

The development phase of a case study of outcomes-based education assessment policy in the Human and Social Sciences learning area of C2005

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The second phase, the 'development phase' (January to December 2003), of an ongoing research project on policy implementation with specific reference to Grade 9 of the Human and Social Sciences (HSS) learning area of C2005 is described. More specifically, a journey, in which nine History and Geography teachers at two independent schools and one university lecturer, working collaboratively as an HSS research team, navigated their way through the national curriculum and assessment policy arena, pushed the boundaries of their own practice as reflexive practitioners, and implemented the first national application of the new General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), is outlined. The article consists of three sections. The first outlines and offers critical commentary on the national policy context in which the research was located, and in which all South African educators currently work. Drawing on national and international literature, it illuminates a number of issues pertinent to national policy enactment. The second section describes the Development Phase. It outlines two areas of curriculum innovation at the two schools, namely enquiry-based learning and the development of a learning process 'map', before honing in on Grade 9 CASS. Section three describes the implementation at the two schools of the HSS Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA) in October/November 2003. The conclusion synthesises the narrative.

Introduction

Despite many of our new education policies being acclaimed by international experts as some of the best in the world, there is little evidence that the goals of transformation, including redress, equity and democracy, have been achieved in practice (Sayed & Jansen, 2001:2). More recently, Chisholm (2004:6) in the introduction to *Changing Class*, a seminal book that provides deep insights into the complexities of changes and continuities in South African education, notes that curriculum and assessment policies have favoured the middle-class. This is evident, for example, in Harley & Wedekind's article (2004: 205-206) which cites a number of studies on C2005 that point to a widening gap between historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools. According to them there is little evidence that C2005 has achieved its intended goals. Fiske & Ladd's (2004:81) critical analysis of fee policy shows how, contrary to the expectations of international consultants and policy-makers, the fee policy has done little, if anything, to help the historically disadvantaged schools. From these and other accounts, including, for example, Soudien (2004:111) and Muller (2004:227), one may infer that the notion of a policy gap, that is, the mismatch between policy intention and policy practice, continues to be an issue in South Africa education (Sayed, 2002:29).

Powerful and varied accounts of the chasm between policy rhetoric and practice abound, three of which are particularly relevant to this research, namely, the notion of policy as 'political symbolism' (Jansen, 2001:272), 'mimicry' (Mattson & Harley, 2003:293), and the notion of 'extended', as opposed to 'restricted', professionalism and the teachers as a reflexive practitioner (Rawling, 2003:21).

Jansen (2001:272-273), drawing on his analysis of statements made by senior bureaucrats and politicians and policy analysts, argues that policies developed in the first five years of democracy served the purpose of 'political symbolism'. He contends that they marked the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid education, and helped to establish the ideological and political credentials of the new government. According to him policy-making was not linked to any serious intention to change practice at the sites where it was to be implemented, that is, classrooms. If we accept Jansen's argument, then it follows that C2005, our first post-apartheid national curriculum, may be viewed as 'symbolic' as opposed to 'real'. Whether or not it succeeded was not the issue.

Jansen argues (2001:273) that since 1999 there has been a shift from a period of symbolic change to one of deep transformation in which policy is enacted and real change starts to take place in classrooms. This is evident, for example, in the appointment of a committee to review C2005 in 2000, the consequence of which has been the development of a strengthened and streamlined revised National Curriculum Statement. The research described in this article provides

evidence of how nine teachers working collaboratively with a university education lecturer have navigated a course through this shifting policy landscape, engaged critically and creatively with policy, pushed the boundaries of their own practices as reflexive practitioners, and affected real, as opposed to symbolic, change in their classrooms.

