*. Cape Town: Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa 1998. Department of Education. Assessment policy in the General Education and Training Band, Grades R to 9 and ABET. *Government Gazette, Vol. 402 No. 19640*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa (Department of Education) 2000. Criteria for Recognition and Evaluation of Qualifications for Employment in Education based on the Norms and Standards for Educators. *Government Gazette, Vol. 415 No. 20844*. Cape Town: Government Printer.

Rogan JM 2000. Strawberries, cream and the implementation of Curriculum 2005: Towards a research agenda. *South African Journal of Education,* 20:118-125.

Shepard LA 2000. The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational Researcher*, 29:4-14.

Stake RE 1995. *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Stobart C & Gipps C 1997. *Assessment: A teacher's guide to the issues*. 3rd edn. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Taylor N & Vinjevold P (eds.) 1999. *Getting learning right. Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project*. Johannesburg: Joint Education Trust.

Van Harmelen U & Kuiper J 1996. The place of knowledge and the knowledge of place. Paper presented at the Kenton Conference, Johannesburg.

Van Harmelen U, Hendricks M & Wilmot D 2001. *Investigating our world. Human and Social Sciences for Grade 8. Teacher's Guide*. Cape Town: Via Afrika.

Western Cape Department of Education 2000. *Doing OBE: Part 1. Educator's Manual Intermediate/Senior Phase*. Cape Town: Department of Education.

Wilmot D 1998. Translating theory into practice: A social constructivist approach to assessment in geography. *Proceedings of the Commission on Geographical Education Conference (87-104)*. Stellenbosch, South Africa, July 14-16.

Wilmot D 2000. Making issues-based enquiry a reality in South African classrooms through co-operative fieldwork. In: Kent WA & Jackson S (eds). *Geography and environmental education: International perspectives*. London: Institute of Education Geography, London University.

Wilmot D 2002. *Report: An evaluation of implementing the Grade 9 CASS and CTA at two Eastern Cape Schools, 2002, within a professional and curriculum development framework*. Education Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

White R & Gunstone R 1992. *Probing understanding*. London: Falmer.

Wortham S 2001. Social construction and pedagogical practice. In: Gergen KJ (ed.). *Social construction in context*. London: Sage.