ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA – CHALLENGES FOR IMPROVING LEARNING

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Overview

- **Education quality and assessment**

- **Post-apartheid education policy**

- **Assessment policy in South Africa**

- **Taking stock**

- **Concluding reflections**

Education quality and assessment

Education Quality

- Quality and EFA
    - is at the heart of teaching and learning. The EFA mention excellence in learning. Yet there is not target or much clarification.
    - As NERs increase, quality becomes important
    - Quality also has a crucial effect on enrolment, attendance, retention, and completion

Assessment and Quality

- Increasing emphasis on assessment due to concern with declining quality
  - national priority that requires involvement and engagement throughout all levels of our society - SA Minister of Education, August 2005.

- Emphasis translates to focus on achievement scores, in "core subjects"

- The discourse of quality redolent with the technology of testing in SA
  - National assessment, TIMSS, PIRLS, SACMEQ, project evaluations, exams

- Caution: testing indicates areas in need of intervention but not what is required
  - Assessment and testing does not equal quality

Post apartheid education policy

Education policy in post apartheid South Africa: from needs to means

Drivers of changes/policy concerns

- ☐ The historical inheritance

- ☐ Equity, Redress and Justice as policy concerns

- ☐ Democracy and participation as policy concerns

- ☐ Economic and global influences

- ☐ Efficiency, Effectiveness and quality

A brief chronology

160 policy texts 7 white papers, 3 green papers, 26 bills (17 amendment bills), 35 Acts (22 amendments of existing laws), 11 regulations, 52 government notices and 26 calls for comments

Period	Focus	Key changes
1994-1999	Policy frameworks and documents 'Framing and frames'	NEPA, OBE, NQF, SASA,
1999-2004	Policy implementation and systems development (delivery) 'Tirisano'	Values Manifesto Split between GET and FET Mergers and closures of HE
2004-2009	Improving quality 'measuring impact '	FLC Revised Assessment Framework Fee free schools
2009 - ...	The split between basic and higher 'performativity'	Green Paper on performance Service agreement with Ministers ???

	Bills	Acts	Green papers	White papers	Regulations	Notices	Calls for comments
Minister Bengu	**38**						
1997	0	5	0	1	1	1	0
1998	0	6	1	1	3	8	0
Total	0	16	2	4	5	11	0
Minister Asmal	**76**						
2000	11	5	0	0	0	4	2
2001	7	3	0	2	1	9	4
Total	24	16	1	2	4	20	9
Minister Pandor	**46**						
2005	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
2006	1	2	0	0	1	15	6
2007	0	1	0	0	0	4	1
2008	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	2	3	0	1	2	21	17

Assessment policy in South Africa

Assessment in South Africa - History

- Assessment driving by the 'scientific' theory of Fundamental Pedagogics
- Assessment practices and systems played a critical role in maintaining oppressive apartheid policies
- Assessment used to sort and rank
- An emphasis on rote learning – examinations focuses on recall and memorisation
- Inefficient; failure of black students

Post-apartheid assessment

- Assessment was neglected aspect of education change in the immediate post apartheid period even though it formed the basis of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) that underpinned the new education system

- Strong international influences on education and assessment policy e.g. OBE,

- Influenced by the WEF in 2000 in particular rise of LSAS, participation in international assessment exercises

Year	Name	Function
1998	Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training Band, Grades R to 9 and ABET	This policy outlines new assessment practices to be applied in Grade R-9 and ABET that are in line with the newly introduced outcome-based education (OBE).
2001	Policy on Whole School Development	Declares the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation to be a national policy.
2002	General & Further Education & Training Quality Assurance Act	Establishes the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Council (GFETQAC); provides for control over norms and standards of curriculum and assessment; provides for the issue of certificates at exit points; and provides for the conducting of assessment.