Secondly, Mattson and Harley (2003:285-286) provide a lucid account of the two competing, modernist discourses contained in policy. The economic imperative, driven by the need to make South Africa competitive in a global economy, is evident in the discourse of high skills, competency, transferability, performativity and life-long learning. The social reconstructivist imperative is evident in the emancipatory discourse and pedagogy of policy. Whereas the former discourse is seen as leaning towards a performance-gear culture driven by accountability and requiring increased state regulation and control, the latter is seen as calling for critical thinking, participation and the adoption of democratic values. Despite the conflicting demands these discourses are seen as exerting on education, Mattson and Harley (2003:287) contend that the more profound disjuncture is between two different ways of being. According to them this is the consequence of current educational change being part of a modernist project involving a transformation from a traditional to a modern way of being. Their research explores the difficulties this poses for many teachers, particularly rural teachers in South Africa, how it can give rise to a sense of displacement, and how it can run the risk of creating a sense of despair and powerlessness.

For many teachers the consequence of policy has been the adoption of a 'mimicry' strategy in an effort to 'look modern' (Mattson & Harley, 2003:296-298). Similar trends are evident in earlier studies (Mattson, 2000; Mattson & Harley 1999) and a more recent one (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). The research described in this article provides evidence which suggests that teachers who take the values, institutions and technologies of late modernity for granted, are able to work creatively within the tension of these competing discourses. As such, the study described in this article provides insights into a context where policy enactment aligned to the broader socio-political goals of transformation is succeeding. Harley & Wedekind (2004:214) argue for knowledge and understanding of the way in which C2005 is being enacted in schools without which there can be little hope for the political project it was intended to serve.

Both these theories are relevant to the case study described in this article, the purpose of which is to illuminate the second phase of an ongoing research project on curriculum and policy implementation at two independent schools. The writer is aware that the research, located within atypical well-resourced schools in the private sector, may be seen as lacking credibility in that it is not representative of South African schools. At the same time, much of the research on policy imple-

mentation has focused on previously disadvantaged schools. Given the legacy of our past, this is understandable. However, whilst research conducted over the past few years has provided rich insights into what is not working and the various reasons militating against change, little has been provided in terms of what can work and the pre-requisites necessary for effective change which policy infers.

As early as 1999 our attention was drawn to the problematic situation regarding the provision and nature of teacher training (Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999). The Review Committee on C2005 highlighted the inadequacy of the 'cascade' model of teacher training which focuses on 'thin' or procedural, i.e. 'how to do', knowledge at the expense of developing teachers' understanding of the 'why', that is, declarative knowledge (Chisholm, 2000:19). The writer's experience with in-service teachers at an Education Honours and Masters degree level in South Africa and with curriculum developers in Namibia reveals high levels of confusion, frustration and anxiety about the way in which 'official' training on curriculum and assessment change is done. Current in-service teacher training, in the form of short workshop interventions, is underpinned by what is described in the literature as a 'restricted' view of professionalism, that is, a 'skilled technician' trained to deliver the state's prescribed curriculum (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998 in Rawling, 2003:21). C2005, the GET Assessment policy and the Norms and Standards for Educators' policy, on the other hand, are underpinned by an extended view of professionalism. Citing Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998:65), Rawling (2003:21) explains that a fully developed or 'extended' professional is a teacher who interacts creatively and meaningfully across a range of areas of work — with pupils, with other teachers and schools, with the discipline and with national agencies.

C2005, with its integrated learning areas, as opposed to a discipline-based knowledge structure, must be understood in relation to Mode 2 knowledge production. Muller's (2000:46-48) account of the distinction between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge, albeit within the context of research, is useful when it comes to understanding C2005. According to Muller (2000:47) who draws on Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, & Trow (1994), Mode 2 knowledge, a new form of knowledge, is trans-disciplinary, emphasising generic competences and transferable skills, strategic and concerned with problem-solving. On the other hand, Mode 1 is orthodox, disciplinary knowledge production (Muller, 2000:48). He contends that Mode 2 knowledge production depends on a sound Mode 1 disciplinary base. He argues that undergraduate courses need to strengthen and consolidate Mode 1 knowledge so that a shift to Mode 2 can be effected at a post-graduate level. His argument, if applied to C2005, is significant. Mattson & Harley (2003:287) contend that C2005's knowledge integration has its roots in Mode 2 discourse. It demands a high level of discipline or Mode 1 knowledge and expertise on the part of teachers and is seen as being underpinned by an 'extended' view of professionalism. Similarly, the Norms and Standards for Educators' policy (DoE, 2000) emphasises practical and foundational competences as well as the development of reflexive competences. Educators are expected to perform seven roles including, *inter alia*, mediator and assessor of learning, curriculum and learning support materials developer. From this one may infer a fully developed or extended view of professionalism.

