THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

by

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BA; HED (UNISA); BEd (UNIZUL)

Submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the

Department of Foundations of Education

of the

Faculty of Education

at the

University of Zululand

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KwaDlangezwa
November 2007

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation *The role of continuous assessment in primary school* presents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Z F Nxumalo
KwaDlangezwa
November 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following:

- The Creator for abiding with me and for granting me fortitude to accomplish this study.

- Prof M S Vos for her unfailing guidance, support, motivation and supervision in my endeavour to prepare for and complete this study.

- Dr S Vilakazi who did the quality control in the completion of this study.

- My wife, Dudu, for her patience, understanding and constant motivation and support.

- My children, Xolani, Nozipho, Sicela, Sibongile and Thandeka who endured deprivation of paternal love, but also enjoyment, by sharing their father with an academic project.

- Mr T H Mfeka who continuously motivated me to further my academic potential and who reminded me of the talent God had given me.

- Mr B R H Thusi who, through his hard work, acted as a role model to me.

- Mr P Duma who introduced me to the world of academics.

- My typist, Mrs Jean Naudé, for sacrificing her time to type this dissertation.

- My editor, Dr M Sprüyt.

- The library staff of the University of Zululand (Durban-Umlazi Campus) for their assistance in obtaining books and journals required for the research.

- All the primary school educators who sacrificed their time in the completion of the questionnaires.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Friedah Ngenisile Nxumalo for her motivation, encouragement and love for education

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to pursue an investigation into the role of continuous assessment in the primary school.

From the literature study it became clear that the role of continuous assessment, as formative assessment, is to inform educators and learners about a learner's progress in order to improve learning. The information obtained by continuous assessment should be of such a nature, and be available at a time, that willl enable the learner to grow. Effective continuous assessment should involve the continuous updating of assessment of the performance of a learner.

There are many different methods that can be employed in continuous assessment and different ways in which they can be used. In order to improve assessment and to ensure the best feedback from it, the educator needs to find the method which best fits the purpose of the assessment. The purpose of continuous assessment is to assess all aspects of a learner's development.

For the purpose of the empirical investigation a self-structured questionnaire, to be completed by primary school educators, was utilised. The completed questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics.

In conclusion a summary was presented on the findings of the literature and empirical study and the following are some of the

recommendations that were made:

- *Educator development should focus on the skills needed by educators for the effective implementation of continuous assessment.*

- Adequate human and material resources should be made available to educators for the successful implementation of continuous assessment.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

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ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of transformation in education the government has introduced continuous assessment to replace the traditional approach that mainly focused on an examination system. Continuous assessment takes into consideration the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values a learner displays in his performance on his way to responsible adulthood (Nicholson, 2001:29).

Assessment *per se* is the strategic approach utilized to evaluate whether learners are ready to be promoted to the next grade. Sieborger and Macintosch (1998:13) maintain that different types of assessment are tools for promoting learners in school. Continuous assessment is currently implemented is schools and is concerned with the holistic evaluation of learners. It serves as a tool for following the principles of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as prescribed by the Department of Education (DoE). The function of the NQF is to approve the evaluation methods for continuous assessment.

Continuous assessment is based on the achievement of specific outcomes by learners, and educators are bound to gear their assessment towards achieving the prescribed outcomes (Spady, 1994:213). Continuous assessment bears value in the promotion of learners and educators should view the effectiveness thereof in collaboration with the current demands of the outside world.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

According to Fraser (1993:192) educationists, during the early nineties, voiced their disapproval of the traditional methods of assessment and demanded change. Continuous assessment was introduced to address this demand, and is considered by psychologists and educators as a new trend that not only places less emphasis on the intellectual ability of the learners, but also takes into consideration a learner's skills, attitudes, knowledge and values.

Le Grange & Reddy (1998:92) identify, *inter alia*, the following problems experienced by educators in the implementation of continuous assessment:

- Educators are not adequately equipped to implement and monitor this new type of assessment.

- It is not yet clear whether continuous assessment will meet the demands of the challenging outside world.

- There is still doubt whether continuous assessment will succeed in developing all the necessary skills in learners as well as the learner as a whole.

- It has as yet not been established whether continuous assessment is a fair and advantageous instrument for promoting learners.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem to be investigated in this research is to determine the effectiveness of continuous assessment in the promotion of learners in primary schools. Questions that need to be answered are:

- Is continuous assessment successful in the promotion of learners in primary school?

- Does continuous assessment succeed in the development of the necessary skills in the primary school child?

- Are educators adequately equipped for the effective implementation of continuous assessment?

1.4 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

This study on the role of continuous assessment in primary school will cover a wide spectrum of concepts. To ensure a clear understanding of the problem to be investigated it is deemed necessary to explain certain concepts.

1.4.1 Gender issue

In this study references to any gender includes references to the other gender.

1.4.2 Assessment

Pretorius (1997:82) describes assessment as a tool which assists the learner and the educator in ascertaining the learner's progress in school. It helps in the development of the learner by identifying learning problems and monitoring progress. Assessment is the means of obtaining information which enables educators, learners and parents to make professional judgements about the learner's academic progress.

1.4.3 Continuous assessment

According to Le Grange and Reddy (1998:11) continuous assessment refers to an ongoing process which takes place throughout the whole learning process. The learners' progress is periodically monitored. Sierborger and Macintosch (1998:25) view continuous assessment as taking place on and off throughout a course or period of learning. Continuous assessment is not only concerned with the cognitive aspect of the learner, but also considers other facets of the learner such as skills, attitudes and values. Nicholson (2001:29) describes continuous assessment, as an instrument for promoting learners' skills, knowledge, attitudes and values

The Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) curriculum requires that learners should be given ample opportunities to demonstrate to their educators what they know and what they can do. The implementation of continuous assessment demands that learners be assessed throughout the course of the year, bearing in mind specific outcomes to be achieved and techniques to be used. Techniques in continuous assessment involve among others projects, role-play, panel discussions, posters, presentations, demonstrations, debates, constructions, designs, etc. (DoE, 1998c:25).

Continuous assessment, therefore, can be defined as an ongoing process that measures a learner's achievement during the course of a grade or level, providing information that is used to support a learner's development to enable improvements to be made in the learning and teaching process (DoE, 1998c:130).

1.4.3 Assessor

According to Van der Horst and MacDonald (1997:201) an assessor is a person who is faced with the responsibility to evaluate the learner's progress

with the aim of determining whether or not the learner should be promoted to the next grade. These persons involve educators, parents or guardians, education development officers, occupational therapists, psychologists, district officials, learners and others.

1.4.5 Assessment criteria

The Department of Education (DoE, 1998a:14) describes assessment criteria as the observable processes and products of learning which serve as evidence of the learner's achievement. In broad terms it refers to the evidence demonstrated by the learner that he has achieved the specific outcomes as required. Assessment criteria involve the following (DoE, 1998a:14):

- The ability to criticise.
- The ability to critically analyse one's own and other's opinion.
- Growth in creative and other activities.

1.4.6 Educator

According to Griessel, Louw and Swart (1993:23) an educator is a person who has to fulfil a special task in the instruction and evaluation situation as pedagogic situation. An educator is both the transmitter of knowledge and a moral mentor.

Fraser (1993:10) defines an educator as a person under whose supervision didactic activities take place. The basic task of an educator is to educate and to help learners to acquire knowledge, insight and skills. In the didactic situation at school the educator is the person who is professionally and didactically trained and qualified as far as his respective subjects and occupation are concerned to carry out educative teaching.

1.4.7 Primary school learner

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:45) a learner is a person who has yet to attain adulthood, which includes all age groups, including infants, toddlers, preschoolers, primary scholars, adolescent and post school youth. Vrey (1990:85) says between the ages of six and twelve the learner usually attends the primary school. Du Toit and Kruger (1994:103) maintain that the grade one child differs considerably from the grade seven child with regard to cognitive abilities, physical stature and social and emotional development. The primary school years are divided into:

- The junior primary phase which extends from grade one (± 6 years) to grade three (± 8 years).
- The senior primary phase from grade four (± 9 years) to grade seven (± 12 – 13 years).

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- To pursue a study of relevant literature in order to determine the effectiveness of continuous assessment in primary school.

- To undertake an empirical investigation to establish the effectiveness of continuous assessment in primary school.

- To formulate certain recommendations based on the findings from the research.

1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research with regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

- A literature study of available and relevant literature on continuous assessment.

- An empirical survey comprising a self-structured questionnaire to be completed by educators in primary schools.

1.7 FURTHER COURSE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 will be a literature review of continuous assessment in primary schools.

An explanation of the research methodology followed in this study will form the contents of Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4 the data obtained from the questionnaires will be analysed and interpreted.

Chapter 5 will consist of a summary, findings and recommendations.

1.8 SUMMARY

An exposition of the problem to be investigated in this study was given in this chapter. Certain relevant concepts were defined, the method of research to be followed explained and the further course of the study was outlined.

In the next chapter a literature review of continuous assessment will be given.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Traditionally the evaluation of learners' progress was based on tests and examinations which focused only on the cognitive aspect of a learner while other facets were ignored (Jacobs & Gawe, 1996:291). According to Fraser (1993:192) traditional methods of learner assessment have, *inter alia*, the following disadvantages:

- The promotion of learners was based and confined to a specific number of tests and examinations during the year.
- Between tests and examinations learners were not always aware of their progress.
- Only tests and examinations were used as determinants of pass or failure of learners.
- Individual educators did assessment only.
- Learners did not get a chance to realize their strengths and weaknesses and improve on them.
- Traditional assessment methods demotivated weaker learners.

Continuous assessment is one of the aspects of the new approach to teaching and learning. Spady (1994:189) regards continuous assessment as authentic. Its authenticity lies in the fact that it gathers information directly pertinent to the quality of performance that perfectly embodies all the defined aspects of that performance. Torrance (1995:101) maintains that authentic strategies for assessment would not only consider a learner's memory, but also skills, attitudes, knowledge and values. Fraser (1993:189) sees continuous assessment as a component of the monitoring of educational activities. Effective teaching and learning can only take place if the learner, educator and content are constantly assessed.

Jacobs and Gawe (1996:282) state that continuous assessment has many advantages for both the learner and the educator. These advantages are, *inter alia*, the following:

- The promotion of learners is not confined to a couple of tests and one or two examinations a year since continuous assessment is an ongoing process.

- Learners are always aware of how they are progressing in their learning as everything is exposed to them.

- Sickness and other causes of absenteeism do not disadvantage the learners since assessment is continuous.

- Continuous assessment is not threatening to learners.

- Continuous assessment enables learners to realize their strengths and weaknesses as they learn.

- It provides opportunity for weak learners to improve their weaknesses.

- Continuous assessment is both formative and summative.

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

In the guide for the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) the following characteristics of continuous assessment are described (DESP, 1995:14):

- Continuous assessment is not concerned only with giving learners a mark and a place in class, but to help educators in identifying areas in which learners do not perform well. Educators could then decide on the type of remedial work that would assist learners in the areas in which they do not perform well.

- Educators do not only assess learners by means of tests and examinations but can utilise various methods of assessment, for example:

  - Evaluating written work and homework on a daily basis.
  - Observation of learners' oral performance, e.g. oral presentations, debates, role-play and other oral work.
  - Monitoring learners working in pairs, groups and as individuals.
  - Questioning learners to find out what they know and can do.
  - Listening to learners' responses to questions.
  - Taking note of the questions learners asked and the comments they make.

- The educator assesses the learner on a daily basis while normal teaching and learning take place instead of waiting until the end of a section of work, the end of the term or the end of the year.

- The information obtained by the educator on a continuous basis can help him to adjust his teaching methods accordingly in order for learners to improve their performance.

2.3 THE PURPOSE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

The general aim of assessing learners in Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) is growth, development and support (DoE, 1998a:5). The purpose of continuous assessment is to monitor a learner's progress through an area of learning so that decisions can be made about the best way to facilitate further learning in terms of expected knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

Assessment provides information about the learning difficulties and remedial action necessary to support learners who may be experiencing learning difficulties. The purpose of continuous assessment is not about promotion (pass, fail, conditional transfer) but about progression (DoE, 2000a:12). Continuous assessment serves to determine whether the learning required for the achievement of the specific outcomes is taking place and whether any difficulties are being encountered.