Year	Name	Function
2005	The National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R-12), Oct 2005	Provides requirements and exemplars for the design of portfolios, reports, cards, record sheets, schedules, and learner portfolios.
2005	The National Senior Certificate: A qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualification Framework (NQF)	This policy describes the regulations, rules and provisions for the awarding of the National Senior Certificate (NCS) qualification – replacement of Matric.
2006	National policy on assessment and qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band	This policy provides for a framework for assessment and qualifications for all public and private schools and community-based sites with learners registered in the General Education and Training (GET) band.
2006	Addendum to the NCS on the National Qualifications Framework regarding National Protocol for Assessment – Grades R-12	This protocol provides requirement for and example of the design of learner profiles, teacher portfolios, report cards, record sheets and schedules.
2008	Foundations for Learning Campaign	The Foundations for Learning Campaign requires all schools to regularly assess, track and record learner progress and achievement in reading, writing and numeracy on a monthly basis for class records and quarterly for district office in Grade R to 6.

Key directions of changes in assessment policy and practice

Teacher / Learning

Accountability / Public Concern

Classroom level

- Continuous assessment
- Foundations of Learning
- Common tasks of Assessment

School level

- Whole school evaluation

Assessment Policy

External examinations

- Continuous Assessment

Certification / University Admissions

Systems level

- Systemic Evaluation 3, 6
- FLC Census testing
- Provincial tests
- Regional – SACMEQ
- International – TIMSS, PIRLS,

Accountability / Public Concern

Classroom level

- Flagship assessment policy promulgated in 2007 which revised 1998 policy:
  - Greater emphasis on classroom based assessment
  - Requires teachers and schools to apply a greater range of assessment methods beyond paper and pencil tests
  - More structured ito of frequency and type of assessments (how and what)
  - Provides a reporting and interpretation framework
- National level provided more support wrt:
  - Common Task of Assessment (CTAs)
  - Grades 10,11 & 12 assessment
 - National Database of items

School level

WSE

- A shift in terminology from 'inspection' to 'whole-school evaluation'
- Aimed at encapsulating school self-evaluation as well as external evaluation
- Provided for schools to receive advice and support in their continual efforts to improve their effectiveness
- Policy places particular emphasis on the need to use objective criteria and performance indicators consistently in the evaluation of schools

Systems level

- Grade 3,6, 9 Systemic Evaluation Study

- LSAS
  - majority of studies were designed to provide information to policy makers, to evaluate specific intervention programs, and to obtain baseline information.
  - No studies focussed specifically on providing information to teachers
  - aggregated reporting in terms of the structural features of the SA system (national, provincial or district level), socio economic variables such as gender, language and geographical location (urban, rural); and learning area (e.g. mathematics) as well as the sub-domains assessed (e.g. by learning outcomes or content areas). While this is important, very rarely was reporting done with the school as the unit of analysis.
  - Rare advanced methods of analysis such as path analysis multi-level modelling