The above discussion highlights some of the tensions within which South African teachers, tasked with the job of policy enactment, are currently working. This writer contends that teachers, as the primary implementers of change, have a vital role to play in effecting change in South Africa schools. However, if teachers are to implement policy meaningfully, that is, in ways that achieve the goals of transformation, then they need to develop a deep understanding of change, and the skills and dispositions to work creatively within the opportunities and constraints of policy. The research intervention described in this article, involving a dynamic partnership between nine History and Geography teachers in two independent schools and a university-based outsider, suggests that developing a deep understanding of

change is a complex, non-linear, difficult process which needs time and mediation.

The research intervention

The intervention was one in which research was done with teachers rather than on teachers. A collaborative and participatory research approach in which democratic relationships are fostered was therefore selected (Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz & Maers, 1997; Grundy, 1998; McTaggart, 1997). During both the 'inception' and 'development' phase of the research, through a process of negotiation and located in and based on critical reflection and review, an egalitarian research relationship was fostered between the university lecturer and the teachers who constituted the research team. There was an ongoing dialogue on roles and responsibilities of the members of the team. The role of the university lecturer (the writer) is best described as participant observer, professional mediator, guide and facilitator. She provided points of reference to national policy and to the literature and practices of constructivist knowledge and outcomes-based education; modelled and scaffolded the new theories in practice, and encouraged and supported a process of critical reflection and review.

The research process involved the lecturer working alongside the teachers on a weekly basis (the Wednesday lunch hour was set aside as the dedicated time for the HSS meeting) for a period that spanned two years (January 2002 to December 2003). The prime sources of data were observations, person-to-person semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, documentary analysis of the materials and portfolios created by the teachers and learners during the two-year intervention.

The national policy arena

In 2002, the implementation of C2005 started in Grade 9, the exit level of the General Education and Training (GET) band of the National Qualifications Framework. In the same year, a new national assessment system, leading to the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), was introduced.

Whereas the assessment policy document (DoE, 1998) sets out the broad principles of OBE assessment, the assessment guideline document (DoE, 2002a) describes how policy is to be enacted in classrooms. The Grade 9 assessment model follows trends in assessment evident in the international literature. Firstly, the model's outcomes-based orientation places assessment at the heart of teaching and learning. Teachers are told to 'design down', i.e. start with the outcomes to be assessed before selecting the assessment type and activity. They must have 'clarity of focus', that is, a clear picture of what is wanted at the end and there must be a shared understanding of what is required (DoE, 2002a:3). The model calls for greater learner participation in assessment and a teacher/learner relationship based on dialogue and discussion. Secondly, the Grade 9 model has a heavily weighted school-based teacher assessment component (CASS) which counts 75%, and an externally set component, the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA), which counts 25%. Thirdly, the model advocates the use of a wider variety of assessment tasks and strategies than was the case previously. Assessment is concerned with both the product and process of learning. It therefore calls for the use of self- and peer-assessment.

It is argued (Wilmot, 2003:313) that the new Grade 9 assessment model described in the assessment guideline document (DoE, 2002a) offers exciting possibilities for maximizing learning through the use of diverse assessment procedures and techniques; however, the mechanics of OBE assessment are complex. An ability to plan, develop and implement criterion-referenced assessment together with descriptive rubrics which link to curriculum goals and learning outcomes, and democratise assessment procedures through the use of self-, peer- and teacher-assessment assumes a high level of teacher competence, both as curriculum developers and assessors.