It is of vital importance to report to parents and other role players on the level of achievement of a learner during the learning process and to build a profile of the learner's achievement across the curriculum. Information regarding the evaluation and review of the learning programme used in the classroom is also important. This information will help maximize learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values defined in the National Curriculum Policy (DoE, 2000b:5).

The guide for the Diploma in Education, Senior Primary, outlines six aspects pertaining to the purpose of continuous assessment (DESP, 1995:11):

- Diagnostic.
- Teaching methodology.
- Motivation.
- Formative.
- Summative.
- Evaluative.

Diagnostic. The diagnostic purpose aims at the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the learner. As soon as weaknesses have been identified remedial measures can be taken.

Teaching methodology. *This aspect enables the educator to evaluate the* effectiveness of teaching methods and strategies used and change them if necessary.

Motivation. Learners' awareness that they are continuously assessed will make a difference to their end of year progress report, and intrinsically motivates them to do their best consistently throughout the year.

Formative. The formative purpose endeavors to monitor the learner's progress towards the set and agreed upon learning goals. After setting expectations, evidence should be collected to provide each learner and educator with feedback about the progress towards the set goals.

Summative. This purpose aims at evaluating the learner's understanding and achievement of the goals within a particular time frame. This is a formal reporting of achievement at certain stages of learning, for example at the end of the primary school.

Evaluative. This is an attempt to discover the manner in which the subject programme is working in relation to the expectations and goals set for the

learners. It is applied in order to evaluate certain parts of school-work and to monitor the standards of the school as a whole.

2.4 COMPONENTS OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Continuous assessment consists of two components, namely (DESP, 1995:12):

- Formal assessment
- Informal assessment

2.4.1 Formal assessment

The formal component of continuous assessment deals with competency levels. The learner's potentials such as insight, knowledge, problem solving skills, logical thinking, etc. receive recognition by the educator. These potentials are usually evaluated by control tests which are conducted during the first and third terms, and examinations which take place at the end of the second and fourth terms.

(1) Tests and examinations

According to Madaus (1998:103) there are various educational debates among educationists concerning the inclusion of tests and examinations as part of continuous assessment and the influence they have on the curriculum. The argument is that tests and examinations distort the curriculum and teaching in various ways.

Ebel (1979:134) believes that tests and examinations have a positive influence on education and tests and examinations are essential for good and productive education. He further argues that some learners only prepare themselves for the final examinations while not having participated

during the course of the year. Some learners can be discouraged by continuous assessment. The latter may occur when a learner continuously performs poor during the course of the year.

Gumede (2000:6) maintains that tests and examinations form part of continuous assessment. Marks obtained in tests and examinations are to be added at the end of the term or year as part of continuous assessment.

According to Jacobs and Gawe (1996:292) there are advantages and disadvantages of continuing with tests and examination as form of assessment in schools. The advantages of tests as part of continuous assessment are:

- They test memory skills.
- Tests enable the educator to see if the learners can work independently.
- The educator can assess if learners can finish activities within a certain time limit.
- Tests enable the educator to assess a wide range of learning aspects quickly.

The disadvantages of tests as part of continuous assessment are (Jacobs & Gawe, 1996:292):

- Tests take a lot of time to prepare and mark.
- They put a great deal of pressure on educators and learners.

- Tests are costly in time and money.

- They assess a limited range of abilities.

Whether a person supports tests and examinations or not, the most important aspect to remember is that all activities in Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) should have a purpose. Educators should thus have reasons for selecting specific assessment strategies. Tests and examinations should be selected for definite and appropriate purposes.

2.4.2 Informal assessment

The informal component of continuous assessment is concerned with assessing of learner behaviour. The following diagnostic measures should be taken into consideration by the educator in observing the learner's attributes such as behaviour, attitudes, confidence, self-concept, oral communication, social skills, technical aptitude and applied creativity.

Informal assessment plays an important role and should take place without learners being aware of what is taking place. Jacobs and Gawe (1996:282) identify the following examples of how informal assessment can be processed:

- Keeping a checklist of learners completing their homework.

- Noting who participates in class discussions.

- Listening and noting down what other educators say about learners.

- Observing who leads in group activities.

2.5 CRITERIA FOR TEST AND EXAMINATION CONSTRUCTION

Although the content of tests and examinations may differ from subject to subject, certain theoretical aspects are universal. According to Fraser (1993:196) tests and examinations must be reliable, valid, objective, practical to apply, discriminatory and balanced.

2.5.1 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which measures from a tests or examination are consistent. Griessel, Louw and Swart (1993:196) describe reliability as the *extent to which the same test (examination) produces the same results* if the same learners under the same conditions write it. A test is considered reliable if repeated implementation thereof produces the same results.

Correlation coefficients are used to determine the reliability of tests and examinations. The correlation coefficient is a number that is calculated to indicate the size and direction of the degree of relationship between the test (examination) marks. A set of marks obtained for a specific test or examination is correlated with a set of marks obtained by a similar group of the same test. The reliability coefficient varies between -1 and +1; the latter indicates a perfect positive relationship or highest possible reliability (Loubser, 1993:184).

2.5.2 Validity

The term validity refers to the fact that a test should measure what it is supposed to measure (Van Rooy, 1993:293). If the educator's intention is to measure the mathematical ability of a grade 6 learner whose first language is not English, then long sentenced problem statements should be avoided in the test. If a learner does badly in such a test the educator may not be able

to establish with certainty whether mathematics or English was the root of the problem.

2.5.3 Objectivity

When learners read a question in a test or examination an assumption arises that there is a possibility of a variety of answers. Likewise, if the same question is given to a group of subject educators each of them may compile a slightly different memorandum (Jacobs & Gawe 1996:292). These differences are an indication of people's interpretative skills and are subjective (Hargreaves, 1990:114).

To reduce the subjective element in tests and examinations questions should be framed carefully and ambiguity and misinterpretation must be avoided. Davis (1981:18) says the more objective questions are in tests and examinations, the better the likelihood that both the learners and the examiners will arrive at similar answers. Greater objectivity is one of the factors which increase test reliability.

2.5.4 Practical applicability

According to Stuart (1985:92) a test must be of a practical nature. It is senseless to test learners' skills in practical work by means of a written test. Van Rooy (1993:197) maintains that this is only a power test, that is a test where achieving a certain standard is a prerequisite for the completion of the test. An example of such a test is typing tests, where a certain number of words per minute must be achieved and enough time must be made available for the completion of the test. If these requirements are not met, the test is impractical.

2.5.5 Discrimination

One of the functions of a good test is that it should be able to distinguish or discriminate sufficiently between able and less able learners (Jacobs & Gawe, 1996:294). If most of the marks obtained by the learners lie around the same score then the tests is said to have a weak discriminatory index. The educator can increase test discrimination by selecting questions which test knowledge as well as interpretation and should avoid overemphasizing lower order skills (Van Rooy, 1993:206).

2.5.6 Balance

Verster (1993:96) maintains that a good test should be balanced in terms of its coverage of knowledge, higher and lower order cognitive, practical and theoretical skills, as well as the time allocated per question and the proportion of objective and subjective test items.

The number of questions per topic should reflect the emphasis and therefore the time taken up by that topic during the course. The number of questions should be more or less evenly distributed between the levels of the cognitive domain, depending on the course objectives. Educators should try to include critical thinking questions and practical skills, for example, testing pollutants in the laboratory (Butler, 1999:164).

2.6 MANAGING CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

The management of continuous assessment is one of the educator's responsibilities. The basic principles underlying management of continuous assessment are (DoE, 2000a:18):

- **Designing down.** This concept refers to planning backwards. The outcome to be addressed through teaching and learning are first clearly stated before developing the teaching and learning activities the learners will be engaged in. In their planning educators should start by identifying outcomes to be assessed from those to be addressed through teaching and learning. They should then choose appropriate assessment techniques and activities to be used when assessing the chosen outcomes.

- **Clarity of focus.** According to this principle everyone involved should have a clear picture of what is expected at the end. This implies that educators must ensure that learners are clear about the criteria against which they are to be assessed and what they are expected to demonstrate.

- **High expectations.** This implies that educators must assist learners to their full potential.

- **Expanded opportunities.** This refers to the fact that educators should find multiple ways of exposing learners to learning opportunities that will help them demonstrate their full potentials in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

2.7 PLANNING CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Generally different levels of assessment refer to the structure of educational bodies or institutions, which have an umbrella controlling function on learner assessment (Fraser, 1993:190). The controlling levels comprise macro, mesa and micro levels (DoE, 1998a:19):

- **Macro level of assessment.** Assessment planning commences at macro planning level with the whole staff and members of the governing body. At this level the phase organisers through which the eight learning areas will be addressed are identified. This level also includes the constitution of the school assessment policy comprising issues that parents will expect to be reflected in the report cards at the end of each quarter or end of each year.

- **Meso level of assessment.** Immediately after the processing of macro planning the phase educators meet to identify all the specific outcomes (SOS), assessment criteria (ACS) and performance indicators (PIS) to be covered in each learning program (LP) with regard to the phase and programme organisers.

- **Micro level of assessment.** The micro level of assessment is usually regarded as the level at which the educator and learner operate. It includes all the educators' and learners' assessment activities. At this level, assessment is usually done by the educator and learners themselves using different assessment techniques. The main focus is on day to day assessment planning and implementation. It ensures that assessment is integrated into teaching and learning. Targeted outcomes are aligned to activities so that assessment can be credited as well as being valid and reliable.

2.8 TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment strategies entail the utilization of a variety of methods to give learners ample opportunity to demonstrate their abilities more fully. The choice of what assessment strategies to use is a subjective one, unique to each educator, grade and school, and dependent on the educator's professional judgement.

The availability of space and resources influences this assessment decision; however, even when resources are similar educators differ in the way they make their assessment choices.

The methods chosen for assessment activities must be appropriate to the assessment standards and the purpose of the assessment must be clearly understood by all learners and educators involved (RNCS, 2002:54).

Educators utilise various types of assessment to evaluate the performance of learners. Among these types of assessment are the following:

- Evaluative assessment.
- Formative assessment.
- Diagnostic assessment.
- Summative assessment.
- Norm referencing.
- Criterion referencing.
- Self assessment.
- Peer assessment.

2.8.1 Evaluative assessment

According to Hawkins (1998:155) the term evaluative means to estimate the value of something. Evaluative assessment is usually applied at the beginning of a new set of activities, usually at the beginning of the new year. The purpose of this type of assessment is to enable the educator to establish the amount of knowledge learners are already equipped with and the skills they have.

Evaluative assessment also assists the educator to compare the aggregate information about the learner's achievements so that it can be used to assist

in curriculum development and evaluation of teaching and learning (Parker, 1998:19). This type of evaluation helps to inform the educator of the learner's previous knowledge which will serve as foundation on which to impose new knowledge.

2.8.2 ***Formative assessment***

Formative assessment aims at informing the educator about the learning experience of each learner and takes place during the learning process (Jacobs & Gawe, 1996:280). This means that formative assessment aims at helping learners grow and progress.

Formative assessment involves a developmental approach and is designed to monitor and support the learning process. It builds on learning activities on a continuous basis, guiding the learner and the educator through constructive feedback (DoE, 1998b:27). According to Raggatt (1994:18) formative assessment can motivate learners through the admission of personal experience as a relevant source of learning and of data for assignment, and through feedback from the educator which can help learners to develop self-esteem and confidence in their development.

Formative assessment is applied so that the positive achievements of the learner may be recognised and discussed and the appropriate next steps may be planned. In other words this type of assessment enables the educator to discover the learner's strengths and weaknesses and address them, and to do remedial work.

2.8.3 Diagnostic assessment

Certain learners have certain learning difficulties and diagnostic assessment aims at discovering and addressing these difficulties. This is done by identifying the nature and cause of these learning difficulties. The educator can consult with other or previous educators or parents of the learner to learn more about his learning difficulties.

After the learning difficulties have been identified and scrutinized, the educator endeavours to provide appropriate remedial assistance and guidance.