Large scale assessment in SA 1994 - 2009
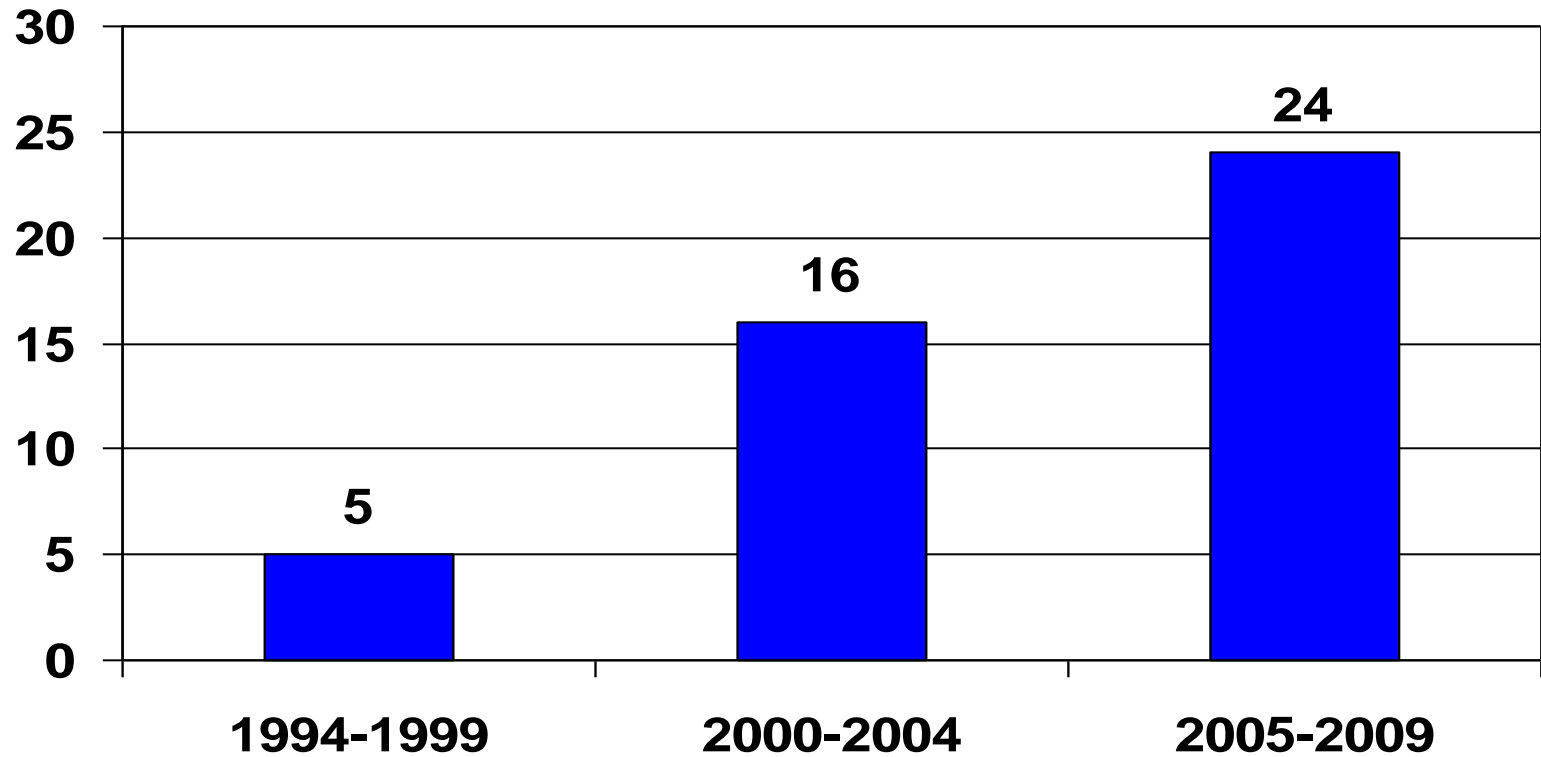
Taking stock

Gains

- A revised assessment policy and the development of structures for developing, reviewing and monitoring assessment practices
- Traditional assessment practices such as tests and exams were reconceptualised as a process of continuous assessments
- Assessments were now directly tied to learning areas and specified competencies
- Success no longer measured by single assessment points - took the form of a more dynamic, holistic assessment
- Significant policy activity aimed at centralising assessment and developing the appropriate structures for overseeing assessment practices