The findings of research on C2005 (Taylor & Vinjevoold 1999; Chisholm 2000; Taylor, Muller & Vinjevoold 2003) point to a lack of

alignment between curriculum and assessment policy, a lack of clarity regarding assessment policy and practice, and too much time being spent on assessment. Chisholm (2002:19), for example, stresses the need for greater attention to assessment in teacher preparation and the need for a coherent policy document aligned with the curriculum and containing clear guidelines and procedures. As South African teachers do not have a good track record as curriculum developers and assessors (Malcolm, 2001:207), it would be naïve to assume that teachers will manage to implement the sophisticated continuous assessment (CASS) component of assessment in Grade 9 in a meaningful way. Given that CASS constitutes a major part of a high stakes assessment, i.e. an assessment linked to a formal qualification, namely the GETC, this takes on new significance. It will raise thorny questions about the validity and reliability of school-based teacher assessment, and will fuel debates for and against more externally controlled standardised assessment at the expense of CASS. The international literature on assessment suggests that these issues associated with teacher assessment have not yet been resolved.

Assessment, within a constructivist paradigm, should be at the heart of any educational enterprise (Shepard, 2000:4). It should, however, not dominate the educational enterprise — a very real danger in any outcomes-based system where pedagogy is assessment-driven. Research on the effect of the introduction of a standards-based National Curriculum in England and Wales shows that assessment has dominated, at the expense of innovative geography teaching (Rawling, 2003:34). Within a South African context, the findings of the Review Committee of C2005 suggest that this is happening with the implementation of C2005 in the primary school (Chisholm, 2000:19). There is a very real danger of this also happening in Grade 9. In addition to coping with the demands of developing and implementing a range of assessment tasks together with criterion-referenced assessment sheets and rubrics, there is a significant amount of paper work that needs to be done for the CASS component in Grade 9.

Another dilemma teachers face is determining the status of the various policy and guideline documents emanating from the national Department of Education. This is illustrated by the following example. Subsequent to the recommendations of the Review Committee on C2005 in 2000, the Department of Education published two Assessment Guideline documents, an electronic one in March 2002 and an undated booklet later in the year. We are alerted to the difficulty of distinguishing the status or 'indeterminate status' of national policy and guideline documents by Hendricks (2003:29). She reminds us that a document only counts as official, when it has been printed in the Government Gazette. According to her, discussion or guidance documents have 'an indeterminate status until they have been legislated or officially ratified, yet such documents have moral status' (p.29). The 'indeterminate status' of the assessment guideline document (DoE, 2002a) is acknowledged in the preamble. It states:

These guidelines are part of a developmental process that is aimed at increasing capacity of the education system ... to enhance the effective implementation of Curriculum 2005 by developing an authentic assessment system that is congruent with outcomes based education in general and Curriculum 2005 in particular.

Further, the Department of Education invites readers to engage critically with the document and alert it to any 'elements that may detract from the goal of establishing an effective assessment system' (DoE, 2002a). Teachers are encouraged to engage in formative evaluation processes of the new assessment model. This is commendable because it provides teachers with an opportunity to comment on and make suggestions for improvement before the document assumes legal status. The extent to which the Department of Education is serious about obtaining feedback and engaging in debate, and whether or not they will act on recommendations made, remains to be seen. This HSS research team's effort, to voice a critical commentary through the submission of a report (Wilmot, 2002) describing their Grade 9 CASS and CTA experiences, failed to evoke a response.