2.8.4 Summative assessment

Jacobs and Gawe (1996:280) describe summative assessment as the type of assessment which takes place at the end of learning experiences and is always norm referenced. This usually means a major test or examination written at the end of a school term or a school year. Summative assessment aims at finding out how much subject content a learner can remember. Traditionally the promotion of learners to the next grade depended on summative assessment.

Summative assessment encompasses a series of assessment activities taken simultaneously resulting in an overall report on the performance of the learner. It should be seen as formative feedback to the learner and educator. The result should feed into the next planning stage (Freiberg, 1996:87).

2.8.5 Norm referencing

Manno (1995:720) maintains that a norm is a standard or yardstick which implies that the educator assesses a learner's competence by comparing it to the competence of other learners. Traditionally norm referencing was done by means of class averages. Individual learners' marks are calculated and compared to the performance of all the learners in that particular class.

Norm referencing does not indicate what the learner has already learnt or what has not yet been learnt.

2.8.6 Criterion referencing

Criterion referencing refers to the practice of assessing a learner's performance against an agreed set of criteria. In case of OBE the learner is assessed against agreed criteria derived from the specific outcomes (DoE, 1997c:14). Criterion referencing uses criteria as reference points (Wolf, 1995:9). Criteria are reference points against which other things can be assessed. The criteria as reference points are specified beforehand and the learner is only assessed according to these criteria. Some examples of specified criteria may be punctuality, self-control, responsibility, cooperation, respect, leadership, cleanliness and good manners.

2.8.7 Self-assessment

One of the aims of assessment is to develop learners to become loyal and responsible beings. The relevant type of assessment to be applied in achieving this goal is self-assessment. Vogel (1997:3) maintains that learners need to be taught how to assess their own work. This practice encourages learners to assume more responsibility for their own work.

Educators are expected to involve learners in the selection of assessment criteria to be used. However, educators should be more alert when criteria are chosen. Assessment criteria chosen should always be in line with what the educator expects his learners to achieve in a lesson.

Jacobs and Gawe (1996:285) say the important role played by self-assessment is that:

- it helps learners to think critically about their own work;
- if done properly learners have a good idea about their progress;
- it encourages learners to take more responsibility for their own learning; and
- educators can give learners much more meaningful feedback.

2.8.8 Peer assessment

According to Hawkins (1998:320) the term peer refers to someone who is equal to another in rank or merit. Argall (2001:72) sees a peer as someone who is either the same age or in a similar position as oneself.

Peer assessment refers to the process whereby learners assess one another's work. This can be an individual task where learners assess one another or how another learner performed in a group task (DoE, 1998b:36). Educators have to teach learners how to conduct peer assessment.

According to Pahad (1997:24) peer assessment is advantageous to learners in the sense that:

- It is a real attempt of involving learners in assessment.

- It is a more transparent form of assessment as it involves more than one person.

- Group and paired activities are designed to suit peer and self-assessment.

- Learners are encouraged to help each other in peer activities.

2.9 ASSESSMENT METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

As stated by the Department of Education (DoE, 1997a:3) continuous assessment must be undertaken using assessment tools and techniques. Educators should have a sound knowledge of what each technique offers. A variety of methods, appropriate tools and techniques which commensurate with the learners' needs, must be used. Chosen methods, tools and techniques must provide a range of opportunities for learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

There is a wide range of assessment strategies that may be used to measure learner performance or the achievement of learners. An assessment tool that is chosen must be aligned to fit the identified purpose of the assessment, and the educator's choice of method depends to a great extent on what is to be assessed (Facilitator's Guide, 2000:22).

The Department of Education discuss the following assessment methods, tools and techniques in their assessment policy (DoE, 1998b:25):

2.9.1 Assessment methods

Assessment methods relate to the procedures the educator wishes to follow in order to assess the learners. These procedures include self-assessment, peer assessment and group assessment.

Self-assessment. In self-assessment learners are guided to take responsibility for their own learning. A learner assesses his own performance against the desired outcomes and is then able to decide what he needs to do in order to improve his own performance.

Peer assessment. Peer assessment is the process of using learners to determine one another's achievement against clearly defined outcomes (Torrance, 1995:87). This can involve individual tasks where learners assess one another, or group tasks where one learner assesses how another learner performed in a group task.

Group assessment. Group assessment can be used for a task where a group of learners will work together to achieve an outcome. This is when groups within one class assess each others performance on a given task with specified criteria (Lazarus, 1997:123).

The second critical outcome in OBE stresses the importance of group work. Learners should be encouraged to work effectively with others in a team, group, organization and community. Some activities are better done in pairs or groups of learners. Some of the activities that can work well when done in pairs or groups are role-play, drama or acting, debates, discussions, brainstorming and sharing ideas (Lorraine, 1996:287).

2.9.2 Assessment tools

An assessment tool may be an instrument that the educators uses when assessing the learners and which is appropriate to the method of assessment (DoE, 1998b:25).

The following are some of the assessment tools suggested in the Facilitator's Guide (2000:29):

- Observation sheets.
- Rubrics or assessment grids.
- Class lists.
- Journals.

Observation sheets. This is an assessment tool in which the educator records his observations about a learner. The educator observes the learner against a criterion. The specific skills, behaviour pattern and achievements that the learner demonstrates, must be linked to the learning programme outcomes and be readily observable (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:67).

Rubrics or assessment grids. A rubric is a set of criteria that is used to ensure that different parts of a task are assessed. A rubric can be assigned in the form of a grid. It can, however, simply be a list of what is assessed, who assesses and what assessment key is used, for example "not yet achieved".

A rubric is a handy tool for gathering information. It can seldomly be used on its own to determine whether an assessment criterion or a specific outcome has been achieved. Thus other rubrics and assessment tools could be used in a given learning experience to contribute towards formal recording (Brown, 1998:118).

Class lists. According to Davidoff (1997:79) class lists are for ensuring that individual learners are assessed systematically. It can, for example, assist the educator to check how many times each learner has read. These lists can be adapted to help the educator to record broad groupings within the class in terms of allocating follow-up work.

Each learner can keep a journal in which he reflects on his own learning and/or writes about his life in general. The educator mustd keep the learner's journal strictly confidential. The educator can share this journal with the learner and write his own comments and messages in it (DoE, 2000a:3).

2.9.3 Assessment techniques

A technique may be a special way in which the educator uses a method and a tool to provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their performance. It may also be the way the learner chooses to demonstrate evidence of attainment (Artel & Spandel, 1991:72).

Assessment techniques include, among others, interviews, conferencing, written assignments, oral questions and answers, portfolios and performance assessments. The Department of Education explains these assessment techniques as follows (DoE, 2000a:28):

Interviews. Interviews can be held between learner and educator, or learner and learner, or they can involve parents as well. Interviews can be both formal and informal and can include discussions, for example, on a research project or a scientific experiment.

Conferencing. Conferencing refers to a group of learners having an effective dialogue about a project. It is a common binding interest to reach a certain targeted outcome. With this technique educators act as

consultants or coaches. They have control over the meeting and have the responsibility of directing the communications. Conferencing demands a thorough and thoughtful preparation on the part of the educator (Van der Horst & MacDonald, 1997:94).

Written assignments. Written assignments should be assessed using a set of criteria or a marking memorandum. This should be given to the learners for them to note their performance and to know how to improve their future levels of performance.

Oral questions and answers. This is where learners listen attentively, interact with the educator or other role players and respond with interest. Peacock (1990:128) suggests the following questions:

- Open ended questions.
- Questions to stimulate creative thinking.
- Problem solving questions.
- Application questions.

Portfolios. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of a learner's work such as projects, journals, assignments, etc. These exhibit to the learner, parent, educator and other interested bodies the progress of the learner in relation to expected outcomes (Artel & Spandel, 1991:87).

Performance assessment. Performance assessment focuses on the process as well as the product. The learner's ability to think, imagine, solve problems and to produce an acceptable performance or product are assessed. This technique can also be used to assess the learner's growth towards achieving the outcomes (Van der Horst & MacDonald, 1997:169).

2.10 RECORDING AND REPORTING LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Cumulative evidence of learner achievement must be recorded (DoE, 1998b:23). These records should accompany all learners throughout their learning paths. Cumulative records should include information on the holistic development of the learner, such as the development of values, attitudes and social development. Portfolios should be built over a period of time and retained as visible proof of development of the learner and improvement of a learner's achievement. Samples of a learner's work included in portfolios should show that they are able to integrate knowledge, concepts and skills and that learners have not been assessed only on memorization of information.

2.10.1 Recording learners' performance.

Recording of a learner's performance can be categorised into formal and informal records of assessment.

(1) Formal records of assessment

These are systematic records of the assessment tasks performed by learners. This is the gathering of information and the progress of the performance of learners over time. These records are about the stated outcomes for specific assessment tasks (DoE, 1998a:37).

According to Marneweck and Rouhani (2000:311) the relevant strategies for recording learner assessment are record books and assessment portfolios. Some activities are best assessed by giving marks, some by giving symbols and others by making written comments.

(2) Informal records of assessment

Informal records of assessment refer to the short notes or comments that an educator writes which are based on the day-to-day observation of learners.

These observations assist the educator in future planning and the adjustments an educator makes about a learner's performance.

According to Sieborger and Macintosh (1998:17) assessment records should be:

- Uncomplicated and easily interpreted by the educator and others.
- Flexible enough to accommodate the addition and deletion of information when the need arises.
- Genuine factual indications of learners' strengths and areas in which support is needed,
- Comprehensive enough to demonstrate learner progress.
- Readily accessible.
- Kept in a secure place to protect the confidentiality of learner progress

2.10.2 Reporting learners' performance

According to Loubser (1993:192) reporting to the relevant stakeholders on the learners' level of performance should be done periodically by the educator.

Reporting is an essential and multifaceted process. It provides a great deal of important information that can be used by a variety of audiences for a number of purposes. According to Pahad (1997:61) these purposes include:

- Describing and detailing the learning that has taken place and the complexity of the learning achieved by learners.

- Outlining learner strengths and support needed for subsequent educators which ensure the continuity of educational programmes.

- Detailing plans for future learning.

- Enabling parents/guardians to participate in the learning process of their children.

- Making educators more accountable to the stakeholders.

There is a vital need for information about learner performance to be conveyed to relevant role players. An educator's report should provide a clear impression of personal knowledge of the learner, summarised achievement and progress, and provide useful feedback to evaluate and improve learning and teaching (Meisels & Steele, 1991:87).

The stakeholders to whom the performance of the learner should be reported are the learners themselves, parents or guardians, other educators, schools, prospective employers, donors, educational support personnel and district assessment teams (Rust, 1994:103).

Reporting and communicating information about the learner's performance to relevant people groups can be done through formal and informal

meetings, written reports, profiles, discussions, assessment portfolios, progression schedules, report cards and cumulative record cards (Marneweck & Rouhani, 1996:319).

Report card. The report card should clearly and accurately give a summarised description of the strengths and developmental needs of the learner. Irrespective of the medium of communication the report should give a positive description of the learner in each learning programme (DoE, 2000a:65).

Jacobs and Gawe (1996:321) maintain that whenever marks are used the marks represented on the report card need to come from a variety of continuous assessment activities. More emphasis need to be placed on remarks about the learner's progress and the educator should give the parent an idea on how to assist his child, if necessary. Learners' portfolios can also be shown to the parents to give them additional information concerning the progress of their children at school.

Profile. A learner profile is a panoramic representation of a learner's qualities as observed by educators. It is an up-to-date database on all information that may assist the learning process collected throughout the learner's path. It also includes records of a learner's progress collected over a period of time. This record consists of a wide range of activities that give a holistic view of the nature of the learner, e.g. strengths, areas that need support and achievement (Lubisi, 1997:18).

Cumulative record card. A cumulative record card of a learner should move with the learner from grade to grade, phase to phase and school to school. This record should include a learner's details such as personal information, personal health, attendance record, achievements and areas where support

is needed, special support given, a summative overall report on the progress of the learner and the progression records of each school year (Kotzé, 1999:72).

Progression schedule. A progression schedule is a tool used to give a summative record of performance of all the learners in a grade. It is also used as a monitoring and moderation tool to ensure quality in the assessment process. It also reflects the progress records in the report card to the parent (Parker, 1998:33).