Challenges

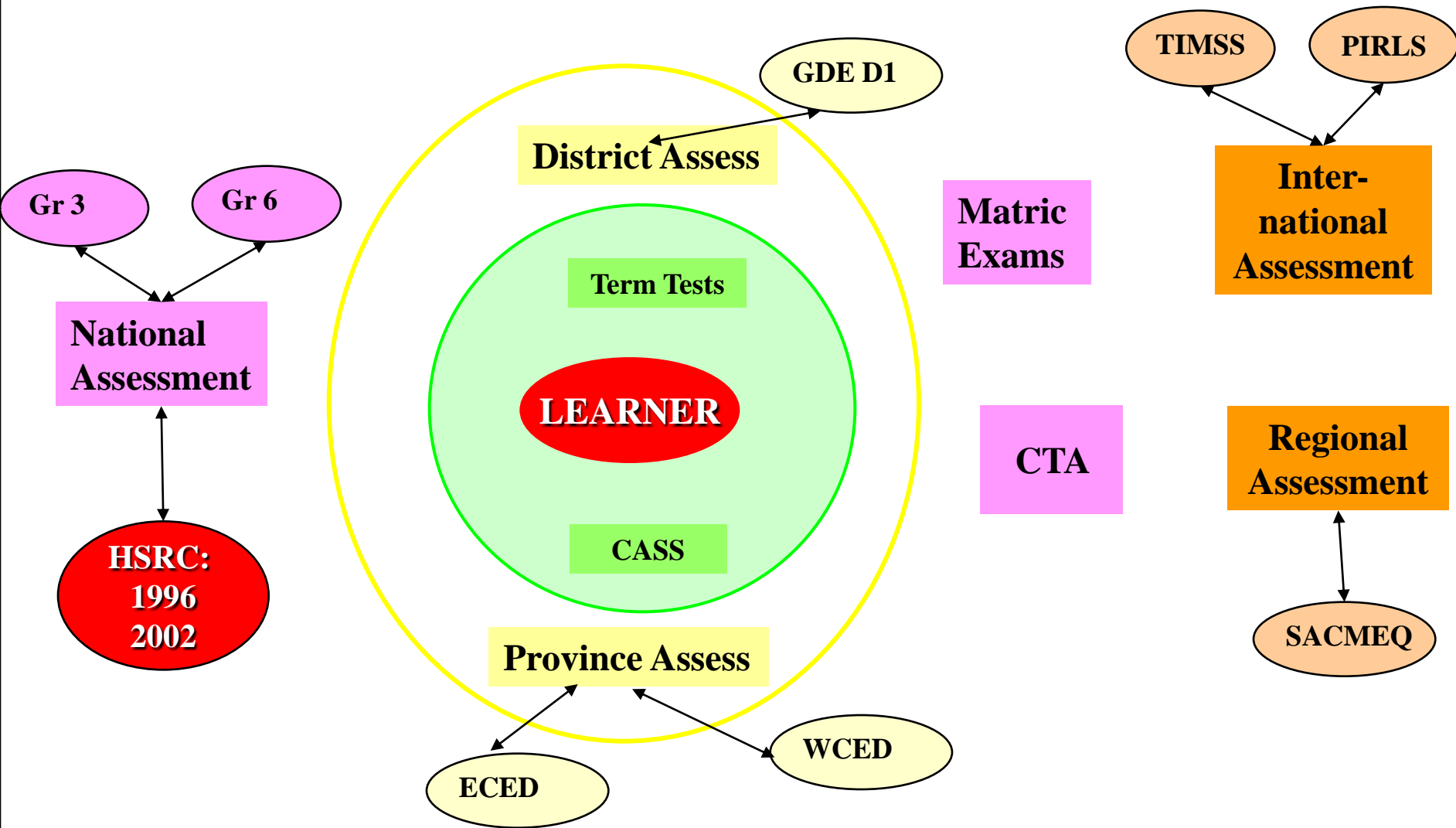| School	Classroom	System	Examinations
•Idea of WSE sound •Union and teacher resistance •Conflation of appraisal and development •Sanctioning a problem •Poor reporting to community	•Shift in thinking Weak teacher capacity •Lack of tools •Weak formative assessment practices •Poor feedback to parents	• Tradition of external assessment established • Capacity outside rather than inside the system – but slowly increasing • Ad hoc and not routinised • Weak interaction • Poor routing into system reform • System capacity constraints • Main challenge on use of information	• Essentially unchanged in focus and practice • Still high stakes for certification and university entrance • Key shift is inclusion of school based into final mark • Concern of dilution with new NSC examination (first implementation in 2008)

Lack of capacity to deliver

Strong policy framing

Current state of assessment system

GDE D1

District Assess

Gr 3 **Gr 6**

National Assessment

HSRC: 1996 2002

Term Tests

LEARNER

CASS

Province Assess

ECED

WCED

Matric Exams

CTA

TIMSS **PIRLS**

Inter-national Assessment

Regional Assessment

SACMEQ

**National Curriculum Statement
Learning Outcomes**

Concluding reflections

Change and development needed … School and teachers

- **Developing Capacity**

- **Providing Tools**

- **Ensuring regular and consistent support**

- **Develop effective monitoring**

Change and development needed ... system

- Integrating assessment into the system

- Using information for reform and for planning

- In house capacity

- Tackle capacity constraints at lower levels of the system (district, area office)

- Become an agent of support to the school

Positive drivers to build upon ...

- Strong policy environment

- Committed leadership and civil service

- External (to Ministry) expertise and skills with some in house

- Political will

- Structures and mechanisms in place e.g. UMALUSI

- Attention beginning to be paid to resources and tools for schools to improve assessment

Thank you

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