However, if we accept that educational change is an ongoing and

evolving process, the 'indeterminate status' of a document is not only necessary but advantageous (Hendricks, 2003:69). One takes issue, however, when a document that has 'indeterminate status' is used for formative or developmental educational purposes and, at the same time, for accountability purposes. Although teachers may feel morally bound to follow the recommendations in the Assessment Guideline document, they are not legally bound to do so. As long as they can provide evidence that they are implementing assessment policy (DoE, 1998), they are not transgressing. Consequently, assessment can, and most likely will, be interpreted and applied differently in Grade 9. If this happens, comparability becomes an issue. As a matter of urgency, the National Department of Education needs to resolve the issue of the indeterminate status of the Assessment Guideline document before the GET certification proceeds.

Dealing with the tension of working in a period of policy transition deserves further elaboration. Faced with the dilemma of what to do about the implementation of C2005 in Grades 4 and 8 in 2001, and Grade 9 in 2002, the Review Committee recommended that

... once this [the National Curriculum Statement] has been approved [that is, June 2001], teachers should begin to orient their teaching accordingly, paying attention to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards for each grade (Chisholm, 2000:24).

Further, it states that

Grade 8 [and by implication Grade 9] should continue on a modified basis. The modified form should entail ... and the Learning Outcomes informed by the National Curriculum Statement. The Committee thus recommends that the current C2005 trajectory be continued in the short-term with transitional arrangements being made for phasing out implementation in further phases (Chisholm, 2000:24).

Given that this recommendation was accepted by the Minister of Education, there is no legal reason why teachers should not work creatively between C2005 and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). When, however, the teachers in this study asked for clarification on this matter at an assessment workshop run by the IEB in 2003, the response was unhelpful. It undermined the teachers' professional judgement and confidence. It also illuminated a tension created by the way in which policy is being interpreted by different agents in the education arena. The teachers participating in this study were seeking to maximise the flexibility and rich opportunities contained in OBE assessment policy for loosening up a system that was previously tighter (Malcolm, 2001:206). On the other hand, the interpretation of policy by 'officials' at the workshop leaned heavily towards imposition and increased regulation. The writer contends that this is counter-productive to the spirit of transformation.

Given the other significant weaknesses of C2005 identified by the Review Committee including, for example, the flawed design features, weak conceptual coherence and progression due to a lack of content being prescribed, the HSS team took the decision to work with the design features of the NCS rather than those of C2005 (Chisholm, 2000). Likewise, the shift from a 'hard' to 'soft' Human and Social Sciences evident in the disentanglement of History and Geography in the NCS, affirmed the HSS team's decision to teach History and Geography as separate but parallel strands under a Human and Social Sciences umbrella. The design of new OBE curricula for Grades 8 and 9 History and Geography at the two schools was therefore guided by the content listed in the NCS.

The above discussion illustrates the importance of teachers firstly having access to the various national policy and guideline documents, and secondly knowing the status of the documents. This knowledge enabled the HSS team to exercise their professional judgement and take decisions that enabled them to work creatively with policy in a period of transition.

The political economy of assessment

The political economy of assessment is well documented in the international literature (see, for example, Barnes, Clarke & Stephens, 2000;

Koretz, Broadfoot & Wolf, 1998; Wragg, 2001). Assessment is increasingly viewed as an instrument of system reform monitoring or system management, and is linked to powerful global discourses of performativity, efficiency, quality assurance, and accountability. According to Wragg (2001:17) assessment becomes a political issue when the ruling party tries to defend or establish its record. This, when applied to the South African context, takes on new significance.

Education is seen as having an important role to play in the broader arena of socio-political and economic transformation in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1995). It has resulted in a plethora of new educational policies, all with the explicit purpose of reconstructing and transforming the legacy of the past. These encompass new priorities including, *inter alia*, achieving redress, equity, quality and democracy in education. C2005, our first national curriculum, has been promoted as a dynamic underpinning of transformation. The critical outcomes of C2005 state that Grade 9 learners, having studied the national curriculum, will be critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, problem-solvers and decision-makers, co-operative and independent learners, etc. The acid test, however, will be the attainment of a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) at the end of Grade 9. As the first national assessment, the GETC is a powerful mechanism for monitoring and judging the efficiency and effectiveness of post-apartheid educational transformation initiatives. C2005 and its associated assessment model are thus linked to powerful political agendas of transformation.