The progression schedule should contain the following information (RNCS, 2002:57):

- The name of the school and the school's official stamp.
- A list of the learners in each grade.
- Codes for progress in each learning area.
- Codes for progress in grades.
- Comments on strengths and areas of support in each learning area.
- Date and signature of the principal, educator and department official.

2.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter various aspects concerning continuous assessment were discussed. The effectiveness of continuous assessment depends on carefully kept records of a learner's work throughout a subject, building up gradually into a profile of his performance.

The characteristics and purpose of continuous assessment were described. An important characteristic of continuous assessment is that it is not mainly concerned with giving learners a mark and a position in class, but also to help educators in identifying areas in which learners experience problems. The purpose of continuous assessment is to monitor all learners' progress through an area of learning so that decisions can be made about the best way to facilitate further learning in terms of expected knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

The components of continuous assessment are formal and informal assessment. Formal assessment deals with the learner's competency levels such as insight, knowledge, problem solving, skills, logical thinking, etc. which are evaluated by tests and examinations. Informal assessment is concerned with the learner's behaviour such as attitudes, confidence, self-concept, oral communication, social skills and applied creativity.

In forming part of continuous assessment, tests and examinations must be reliable, valid, objective, practical, applicable, discriminatory and balanced. Other assessment strategies entail the utilization of a variety of methods to give learners ample opportunity to demonstrate their abilities more fully. The choice of assessment to use is a subjective one, unique to each educator, grade and school. However, a variety of methods, appropriate tools and techniques which commensurate with learners' needs must be used.

The assessment methods, tools and techniques chosen by the educator must provide a range of opportunities for learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes

In the next chapter the planning of the empirical research will be explained.

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter a literature study was presented of the role continuous assessment plays in primary school. The literature study revealed that there is still areas of uncertainty in the implementation of continuous assessment. There is still some uncertainty about the effectiveness of continuous assessment concerning the promotion of learners and the development of the necessary skills in learners.

This chapter will focus on the planning of the research in discussing the questionnaire as research instrument and the processing of data.

3.2 SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

Primary schools were selected by stratified random sampling from the list of primary schools in the Maphumulo district in the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal. The district comprises predominantly semi-urban and rural areas. This provided the researcher with a random selected sample of 20 primary schools from which 150 educators were randomly selected by the lottery method (depending on the staffing of the school 4 or 5 educators were randomly selected from a school). One hundred (100) correctly completed questionnaires were received back for data analysis which can be considered an adequate percentage (66%) for reliable data analysis by means of descriptive statistics.

3.3 DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

3.3.1 Quantitative research

The purpose of a research design is to provide the most valid and accurate answers possible to research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:34) say that since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the questions. Quantitative research methods collect data to be translated into a statistical format. The responses of respondents to the questions in a questionnaire are recorded in coded format, presented in frequency tables, graphs and/or chart formats, analysed and interpreted (De Vos, 2001:208). The simplest form of data analysis is univariate analysis, which means that one variable is analysed, mainly with the view to describing that variable (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:100). It can thus be stated that where information is required by a first time researcher, quantitative data collection and analysis seem to be the most suitable method. The researcher selected the quantitative approach because:

- it is more formalised;
- better controlled;
- has a range that is more exactly defined; and
- uses methods relatively close to the physical sciences.

3.3.2 The questionnaire as research instrument

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:504) a questionnaire is a set of questions dealing with some topic or related group of topics, given to a selected group of individuals for the purpose of gathering data on a problem under consideration.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) say the questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view to obtaining information. Churchill and Peter (Schnetler, 1993:77) have shown that the measuring instrument has the greatest influence on the reliability of research data. The characteristics of measurement are best controlled by the careful construction of the instrument. There is, however, insufficient appreciation for the fact that a questionnaire should be constructed according to certain principles (De Vos, 2001:89).

A well-designed questionnaire is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objective, formulating the problem, generating the hypothesis, etc. A questionnaire is not simply thrown together. A poorly designed questionnaire can invalidate any research results, notwithstanding the merits of the sample, the field workers and the statistical techniques (Huysamen, 1989:2).

In their criticism of questionnaires Berchie and Anderson (Schnetler, 1993:61) object to poor design rather than to questionnaires as such. A well-designed questionnaire can boost the reliability and validity of the data to acceptable tolerances (Schumacher & Meillon, 1993:42).

It therefore stands to reason that questionnaire design does not take place in a vacuum. According to Dane (1990:315-319) the length of individual questions, the number of response options, as well as the format and wording of questions are determined by the following:

- The choice of the subject to be researched.
- The aim of the research.
- The size of the research sample

- The method of data collection.
- The analysis of the data.

Against this background the researcher can now look at the principles that determine whether a questionnaire is well-designed. It is thus necessary to draw a distinction between questionnaire content, question format, question order, type of questions, formulation of questions and validity and reliability of questions.

3.3.3 Construction of the questionnaire

Questionnaire design is an activity that should not take place in isolation. The researcher should consult and seek advice from specialists and colleagues at all times during the construction of the questionnaire (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). Questions to be taken up in the questionnaire should be tested on people to eliminate possible errors. A question may appear correct to the researcher when written down but can be interpreted differently when asked to another person.

There should be no hesitation in changing questions several times before the final formulation whilst keeping the original purpose in mind. The most important point to be taken into account in questionnaire design is that it takes time and effort and that the questionnaire will be re-drafted a number of times before being finalised. A researcher must therefore ensure that adequate time is budgeted for in the construction and preliminary testing of the questionnaire (Kidder & Judd, 1986:243-245). All of the above was taken into consideration by the researcher during the designing of the questionnaire for this investigation.

An important aim in the construction of the questionnaire for this investigation was to present the questions as simple and straightforward as possible. Reasons for this were that not all members of the target population under investigation might be adequately literate to interpret questions correctly or are familiar with the completion of questionnaires. The researcher further aimed to avoid ambiguity, vagueness, bias, prejudice and technical language in the questions.

The aim of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was to obtain information regarding educators' views of the role of continuous assessment in primary school. The questions were formulated to establish the respondents' views with regard to the following:

- Perceptions of the implementation of continuous assessment.
- The effect of continuous assessment on learner performance.

The questionnaire was sub-divided into the following sections:

- Section one, which dealt with the biographical information of the respondents, namely school educators, and consisted of questions 1 to 10.
- Section two and three of the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions. The respondents were requested to indicate their responses to the statements pertaining to their view of continuous assessment and the effect there of on the performance of primary school learners. The respondents have to state their views concerning the latter in three ways, namely agree, disagree and uncertain. The questions were grouped as follows:

SECTION THREE: THE OUTCOMES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	Continuous assessment has the following effect on learner performance:			
3.1	Is effective in developing learners to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society.			
3.2	Provides learners who have been absent with opportunities to demonstrate their potentials.			
3.3	Motivates learners to participate actively in their learning.			
3.4	Creates confusion among learners about their academic performance.			
3.5	Provides learners with opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses.			
3.6	Is non-threatening to learners.			
3.7	Provides learners with opportunities to take decisions about their careers at an early stage.			
3.8	Motivates learners to work hard throughout the year.			
3.9	Discourages competition among learners.			
3.10	Demotivates highly gifted learners.			
3.11	Results in learners leaving school at an early stage.			
3.12	Enhances the self-esteem of learners.			
3.13	Assesses the various potentials of learners.			

- Section two contained questions on how continuous assessment is viewed by educators.

- Section three consisted of questions relating to the effect of continuous assessment on learner performance.

3.3.4 Characteristics of a good questionnaire

Throughout the construction of the questionnaire the researcher had to consider the characteristics of a good questionnaire in order to meet the requirements necessary for the research instrument to be reliable. The characteristics of a good questionnaire that were considered by the researcher are, according to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190), Mahlangu (1987:84-85) and Norval (1990:60) the following:

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one the respondent will recognize as important enough to warrant spending his or her time on. The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and in the accompanying letter.

- It must seek only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.

- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to get the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.

- Questionnaires should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated or printed.

- Directions for a good questionnaire must be clear and complete and important terms clearly defined.

- Each question has to deal with a single concept and should be worded as simply and straightforwardly as possible.

- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses.

- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses. Leading questions are just as inappropriate in a questionnaire as they are in a court of law.

- Questions should be presented in a proper psychological order, proceeding from general to more specific and sensitive responses. An orderly grouping helps respondents to organise their own thinking so that their answers are logical and objective. It is preferable to present questions that create a favourable attitude before proceeding to those that are more intimate or delicate in nature. Annoying and/or embarrassing questions should be avoided if possible.

3.3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire

Data can be gathered by means of a structured questionnaire in, *inter alia*, the following ways: a written questionnaire that is mailed, delivered or handed out personally; personal interviews or telephone interviews (Kidder & Judd, 1986: 221). Each mode has specific advantages and disadvantages which the researcher need to evaluate for their suitability to the research question and the specific target population being studied, as well as cost.

The researcher used the written questionnaire as research instrument taking into consideration the following advantages:

(1) Advantages of the written questionnaire

The written questionnaire as a research instrument to obtain information, has the following advantages (Bless & Higson Smith, 1995:110; Cooper,1989:01):

- Affordability is the primary advantage of written questionnaires because it is the least expensive means of data gathering.

- Written questionnaires preclude possible interviewer bias. The way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or interaction may influence a respondent's answers. Such biases can be completely eliminated with a written questionnaire.

- A questionnaire permits anonymity. If it is arranged such that responses were given anonymously, this would increase the researcher's chances of receiving responses which genuinely represent a person's beliefs, feelings, opinions or perceptions.

- They permit a respondent a sufficient amount of time to consider answers before responding.

- Questionnaires can be given to many people simultaneously, that is to say a large sample of a target population can be reached.

- They provide greater uniformity across measurement situations than do interviews. Each person responds to exactly the same

questions because standard instructions are given to the respondents.

- Generally the data provided by questionnaires can be more easily analyzed and interpreted than the data obtained from verbal responses.

- A respondent may answer questions of a personal or embarrassing nature more willingly and frankly on a questionnaire than in a face to face situation with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger. In some cases it may happen that respondents report less than expected and make more critical comments in a mail questionnaire.

- Questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable respondents to consult documents in the case of the mail questionnaire approach.

- Respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.

- Questionnaire design is relative easy if the set guidelines are followed.

- The administering of questionnaires and the coding, analysis and interpretation of data can be done without any special training.

(2) <u>Disadvantages of the questionnaire</u>

The researcher is also aware of the fact that the written questionnaire has important disadvantages. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) and Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:112) the

disadvantages of the questionnaire are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews. In an interview an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge how people are interpreting the question. If questions asked are interpreted differently by respondents the validity of the information obtained is jeopardized.

- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.

- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.

- The mail questionnaire does not make provision for obtaining the views of more than one person at a time. It requires uninfluenced views of one person only.

- Answers to written questionnaires must be seen as final. Re-checking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answer for a clarification of ambiguous answers. If respondents are unwilling to answer certain questions nothing can be done about it because the mail questionnaire is essentially inflexible.

- In a written questionnaire the respondent examines all the questions at the same time before answering them and the answers to the different questions can therefore not be treated as "independent".

- Researchers are unable to control the context of question answering, and specifically, the presence of other people. Respondents may ask friends or family members to examine the questionnaire or comment on their answers, causing bias if the respondent's own private opinions are desired.

- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that the respondents may have. Respondents might answer questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

3.3.6 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

There are two concepts that are of critical importance in understanding issues of measurement in social science research, namely validity and reliability (Huysamen, 1989:1-3). All too rarely do questionnaire designers deal consciously with the degree of validity and reliability of their instrument. This is one of the reasons why so many questionnaires are lacking in these two qualities (Cooper, 1989:15). Questionnaires have a very limited purpose; In fact, they are often one-time data gathering devices with a very short life, administered to a limited population.

There are ways to improve both the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Basic to the validity of a questionnaire is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous way. In other words, do the items sample a significant aspect of the purpose of the investigation? Terms must therefore be clearly defined so that they have the same meaning to all respondents (Cohen & Manion, 1989: 111-112).

Kidder and Judd (1989:53-54) mention the fact that although reliability and validity are two different characteristics of measurement, they "shade into

each other". They are two ends of a continuum but at points in the middle it is difficult to distinguish between them. Validity and reliability are especially important in educational research because most of the measurements attempted in this area are obtained indirectly. Researchers can never guarantee that an educational or psychological measuring instrument measures precisely and dependably what it is intended to measure (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). It is essential, therefore, to assess the validity and reliability of these instruments. Researchers must therefore have a general knowledge as to what validity and reliability are and how one goes about validating a research instrument and establishing its reliability.

(1) Validity of the questionnaire

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:560) define validity as the extent to which a measuring instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. It also refers to the extent to which it correlates with some criterion external to the instrument itself. Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to determine what it was designed to determine. In general terms validity refers to the degree to which an instrument succeeds in measuring what it has set out to measure.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:237), Mouton (1996:85-87) and Dane (1990:257-258) distinguish between three types of validity:

- Content validity, where content and cognitive processes included can be measured. Topics, skills and abilities should be prepared and items from each category randomly drawn.

- Criterium validity, which refers to the relationship between scores on a measuring instrument and an independent variable (criterion) believed to measure directly the behaviour or characteristic in question. The criterion should be relevant, reliable and free from bias and contamination.

- Construct validity, where the extent to which the test measures a specific trait or construct is concerned, for example, intelligence, reasoning, ability, attitudes, etc.

The validity of the questionnaire indicates how worthwhile a measure is likely to be in a given situation. Validity shows whether the instrument is reflecting the true story, or at least something approximating the truth. A valid research instrument is one that has demonstrated that it detects some "real" ability, attitude or prevailing situation that the researcher can identify and characterize (Schnetler, 1993:71). If the ability or attitude is itself stable, and if a respondent's answers to the items are not affected by other unpredictable factors, then each administration of the instrument should yield essentially the same results (Dane, 1990:158).

The validity of the questionnaire as a research instrument reflects the sureness with which conclusions can be drawn. It refers to the extent to which interpretations of the instrument's results, other than the ones the researcher wishes to make, can be ruled out. Establishing validity requires that the researcher anticipates the potential arguments that sceptics might use to dismiss the research results (Cooper, 1989:120).

The researcher employed the questionnaire as an indirect method to measure educators' views of discipline as an integral part of a code of conduct for learners. Because of the complexity of the respondents'

attributes one is never sure that the questionnaire devised will actually measure what it purports to measure. Items in the questionnaire cannot be measured like height, mass, length or size. From the interpretation of the results obtained and the sureness with which conclusions could be drawn, the researcher is convinced that the questionnaire, to a great extent, did measure that which is was designed for.

(2) Reliability of the questionnaire

According to Mulder (1989:209) and Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994: 512) reliability is a statistical concept and relates to consistency and dependability. Consistency of obtaining the same relative answer when measuring phenomena that have not changed. A reliable measuring instrument is one that, if repeated under similar conditions, would present the same result or a near approximation of the initial result. Van-den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:194) and Kidder and Judd (1986: 47-48) distinguish between the following types of reliability:

- Test-retest reliability (coefficient of stability) - consistency estimated by comparing two or more repeated administrations of the measuring instrument. This gives an indication of the dependability of the results on one occasion and on another occasion.

- Internal consistency reliability - this indicates how well the test items measure the same thing.

- Split-half reliability - by correlating the results obtained from two halves of the same measuring instrument, one can calculate the split-half reliability.

In essence, reliability refers to consistency, but consistency does not guarantee truthfulness. The reliability of the question is no proof that the answers given reflect the respondent's true feelings (Dane, 1990: 256). A demonstration of reliability is necessary but not conclusive evidence that an instrument is valid. Reliability refers to the extent to which measurement results are free of unpredictable kinds of error. Sources of error that effect reliability are, *inter alia*, the following (Mulder, 1989: 209; Kidder & Judd, 1986:45):

- Fluctuations in the mood or alertness of respondents because of illness, fatigue, recent good or bad experiences, or temporary differences amongst members of the group bring measured.

- Variations in the conditions of administration between groups. These range from various distractions, such as unusual outside noise to inconsistencies in the administration of the measuring instrument such as omissions in verbal instructions.

- Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, chance differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores.

- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

When the questionnaire is used as an empirical research instrument there is no specific method, for example the "test-retest" method, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire.

Therefore, it will be difficult to establish to what extent the answers of the respondents were reliable. The researcher, however, believes that the questionnaires in this investigation were completed with the necessary honesty and sincerity required to render the maximum possible reliability. Frankness in responding to questions was made possible by the anonymity of the questionnaire. In the coding of the questions it was evident that the questionnaires were completed with the necessary dedication.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practises or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project (De Vos, 2001:178). For the purpose of the pilot study in this research project ten educators were selected from amongst the researcher's colleagues and educator friends. The pilot study is a preliminary or "trial run" investigation using similar questions and similar subjects as in the final survey. Kidder and Judd (1986:211-212) say the basic purpose of a pilot study is to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved and to identify flaws in the measuring instrument. A pilot study gives the researcher an idea of what the method will actually look like in operation and what effects (intended or not) it is likely to have. In other words, by generating many of the practical problems that will ultimately arise, a pilot study enables the researcher to avert these problems by changing procedures, instructions and questions.

The number of participants in the pilot study or group is normally smaller than the number scheduled to take part in the final survey. Participants in the pilot study and the sample for the final study must be selected from the same target population. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted a pilot run on his colleagues.

According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1991: 49-66) the following are the purposes of a pilot study, and these were also the aim of the researcher in this survey:

- It provided the researcher with the opportunity of refining the wording, ordering and layout and it helped to prune the questionnaire to a manageable size.

- It permitted a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data.

- It greatly reduced the number of treatment errors because unforeseen problems revealed in the pilot study resulted in redesigning the main study.

- It saved the researcher major expenditures in time and money on aspects of the research which would have been unnecessary.

- Feedback from other persons involved were made possible and led to important improvements in the main study.

- The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire was established in the pilot study.

- Questions and/or instructions that were misinterpreted were reformulated.

Through the use of the pilot study as "pre-test" the researcher was satisfied that the questions asked complied adequately to the requirements of the study.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

If properly administered the questionnaire is the best available instrument for obtaining information from widespread sources or large groups simultaneously (Cooper, 1989:39). The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the selected schools in the Scottburgh District and collected them again after completion. This method of administration facilitated the process and the response rate. A satisfactory return rate (62,5%) was obtained with 100 out of 160 questionnaires completed and collected.

3.6 THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

Once data was collected, it had to be captured in a format which would permit analysis and interpretation. This involved the careful coding of the 100 questionnaires completed by the randomly selected educators. The coded data was subsequently transferred onto a computer spreadsheet using the Quattro Pro 6.0 programme. The coded data was analysed using the same programme in order to interpret the results by means of descriptive statistics.

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics serve to describe and summarise observations (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994:355). Frequency tables, histograms and polygons are useful in forming impressions about the distribution of data. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:65) frequency distribution is a method to organize data obtained from questionnaires to simplify statistical analysis. A frequency table provides the following information:

- It indicates how many times a particular response appears on the completed questionnaires.

- It provides percentages that reflect the number of responses to a certain question in relation to the total number of responses.

- The arithmetic mean (average) can be calculated by adding all the scores and dividing it by the number of scores.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This investigation was constrained by a number of factors. The following are likely factors that might have influenced the reliability and validity of the questionnaire:

- Although anonymity was required in the questionnaire the possibility exists that, because of the educators' cautiousness, they might not have been frank and truthful in their responses.

- The sensitive nature of items in the questionnaire might have elicited false or misleading responses and influenced the reliability of the results.

- To restrict the investigation to manageable proportions, the researcher limited the study to educators of schools which are easily accessible.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the planning and design of the empirical research was discussed and a comprehensive description of the questionnaire as research instrument was given.

In the following chapter the data obtained from the completed questionnaires will be analysed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data which was collected from the completed questionnaires will be analysed, findings will be interpreted and some comments will be presented. The data comprised biographical information of the respondents (educators) and their perceptions of continuous assessment and the effect thereof on learner performance in primary school. The data obtained from one hundred completed questionnaires will be analysed, interpreted and commented on.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) state that the purpose of research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person. Descriptive research is one of the methods of research used to study a person or persons scientifically in the educational situation. It attempts to describe the situation as it is, thus there is no intervention on the part of the researcher and therefore no control. Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:355) say descriptive studies do not set out with the idea of testing hypotheses about relationships, but want to find the distribution of variables. In this study nomothetic descriptive research was employed with the aim of describing educators' perceptions pertaining to continuous assessment in primary school. The researcher was primarily concerned with the nature and degree of existing situations in primary schools.

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

Table 1 Frequency distribution according to the gender of respondents

	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Male	42	42%
2	Female	58	58%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents (58%) are females. Possible reasons for this phenomenon are the following:

- The research sample involved only primary schools (cf. 4.3.5). Primary schools generally tend to appoint more female than male educators. In the majority of primary schools the junior primary phase (foundation phase) are taught by female educators (Du Toit & Kruger, 1991:23).

- A female educator represents a motherly figure and is more acceptable by younger primary school children as *in loco parentis*.

- Schnetler (1993:42) believes that female educators have special qualities to care for the grade ones in the junior primary phase.

4.2.2 Age of respondents

Table 2 Frequency distribution according to the age of the respondents

	Age group	Frequency	%
1	20 - 25 years	6	6%
2	26 - 30 years	20	20%
3	31 - 35 years	26	26%
4	36 - 40 years	22	22%
5	41 - 45 years	14	14%
6	46 - 50 years	10	10%
7	51 - 55 years	2	2%
	TOTAL	100	100%

According to Table 2 more than a quarter of the respondents (26%) in the research sample are in the age group 31 to 35 years while nearly half (48%) are between 30 and 40 years old. The Table further reveals that the majority of the respondents (68%) are younger than 40 years which means that they have more to offer in terms of energy and productivity.

The possibility also exists that younger educators may stay in the education profession for a longer period of time to gain more experience with the aim of possible promotion. Younger educators are also more eager and show more enthusiasm in the implementation of new programmes in education such as OBE and continuous assessment (Spady, 1994:56).

4.2.3 Qualifications

Table 3 Frequency distribution according respondents' qualifications

	Qualifications	Frequency	%
1	Degree & diploma/certificate	30	30%
2	Diplomas and/or certificates	70	70%
	TOTAL	100	100%

From Table 3 it emerges that the minority (30%) of the educators in the research sample possess academic and professional qualifications which are by many perceived as being better qualified for the teaching profession. However, the finding that most (70%) of the educators have diplomas and/or certificates may be because they are teaching in primary schools. The contents (curricula) of teaching diplomas and certificates are more practical than theoretically orientated courses and therefore more appropriate for teaching younger primary school children (Griessel, Louw & Swart, 1993:71). In order to be an effective educator a person should have obtained the most suitable qualifications.

According to Le Grange and Reddy (1998: 45) the successful implementation of OBE which involves continuous assessment requires adequately trained educators. With the introduction of OBE many educators lack adequate training. To assist these educators, one week had been granted for OBE in-service training. However, for many educators this period is too short to bring them up to date with the implementation of what many perceive as a complicated approach to teaching and learning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:67).

4.2.4 Years of service as an educator

Table 4 Frequency distribution according to the respondents' years of completed service as educators

	Completed years of service	Frequency	%
1	1 - 5 years	26	26%
2	6 - 10 years	36	36%
3	11 - 15 years	18	18%
4	16 - 20 years	10	10%
5	21 - 25 years	8	8%
6	more than 25 years	2	2%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 4 shows that most of the respondents (36%) that completed the questionnaire are in the teaching profession for a period of between 6 and 10 years. More than a quarter of the respondents (26%) in the research sample have less than 5 years teaching experience while 62% have less than 10 years teaching experience. Experience together with adequate training is needed for the responsibilities and the demands imposed on educators (Carl, 1995:21). The more experience and training an educator have the more confidence and expertise he will have acquired to be an effective educator. Anderson (1989:28) says continuous professional development and experience are prerequisites for educators to keep up with the rapid pace of change in knowledge, advancement of technology and increasing demands imposed upon educators.