Curriculum and assessment decisions often have political dimensions. This was evident in Britain when the Thatcher government passed the Education Act of 1988 in response to falling standards. The Act mandated a national curriculum, and a national testing system at ages 7, 11, and 14 to monitor standards (Tell, 1998:66). As a result, of the new emphasis on assessment as a mechanism for monitoring and judging standards and how well the system was responding to reform, the assessment industry burgeoned.

Given the shift to an outcomes-based education system in South Africa where assessment can be viewed as the engine driving transformation, we are starting to see a similar burgeoning of the assessment industry. The Grade 9 assessment model is a good example of how assessment has gained currency in our school system. The significance of our first national assessment, the GET certificate, as a 'high stakes' assessment needs to be understood. As the exit point of Level 1 of the NQF, and a pre-requisite for admission to the Further Education and Training band (Level 2 of the NQF), the GETC has considerable currency. The issue of accountability takes on new proportions.

Firstly, the results of the GET assessment will provide the state with a powerful indicator of how well provinces, districts, and schools are faring in relation to the expected national standards. As such, the results can be used by the state for quality assurance purposes. It will enable the state to identify and implement a plan of action to remedy problems in the system. If we follow the route taken in the UK, for example, schools in which learners are performing poorly could be put on special measures and those with good results could be used as beacon schools. We already have a similar system operating at the matriculation level. Further, publishing the results in the newspapers will enable schools to compare how they are doing with the rest of the district and country. This information will be useful to schools, teachers and parents. There is, however, a danger of using crude scores for comparative purposes. Given the wide range of schools that exist in South Africa, we need to be sensitive to the context and circumstances of schools. In Britain attempts have been made to resolve this issue by producing 'benchmark data' which categorises schools so that similar schools are compared (Tate in Tell, 1998:67).

Secondly, for individual schools and teachers the introduction of a national assessment in Grade 9 heralds in a new era of increased accountability to the state. Public naming and shaming may demoralise schools and teachers, it may force schools to keep on their toes. It places more pressure on teachers at an earlier stage than is the case at present. At present, it is only at the matriculation level that schools,

and to a lesser extent, teachers are held accountable to the state.

There is, however, another side to accountability. As the first national assessment in our new outcomes-based education system, the GET certificate will provide the public with tangible evidence of the extent to which the state's educational transformation initiatives have or have not succeeded. While research reports including, for example, the PEI Report and Review Committee of C2005, and the media, have alerted the public to the weaknesses of C2005, this writer argues that the real test of its success, or lack thereof, will be the GETC results. If published, the results will reveal the extent to which educational transformation initiatives have achieved their goals, raised standards and improved the life chances of our children. As such, the GET assessment carries enormous risks in terms of state accountability to the public. If the new system is not seen as achieving its goals, its credibility and legitimacy will be challenged.

Given the political agenda for the GET assessment to succeed, and the high risks it carries, the National Department of Education's decision to postpone the GET certification process until the end of 2004 came as no surprise. The reasons given were, *inter alia*, 'to build capacity within the system; prepare teachers and learners for the assessment of outcomes; trial and develop recording and reporting procedures' (Independent Examinations Board Circular No. 41/2002). The postponement provides a valuable window period for Grade 9 teachers and learners, and it buys time for the state to ensure that the system is able to deliver the educational goods it has promised the public.