4.2.5 Type of school

Table 5 Frequency distribution according to the classification of respondents' schools

	School	Frequency	%
1	Junior primary	26	26%
2	Senior primary	66	66%
3	Combined primary	8	8
	TOTAL	100	100%

In accordance with the focus of the research the schools where the questionnaire was administered comprise of senior, junior and combined primary schools (Table 5).

4.2.6 Post level of respondents

Table 6 Frequency distribution according to the post level of the educators

	Post level	Frequency	%
1	Principal	6	6%
2	Head of Department	18	18%
3	Educator (post level 1)	76	76%
	TOTAL	100	100%

Table 6 shows that more than three quarter of the respondents (76%) in the research sample are level one educators. This finding is consistent with the composition of educators in most schools. Statistics of the Department of Education indicate that generally level one educators comprise a little over seventy percent of the teaching personnel in a school (DoE, 2002:2).

4.2.7 Type of post held by respondents

Table 7 Frequency distribution according to the nature of the post held by the respondents

	Nature of post	Frequency	%
1	Permanent	88	88%
2	Temporary	12	12%
	TOTAL	100	100%

The majority of the respondents (88%) in the research sample are on the permanent educating staff (Table 7). This can be seen as a favourable position for both the educator and the school.

Educators who are appointed on the permanent staff may have the following advantages (DoE, 1999d:2):

- They are entitled to a housing subsidy which enables them to purchase a house or flat.
- They enjoy job security.
- They are better able to provide for retirement as they are contributers to a pension fund.
- They can join a medical aid benefit to which the employer contributes a percentage of the monthly premium.

Schools with a high percentage of permanent staff have a low staff turnover which promotes effective teaching and learning. The Department of

Education also provides in-service training opportunities (e.g. OBE) for educators on the permanent staff.

4.2.8 Respondents' employer

Table 8: Frequency according to the respondents' employer

	Employer	Frequency	%
1	Department of Education	100	100%
2	Governing body	0	0%
	TOTAL	100	100%

The finding in Table 8 could be predicted because the schools targeted in the research are all public schools of which the educators are on the education department's payroll. As the majority of the schools in the research sample are situated in lower socio-economic areas none of the school governing bodies are able to afford employing educators to supplement the provision norms at the school.

4.2.9 Perceptions of continuous assessment

Table 9 Frequency distribution according to respondents' perceptions of continuous assessment

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
	As an educator I see continuous assessment as:				
2.1	An effective instrument for the promotion of learners.	72 72%	22 22%	6 6%	100 100%
2.1	The main cause of the high failure rate.	14 14%	82 82%	4 4%	100 100%
2.3	Being implemented by adequately qualified educators.	66 66%	24 24%	10 10%	100 100%
2.4	A suitable tool for determining learners' progress.	74 74%	26 26%	0 0%	100 10%
2.5	Assisting in the development of learners.	88 88%	8 8%	4 4%	100 100%
2.6	A valuable instrument for developing learners' skills	86 86%	14 14%	0 0%	100 100%
2.7	Increasing opportunities for weaker learners to progress to the next grade.	56 56%	40 40%	4 4%	100 100%
2.8	Too time consuming to implement.	44 44%	54 54%	2 2%	100 100%
2.9	An unreliable tool for the promotion of learners.	66 66%	30 30%	4 4%	100 100%
2.10	Easy to implement in a large class.	52 52%	48 48%	0 0%	100 100%
2.11	Overburdening educators with extra work.	42 42%	50 50%	8 8%	100 100%
2.12	Needing a lot of material resources.	88 88%	12 12%	0 0%	100 100%
2.13	Not easy to implement in rural schools.	58 58%	36 36%	6 6%	10 100%
2.14	Providing opportunities for the involvement of parents in the teaching and learning situation.	86 86%	12 12%	2 2%	100 100%
2.15	One of the driving forces of quality assurance in education.	76 76%	18 18%	6 6%	100 100%
2.16	Assisting educators in identifying problems experienced by learners in the mastering of skills	84 84%	14 14%	2 2%	100 100
2.17	Helping educators to determine the appropriateness of new subject contents, which has been introduced.	94 94%	6 6%	0 0%	100 100%
2.18	Causing confusion to parents in determining the progress of their children.	56 56%	30 30%	14 14%	100 100%

The responses to the questions in Table 9 show that the majority of respondents in the research sample have positive perceptions about

continuous assessment. This statement can be substantiated by the following findings in Table 9.

Promotion of learners (2.1)

The majority of the respondents (72%) in the research sample perceived continuous assessment as an effective instrument for the promotion of learners. The purpose of continuous assessment is to monitor learners' progress through the different learning areas for promotion to a higher grade (cf. 2.5.4).

Cause of high failure rate (2.2)

More than eighty percent (82%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that continuous assessment is the cause of the high failure rate in schools. According to McGhan (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997:15) one of the advantages of continuous assessment is that permanent failure is eliminated because learners who have not achieved the required standard can be granted further opportunities to do so. Asmal (Bipath, 2002:43) cites continuous assessment as one of the reasons for the improved matric pass rate.

Adequately qualified educators (2.3)

Although the larger percentage of the respondents (66%) agreed that adequately qualified educators are needed for the effective implementation of continuous assessment, nearly a quarter (24%) disagreed with the statement. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997: 18) identify one of the problem areas of OBE as the retraining of educators.

Progress of learners (2.4)

The majority of respondents (74%) agreed that continuous assessment is a suitable tool for determining the progress of learners. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and serves as a means of monitoring or auditing learners' performance, thus monitoring the progress

they make (Simmons & Resnick, 1993:12). Assessment in OBE will be ongoing, which means that a learner's progress will be monitored continuously.

Development of learners (2.5)

The aim of education is assisting the child in his development to become an independent, responsible adult. Most of the respondents (88%) agreed that continuous assessment is one of the means of assisting the learner in his development.

Developing learners' skills (2.6)

More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents said that continuous assessment is a valuable instrument for developing learners' skills. One of the aims of OBE is to equip learners with skills necessary to become responsible adults (cf. 2.3).

Opportunities for weaker learners (2.7)

The larger percentage (56%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that continuous assessment provides opportunities for weaker learners to progress to the next grade. In continuous assessment the promotion of learners is not confined to one or two tests per year but various assessment methods (cf. 2.2). Weaker learners are provided ample opportunities to repeatedly demonstrate and to improve their potentials since continuous assessment is an ongoing process utilising various assessment methods (cf. 2.3). Learners are also exposed to informal assessment whereby aspects such as learning behaviour, attitude, confidence, social skills, technical aptitude and applied creativity are assessed without the learner being aware of what is taking place. This increases chances for weaker learners to progress to the next grade.

Time consuming (2.8)

More than half (54%) of the respondents said that the implementation of continuous assessment is not time consuming. A possible explanation for this finding is that no specific time is set aside for the assessment of learners. Teaching, learning and assessment of learners are integrated and inseparable entities in the OBE approach to teaching and learning. Assessment of learners is integral to all planning and preparation and is applied while teaching and learning is taking place (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997:167).

Tool for promoting learners (2.9)

Two thirds (66%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that continuous assessment is an unreliable tool for the promotion of learners. A tool for promotion of learners can be considered reliable if repeated implementation thereof produces the same results (Loubser, 1990:184). According to Griessel, Louw and Swart (1993:196) reliability is the extent to which the same assessment tool produces the same results if it is done by the same learners under the same conditions. Tests, of which the reliability as a promotion tool can be established by the test-retest method, are only one of the promotion tools in OBE. Learners' skills, attitudes, etc. which can also form part of continuous assessment for promotion might be unreliable if not properly implemented. The reliability of these tools cannot be measured by, for example, the test-retest method.

Implementation in large classes (2.10)

More than half (52%) of the respondents agreed that it is easy to implement continuous assessment in large classes although only four percent less (048%) indicated that it is not so easy. Continuous assessment should always be integrated with the teaching and learning activities in the classroom (DoE, 1998b:4). Individual attention to get every learner involved and actively working are difficult to achieve in a class with a large number of learners.

In a large class the educator cannot keep a close eye on all the learners which is a needed in a number of the continuous assessment tools.

Extra work for educators (2.11)

The larger percentage of the respondents (50%) said that continuous assessment do not burden educators with extra work. However, more than forty percent (42%) indicated that continuous assessment overburden educators with extra work. A possible reason for the latter finding is that educators lack sufficient knowledge of continuous assessment and regard it as a separate entity from the normal daily teaching and learning activities. Continuous assessment should form part of all teaching and learning and never be implemented separately (Van den Horst & McDonald, 1997:167).

Material resources (2.12)

Close to ninety percent of the respondents (88%) acknowledged that the implementation of continuous assessment needs a lot of material resources. A material resource is any instrument that the educator utilises in continuous assessment and is appropriate to the specific method of assessment. These includes worksheets, rubrics and assessment grids, cassettes, etc. (cf. 2.9.2). The traditional method of assessment only needed question papers and answer books or sheets.

Implementation in rural schools (2.13)

Most of the respondents (58%) in the research sample agreed that it is not easy to implement continuous assessment in rural schools. The focus of the research was rural schools (cf. 3.2.2). Possible reasons why educators experience problems with the implementation of continuous assessment in rural schools are the following (Pahad, 1997:8):

- Lack of resources because of the poverty in rural areas where parents pay very little or no school fees.

- Limited opportunities for educators in rural areas to attend workshops on OBE and continuous assessment.

- Schools in rural areas are not easily accessible for visits from experts to give assistance in the implementation of continuous assessment.

Involvement of parents (2.14)

More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents said that continuous assessment provides opportunities for parental involvement in the teaching and learning situation. Parental involvement is a catch-all term that is used to describe a wide variety of activities that range from attendance of school meetings and functions to efforts to help parents become better teachers of their children.

Homework, assignments and projects are given to learners as part of continuous assessment to complete at home. An important part of parental involvement is assisting with learning activities at home.

Quality assurance (2.15)

The majority of the respondents (76%) in the research sample noted that continuous assessment is one of the driving forces of quality assurance in education. Quality assurance is a process by which the structures and systems within a school are organised to ensure that certain standards of quality are achieved and maintained. Sieborger and Macintosh (1998:71) agree that an assessment policy for the school is one of the main criteria used in quality assurance within the school.

Identification of problems (2.16)

The majority of respondents (84%) agreed that continuous assessment assist educators in the identification of problems experienced by learners in the mastering of skills. According to Carl (1995:13) it is important that

learners who are likely to experience barriers to learning are identified early and provided with special support. Individual tasks assigned to learners can indicate to the educator areas where the learner experiences problems.

Appropriateness of new subject contents (2.17)

More than ninety percent (94%) of the respondents said that continuous assessment helps educators to determine the appropriateness of new subject content which has been introduced. The appropriateness of a newly introduced subject content is determined by the successful mastering of the prescribed specific outcomes by learners (Marnewick & Singh, 1998:47). If learners are assessed on newly introduced subject content and perform well it is an indication that the new subject content was mastered. The opposite is also applicable.

Confusing parents (2.18)

Most of the respondents (56%) in the research sample agreed that continuous assessment causes confusion among parents in determining the progress of their children in school. Percentages for individual subjects and traditional terms such as "pass" and "fail" no longer form part of school reports. The rubrics and symbols used in continuous assessment are unfamiliar to many parents and thus cause confusion as to whether a learner has passed or failed. In rural areas such as the one in which the research was conducted many parents are illiterate or semi-literate and thus enable to interpret their children's reports.

4.2.10 The outcomes of continuous assessment

Table 10 Frequency distribution according to respondents' perceptions of the effect of continuous assessment on learner performance

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
	Continuous assessment has the following effect on learner performance.				
3.1	Is effective in developing learners to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society	70 70%	28 28%	2 2%	100 100%
3.2	Provides learners who have been absent with opportunities to demonstrate their potentials	54 54%	42 42%	4 4%	100 100%
3.3	Motivates learners to participate actively in their learning	86 86%	12 12%	2 2%	100 100%
3.4	Creates confusion among learners about their academic performance	28 28%	70 70%	2 2%	100 100%
3.5	Provides learners with opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses.	88 88%	8 8%	4 4%	100 100%
3.6	Is non-threatening to learners	60 60%	36 36%	4 4%	100 10%
3.7	Provides learners with opportunities to take decisions about their careers at an early stage.	78 78%	14 14%	8 8%	100 100%
3.8	Motivates learners to work hard throughout the year	82 82%	16 16%	2 2%	100 100%
3.9	Discourages competition among learners	50 50%	44 44%	6 6%	100 100%
3.10	Demotivates highly gifted learners	40 40%	56 56%	4 4%	100 100%
3.11	Results in learners leaving school at an early stage	20 20%	72 72%	8 8%	100 100%
3.12	Enhances the self-esteem of learners	84 84%	16 16%	0 0%	100 100%
3.13	Assesses the various potentials of learners	86 86%	14 14%	0 0%	100 100%

According to the majority of the responses in Table 10 continuous assessment has an effect on learner performance. The findings in Table 10 substantiate this statement.

Demands of changing society (3.1)

The majority of the respondents (70%) in the research sample agreed that continuous assessment is effective in developing learners to meet the

demands of a rapidly changing society. One of the objectives of continuous assessment is to promote critical thinking, creativity, reasoning and reflection which can also be seen as requirements to meet the demands of a changing society. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:173) say that that one of the functions of schools is to prepare learners to be responsible citizens and workers of the future with the ability to orientate themselves to a changing society.

Opportunities to absent learners (3.2)

Fifty four percent (54%) of the respondents agreed that continuous assessment provides learners who have been absent with opportunities to demonstrate their potentials. In traditional assessment methods (tests and examinations only) learners that were absent could possibly be disadvantaged when missing a test and/or examination. With continuous assessment which is an ongoing process and takes place throughout the whole year, learners that were absent and missed an assessment, will have other assessment opportunities to demonstrate what they know (cf. 2.3; Marnewick & Rouhani, 1996:279).

Of concern, however, is the finding that more than forty percent (42%) of the respondents disagreed that continuous assessment provides learners who have been absent with opportunities to demonstrate their potentials. Possible reasons for this finding are :

- Absent learners must often be given an assignment or test different to that done by other learners which means more work for the educator.

- Absent learners at times do not succeed in catching up the work they have missed and perform poor in assessments.

Active learner participation (3.3)

More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents in the research sample acknowledged that continuous assessment motivates learners to participate actively in their learning. In continuous assessment learners are always aware of their progress and thus able to realise where their strengths and weaknesses are (cf. 2.3). This knowledge can motivate learners to participate more actively in their learning with the aim to improve their weaknesses. Learners can also be motivated to better their strengths, for example strive for a distinction in a subject.

Confusion about academic performance (3.4)

Most of the respondents (70%) disagreed that continuous assessment creates confusion among learners about their academic performance. This finding implies that learners know how they perform academically because they are directly involved in the assessment process by means of the following (DoE, 1998b:36):

- Self-assessment.
- Peer assessment.
- Group assessment.

Identification of strengths and weaknesses (3.5)

The majority of respondents (88%) said that continuous assessment provides learners with opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Kotzé (1999:62) says one of the characteristics of continuous assessment is transparency, which means that all assessment results are available to the learners. When they know their assessment results learners will be able to identify where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

Non-threatening (3.6)

Most of the respondents (60%) indicated that continuous assessment is non-threatening to learners. According to Jacobs and Gawe (1996:282) continuous assessment is a daily practice that forms part of the teaching and learning in the class (cf. 2.1). Traditional assessment terms such as "test" and "examination" were often experienced as a threat by learners because they know that the test and/or examination could be the only opportunity to give account of what they have learned.

However, more than a third (36%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that continuous assessment is non-threatening to learners. Possible reasons why respondents view continuous assessment as threatening to learners might be:

- Any form of measurement that determines a pass or failure to a person is regarded as a threat by that particular person.

- Learners who are not adequately prepared or do not know the work for assessment perceive it as threatening.

- Learners with special educational needs (LSEN) often regard any form of assessment as a threat.

Decisions about careers (3.7)

Nearly eighty percent (78%) of the respondents said that continuous assessment provides learners with opportunities to take decisions about their careers at an early stage. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:26) say that when learners are granted opportunities to demonstrate their potentialities at an early stage they are also able to decide on possible careers at an early stage. Continuous assessment considers all facets (potentials) of a learner and this may enable learners to discover and realise their talents at

an early stage, even in primary school. As a result they may take an early decision about their future career.

Work throughout year (3.8)

The majority of respondents (82%) acknowledged that continuous assessment motivates learners to work hard throughout the year. Tests and examinations that were traditionally written at the end of a term or year often resulted in the phenomenon that learners only work hard during test and examination times (Jacobs & Gawe, 1996:292). Continuous assessment motivates learners to work throughout the year because it (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998:11):

- forms part of the daily teaching and learning in the class ; and
- is an ongoing process that takes place throughout the whole year.

Competition among learners (3.9)

Half of the respondents (50%) agreed that continuous assessment discourages competition among learners; however a rather close percentage (44%) disagreed with the statement. According to Madaus (1998:104) a debate prevails among educationists about whether continuous assessment encourages competition among learners or not. Raggatt (1994:72) maintains that a competitive spirit among learners is enhanced by the transparency that characterises continuous assessment. Muthukrisna (1998:139) is convinced that even the most demotivated learner can be transformed to an eager and competitive learner if an enthusiastic educator continuously reminds learners what the intended learning outcomes are and allows them to experience a growing confidence and status as their own competition increases.

Gifted learners (3.10)

The larger percentage (56%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that continuous assessment demotivates highly gifted learners. One of the principles of continuous assessment is that learners, as unique beings, should be provided with opportunities to work at their own pace (DoE, 1998b:5). Highly gifted learners should be given more challenging tasks to keep them interested and motivated.

The forty percent (40%) respondents that said that continuous assessment demotivates highly gifted learners might be explained by the following (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997:05):

- Educators do not differentiate in the assessment tasks given to learners. If a task is too easy for a learner he looses interest in the work and becomes demotivated.

- If an assessment task given to a class is not challenging enough for a gifted learner the educator should give such a learner an additional task. This is, however, not always possible because of large classes and a already heavy work load.

Leaving school early (3.11)

The majority of respondents (72%) were in agreement that continuous assessment does not result in learners leaving school at an early age. According to Simmons and Resnick (1993:12) continuous assessment forms an integral part of teaching and learning and is not just a means of monitoring or auditing a learner's performance. Permanent failure which might contribute to learners leaving school is eliminated since learners who have not achieved the required standard are granted further opportunities to do so (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997:15).

Self-esteem (3.12)

More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents indicated that continuous assessment enhances the self-esteem of learners. The self-esteem of a learner is the degree of positive or negative feeling that he has on the assessment or evaluation of himself (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:206). A high self-esteem comes from being able to do things better than others, when set goals are achieved. In continuous assessment the learner can experience success in the unfolding of his personal potentials and find that he is actualising his self effectively (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:27). In continuous assessment experiences of success and effectiveness in schoolwork enhances the self-esteem of the learner (cf. 2.3).

Assessment of potentials (3.13)

The majority of respondents (86%) agreed that continuous assessment assesses the various potentials of learners. According to Jacobs and Gawe (1996:292) traditional tests and examinations only tested the cognitive potential of a learner. Torrance (1995:101) maintains that the new approach of assessing learners (continuous assessment in OBE) not only consider a learner's cognitive ability but also his skills and attitudes. All the facets of the learner's potential are assessed by means of different assessment methods (cf. 2.1 & 2.3).

4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher's aim was to give order to the range of information provided by the respondents in their responses to the statements in the questionnaire. Some of the data collected were biographical in nature and enabled the researcher to construct a general profile of the randomly selected sample for the investigation.

Data collected regarding the respondents (primary school educators) perceptions of continuous assessment were organised in frequency tables to simplify the interpretation thereof.

The last chapter will consist of a summary of the study, findings and certain recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS PAGE

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter of the dissertation a summary of the previous chapters is presented and some of the most important findings from the research will be discussed. This is followed by recommendations and a final remark.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Statement of the problem

In essence this study investigated the role continuous assessment plays in primary school. Continuous assessment is being used as an alternative to terminal examinations because it provides more information about the learner. The effectiveness of continuous assessment lies in its aim, namely, to build up a picture of a learner's performance over a prolonged and representative period whereas an examination shows only what was achieved in the examination. If proper records are kept of a learner's performance in nearly everything he does during a course, these records build up into a much more complete and reliable assessment for promotion of the learner than is possible by a single examination. The effectiveness of examinations is limited because they cannot measure all that a learner has learned. If correctly implemented continuous assessment succeeds in developing the necessary skills in learners whereas formal examinations are more focused on cognitive skills.

5.2.2 Literature review of continuous assessment

Assessment is the process by which the quality of a learner's work or performance is judged. In schools assessment of learning is usually carried out by educators on the basis of impressions gained as they observe the learners at work or by various kinds of tests given periodically. Continuous assessment is a way of recording a learner's progress in school without using examinations. It depends on carefully kept assessments of the learner's work throughout a subject, building up gradually into a profile of his performance. Educators should put considerable thought into what is assessed and into the method of assessment. The latter is of utmost importance so that all the learner's skills in the subject are recognised and not simply the intellectual and literacy ones which examinations normally measure.

In the implementation of continuous assessment the educator should:

- Know the value of assessing learning in the context of the school.
- Be able to use different methods to assess learners.
- Be able to interpret, from the results of a particular assessment, facts about the effectiveness of the assessment method.
- Understand the different methods to be used in continuous assessment.

Assessment methods relate to the procedure the educator wishes to follow in order to assess the learners. These procedures include:

Self-assessment. In this method the learner is supplied with the correct answers after he has completed an assignment or test and is invited to mark his own work and write appropriate comments. This works remarkably well once learners appreciate that writing their own comments is for their own benefit and is always open to comment from the educator.

Peer assessment. Learners evaluate (mark) one another's work either as individuals or in groups. This method requires careful planning to get evenness of evaluation (marking) by the various learners. Peer assessment therefore requires careful preparation by the educator in explaining to the learners what they are looking for in evaluating (marking) and on what basis they are to award marks. This in itself is a useful exercise as it compels the educator to think through his marking scheme. It also helps to show learners that marks are not arbitrarily assigned but are awarded according to a carefully worked out plan that is fair to every learner.

Group assessment. In this form of assessment groups in a class assess each other's work or performance in a given task according to specific criteria supplied by the educator. Group assessment can be used for a task where a group of learners work together towards a common goal.

Answers to the following problems experienced by educators in the implementation of continuous assessment remain unclarified:

- Will continuous assessment prepare learners for the demands of a rapid changing society?

- Are educators adequately equipped for the effective implementation of continuous assessment?

- Will continuous assessment succeed in developing the necessary skills in learners?

- Is continuous assessment a fair and reliable instrument for promoting learners?

5.2.3 Research design

This study utilised a self-structured questionnaire as research instrument to obtain information concerning educators' perceptions of the role of continuous assessment in primary schools. The information sought for this investigation was not available from any other source and had to be acquired directly from the respondents, namely, primary school educators. In a situation like this the most appropriate method of data collection is the questionnaire as it is easily adapted to a variety of situations.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information regarding the role of continuous assessment in primary schools concerning the following:

- Primary school educators' perceptions of continuous assessment in their schools.

- The effect of continuous assessment on learner performance in primary school.

5.2.4 Presentation and analysis of research data

The purpose of chapter four was to discuss the data collected from the questionnaires completed by one hundred primary school educators, and to analyse and interpret the findings.

At the outset an explanation and description was provided as to the methods employed in the categorisation of the responses and the analysis of the collected data. The data was presented in frequency tables, which displayed a set of responses, by the number of times each response was obtained. This was done in order to simplify the presentation of data in that it indicates the proportion of the total number of responses that were obtained for a particular statement question. The findings from the frequency distributions were analysed and interpreted.

5.2.5 Aims of the study

The course of the study was determined by the specific aims (cf. 1.5) formulated by the researcher. These aims were realised through a literature review, together with the empirical study comprising a self-structured questionnaire.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Important findings from the empirical survey are:

- The majority of the respondents (72%) in the research sample perceived continuous assessment as an effective instrument for the promotion of learners. The purpose of continuous assessment is to monitor learners' progress through the different learning areas for promotion to a higher grade (cf. 2.1)

- Nearly three quarters of the respondents (74%) said that continuous assessment is a suitable tool for determining the progress of learners. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and serves as a

means of monitoring or auditing learners' performance, thus monitoring the progress they make (cf. 2.4).

- The larger percentage (56%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that continuous assessment provides opportunities for weaker learners to progress to the next grade. The promotion of learners is not confined to one or two tests per year but various assessment methods are used.

- Weaker learners are provided ample opportunities to repeatedly demonstrate and improve their potentials since continuous assessment is an ongoing process utilising various assessment methods (cf. 2.7).

- Nearly half (48%) of the respondents indicated that it is not easy to implement continuous assessment in large classes. Continuous assessment should always be integrated with the teaching and learning activities in the classroom; however individual attention to get every learner involved and actively working are difficult to achieve in a class with a large number of learners (cf. 2.10).

- Forty two percent (42%) of the respondents in the research said that continuous assessment overburden educators with extra work. Continuous assessment should form part of all teaching and learning and never implemented separately, which means extra work in the lesson preparation (cf. 2.11).

- Close to ninety percent of the respondents (88%) acknowledged that the implementation of continuous assessment needs a lot of material resources. A material resource is any instrument that the educator utilises in continuous assessment and is appropriate to the specific

method of assessment. These include worksheets, rubrics and assessment grids, cassettes, etc. (cf. 2.12).

- Most of the respondents (58%) in the research sample agreed that it is not easy to implement continuous assessment in rural schools. This finding may be explained by the lack of resources because of poverty in rural areas where parents pay very little or no school fees (cf. 2.13).

- The majority of respondents (84%) agreed that continuous assessment assist educators in it the identification of problems experienced by learners in the mastering of skills (cf. 3.1).

- Fifty four percent (54%) of the respondents acknowledged that continuous assessment provides learners who have been absent with opportunities to demonstrate their potentials. With continuous assessment which is an ongoing process and takes place throughout the whole year, learners that were absent and missed an assessment, will have other assessment opportunities to demonstrate what they know (cf. 3.2).

- More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents in the research sample acknowledged that continuous assessment motivates learners to participate actively in their learning (cf. 3.3).

- The majority of respondents (88%) said that continuous assessment provides learners with opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses (cf. 3.5). Because of the transparency of continuous assessment learners know their results and are able to identify where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

- Nearly eighty percent (78%) of the respondents said that continuous assessment provides learners with opportunities to take decisions about their careers at an early stage (cf. 3.7).

- The majority of respondents (82%) acknowledged that continuous assessment motivates learners to work hard throughout the year. Tests and examinations that were traditionally written at the end of a term or year often resulted in the phenomenon that learners only work hard during test and examination times. Continuous assessment motivates learners to work throughout the year because it forms part of the daily teaching and learning (cf. 3.8).

- More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents indicated that continuous assessment enhances the self-esteem of learners. In continuous assessment the learner can experience success in the unfolding of his personal potentials and finds that he is actualising his self effectively (cf. 3.12).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Educator development

(1) Motivation

From the findings of the empirical research it emerged that educators need to be adequately qualified for the successful implementation of continuous education in the primary school (cf. 4.2.9). Educators must have the necessary skills to manage continuous assessment. The skills needed in managing continuous assessment are, *inter alia*, the following (cf. 2.6):

- Identification of outcomes to be assessed.
- Ability to ensure that learners are clear about assessment criteria.
- Multiple ways of exposing learners to learning opportunities.

Effective planning of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in the classroom requires educators that is experienced and qualified for the task (cf. 2.7). In the empirical research it was found that educators experience continuous assessment as time consuming, difficult to implement in a class with a large number of learners and overburdening educators with extra work (cf. 4.2.9).

To promote the effective implementation of continuous assessment and the school as successful learning environment, professional development of educators should be an ongoing and coherent process. Professional development should enable educators to become lifelong learners through high quality, needs driven, research based, in-service support programmes. Staff development should not only affect knowledge, attitudes and practices of educators and administrators, but also alter the culture and structures of the school.

(2) <u>Recommendation</u>

The effectiveness of continuous assessment mainly depends on adequately equipped educators. To achieve this educators' must be professionally developed in continuous assessment and the recommendation is that the department of education must:

- Provide in-service training for educators. Ân in-service training programmes should involve the following aspects:

- Information about the different methods of continuous assessment and their uses

- The role of the educator in continuous assessment (what is expected of the educator)

- The understanding and managing of the change in assessment (from the traditional assessment methods to continuous assessment).

- Specific knowledge, methods and strategies on the implementation of continuous assessment in the classroom.

- The relationship between assessment and the curriculum.

- Organise workshops on continuous assessment which should address the same aspects as the in-service training programmes.

- All the institutions that train educators must include a module or course on continuous assessment in the curriculum.

5.4.2 Support for educators

(1) Motivation

Committed educators spend many hours on lesson preparation, administrative work and extramural activities. From the empirical research it appears that more than forty percent of the educators in the research sample perceived continuous assessment as overburdening educators with extra work (cf. 4.2.9). Insufficient knowledge about a new programme (for

instance continuous assessment) or the implementation thereof, tends to make it a burden to the person who must implement it. Accountable support to educators who lack adequate knowledge about the implementation of continuous assessment will eliminate the perception that it is a burden.

The research was conducted in a predominantly rural area and more than half of the respondents in the research sample indicated that they experience difficulties in the implementation of continuous assessment in their school (cf. 4.2.9).

Support in the form of human and material resources are needed to ensure the effective implementation of continuous assessment in all schools, including those situated in rural areas. Support can be from colleagues, school management, the Department of Education and the community.

In the absence of adequate support educators:

- can become demotivated,
- percieve the change in assessment as negative;
- become unsure about their abilities as an educator; and
- experience feelings of insecurity.

(2) <u>Recommendation</u>

The following are recommendations concerning accountable support to educators in the implementation of continuous assessment:

- Provision should be made for experts to visit schools to assist in clarifying problem areas in the implementation of continuous assessment.

- Internal workshops on continuous assessment should be conducted at schools. These workshops must be conducted by experts.

- Networking between neighbouring schools must be promoted to, *inter alia*, discuss and evaluate assessment policies and methods.

- Classes should be smaller. The ideal educator-learner ratio in a school should be 1:30. This can be achieved by increasing the number of educators in a school.

- The school management team, headed by the principal should provide opportunities for educators to plan and learn new skills. These opportunities can include the following:

  - Attendance of in-service training courses on continuous assessment.

  - Allow educators to attend formally organised workshops by the Department.

  - Experts must be available for consultation when educators experience specific problems in the implementation of continuous assessment.

5.4.3 Further research

The transformation from established traditional assessment to continuous assessment in schools will require an effective policy, adequately trained educators and sufficient resources. The implementation of the new system of assessing learners also demands the active participation of all stakeholders. The principal aim of continuous assessment is to ensure quality education to

every learner in school. Effective continuous assessment aims at developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of learners so that they became responsible adults.

The recommendation is that further research be conducted on the various aspects of continuous assessment as set out above.

5.5 CRITICISM

Criticism that emanates from this study includes the following:

- It can be presumed that some of the respondents in the research sample formed their perceptions regarding the role of continuous assessment in primary school, from the media. The possibility therefore exists that these respondents indicated what should be achieved when continuous assessment is effectively implemented and not what is really happening in schools.

- The randomly selected research sample comprised only educators of schools from the former black Department of Education. Dissimilar responses might have been elicited from former model C schools and coloured and Indian education departments.

- The research focused on primary schools situated in predominantly rural areas which is characterised by poverty. Findings from schools situated in more affluent areas might have been different because they have more resources needed in continuous assessment.

5.6 FINAL REMARK

The aim of this study was to obtain a better understanding of the role of continuous assessment in the primary school. It is trusted that the study will be of value to all the stakeholders who are involved in the implementation of continuous assessment in primary schools. It is also hoped that the recommendations may be taken into consideration in order to assist in the successful implementation of continuous assessment.

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STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE

The role of continuous assessment in primary school

Z F Nxumalo
March 2006

Dear Educator

QUESTIONNAIRE: THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my MEd (Master in Education) degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Prof. M S Vos. The research is concerned with *The role of continuous assessment in primary school.*

I have taken the liberty of writing to you, as one of the selected respondents, in order to seek your assistance in acquiring information about your experiences relating to the research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information will be regarded as **CONFIDENTIAL**, and no personal details of any educator/respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any of the results be related to any particular educator or school.

We deeply appreciate your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

....

Z F Nxumalo Prof M S Vos

.....

Date

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RESPONDENT

1. Please read through each statement carefully **before** giving your opinion.
2. Please make sure that you do not **omit** a question, or skip any page.
3. Please be totally **frank** when giving your opinion.
4. Please **do not** discuss statements with anyone.
5. Please **return** the questionnaire after completion directly to the researcher.

Kindly answer **all the questions** by supplying the requested information in writing, or by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block.

SECTION ONE: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1.1 My gender:

Male ☐
Female ☐

1.2 My age in completed years as at 2003-12-31:

Age group	
20 - 25 years	
26 - 30 years	
31 - 35 years	
36 - 40 years	
41 - 45 years	
46 - 50 years	
51 - 55 years	
56 - 60 years	
61 - 65 years	
Older than 65 years	

1.3 My qualification(s):

Academic qualification(s) (e.g. BA, MEd, etc.) .....

Professional qualification(s) (e.g. HDE, FDE, PTC, etc.) .....

1.4 Total number of completed years in the teaching profession as at 2003-12-31:

Number of years	
0 - 5 years	
6 - 10 years	
11 - 15 years	
16 - 20 years	
21 - 25 years	

26 - 30 years	
more than 30 years	

1.5 My school is classified as a:

Junior primary school ☐
Senior primary school ☐
Combined primary ☐

Other (please specify) .....

1.6 My post level:

Deputy Principal ☐ Educator (Post level 1) ☐
HOD ☐

1.7 Type of post held by me:

Permanent ☐
Temporary ☐
Governing Body ☐

1.8 My employer is:

Department of education ☐
Governing body ☐

SECTION TWO: PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	As en educator I see continuous assessment as:			
2.1	An effective instrument for the promotion of learners.			
2.2	The main cause of the high failure rate.			
2.3	Being implemented by adequately qualified educators.			
2.4	A suitable tool for determining learners progress.			
2.5	Assisting in the development of learners.			
2.6	A valuable instrument for developing learners' skills.			
2.7	Increasing opportunities for weaker learners to progress to the next grade.			
2.8	Too rime consuming to implement.			
2.9	An un reliable tool for the promotion of learners.			
2.10	Easy to implement in a large class.			
2.11	Overburdening educators with extra work.			
2.12	Needing a lot of material resources.			
2.13	Not easy to implement in rural schools.			
2.14	Providing opportunities for the involvement of parents in the teaching and learning situation.			
2.15	One of the driving forces of quality assurance in education.			
2.16	Assisting educators in identifying problems experienced by learners in the mastering of skills.			
2.17	Helping educators to determine the appropriateness of new subject contents which has been introduced.			
2.18	Causing confusion to parents in determining the progress of their children			

SECTION THREE: THE OUTCOMES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
	Continuous assessment has the following effect on learner performance:			
3.1	Is effective in developing learners to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society.			
3.2	Provides learners who have been absent with opportunities to demonstrate their potentials.			
3.3	Motivates learners to participate actively in their learning.			
3.4	Creates confusion among learners about their academic performance.			
3.5	Provides learners with opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses.			
3.6	Is non-threatening to learners.			
3.7	Provides learners with opportunities to take decisions about their careers at an early stage.			
3.8	Motivates learners to work hard throughout the year.			
3.9	Discourages competition among learners.			
3.10	Demotivates highly gifted learners.			
3.11	Results in learners leaving school at an early stage.			
3.12	Enhances the self-esteem of learners.			
3.13	Assesses the various potentials of learners.			