A subsequent, somewhat surreptitious, decision taken by the national Department of Education (IEB Circular No. 38/2003) to tweak the Grade 9 grading levels is problematic. The percentages needed for Levels 1 to 3 of the four-level grading system have been lowered. For example, the range for Level 3 ('achieved') has been changed from 50%–69% to 40%–69%. This is significant: it represents a lowering of standards. It can be interpreted as a strategic move by the state to reduce the risk of potentially high GET failure rates. One may infer the state's uneasiness and lack of confidence in the system's ability to deliver its promises of redress and equity. In a country with a poor track record of educational achievement compared to many African countries — evident, for example, in the findings of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study – Repeat [TIMSS-R] achievement tests of 1998/1999 (Howie, 2001; Taylor, Muller & Vinjevd, 2003) — the decision to lower the GET levels represents a regression in terms of educational standards in South Africa.

The following section describes the development phase (January to December 2003) of a two-year school-based research intervention. It shows how History and Geography teachers, in collaboration with a university-based outsider, worked inter- and intra-departmentally to interpret, implement and trial OBE assessment policy in the Grade 9 classes at two schools. It provides evidence of how an intervention can facilitate teachers' development of deep knowledge seen as necessary for creative and innovative application of policy.

The Development Phase

Curriculum development and innovation

At the first HSS meeting held in January 2003, the team reflected on what had been done and achieved during the Inception phase the previous year, identified goals for 2003, and negotiated a plan of action.

During the first school term, the focus was primarily on curriculum development. Implementation of OBE curricula developed by the teachers at the end of 2002 got underway. To this end, the teachers worked creatively, synthesising the specific outcomes and the learning outcomes of the two national curriculum policies (DoE, 1997; 2002b). Their curricula were thus an amalgam of current and imminent policy. Interestingly, the Grade 9 Geography curriculum represented a radical departure from that which was taught before the start of the collaborative study in 2002. A complete overhaul of Geography had been necessary to align it to OBE curriculum policy. This was not the case in History. Instead, an incremental approach to curriculum development was taken because much of the content of the new curriculum (DoE,

2002b) had been taught previously in Grade 8 and 9 at the two schools. This said, some tweaking of the Grade 9 History curriculum was necessary for a better fit with policy. This had a knock-on effect, both up and down, with two themes normally taught in Grade 9 going to Grade 8, and another to Grade 10. One of the challenges identified by the history teachers was finding creative ways to deal with the content so that unnecessary repetition was avoided in the senior grades. Because the history teachers were working with topics that they had previously taught, their focus was primarily, although not exclusively, on adapting and using 'old' units of work differently, and developing a wider range of assessment activities and criterion-referenced assessment *pro forma*.

The geography teachers took more of a 'systemic', as opposed to incremental, approach to curriculum development. Most of their time and energy was expended on trying to make sense of the new content and then designing and developing coherent and relevant units of work and new assessment tasks. Despite being forced to discard a large component of Geography, namely physical geography, the geography teachers were generally satisfied with the shift to an enquiry approach in which relevant and topical issues in South African and global society were the foci.

Two areas of curriculum innovation were inspired by OBE: enquiry learning and the creation of a learning process map. Two 3-hour enquiry workshops were held. The process was mediated and scaffolded by the university lecturer who provided points of reference to relevant curriculum policies (DoE, 2002b; 2002c). The developmental process continued until mid-year (mostly outside of the weekly meetings). It resulted in two innovative enquiries. The issues-based enquiry developed and implemented by the Geography teachers was presented to an international audience and subsequently published (Wilmot & Norton, 2004).

The development of a Learner Profile document describing the domains of learning, both specific and generic, to history and geography within a Social Science framework has been discussed previously (Wilmot, 2003:316). It was used by the teachers to guide the development of new OBE curricula at the end of 2002, and when designing new or modifying old units of work and assessment tasks in 2003. Work on the document continued in 2003 and by mid-year it had evolved to a Learning Process 'map' for Geography and History. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss these two curriculum innovations in more detail.

CASS development

Throughout 2003, the teachers continued to extend their repertoire of assessment tasks for CASS purposes. In Grade 9 history a combination of 'old', that is tasks developed in 2002, and new assessment tasks were used. The range of new assessment tasks developed for Grade 9 Geography are shown in Table 1.

The portfolio compilation process started at the beginning of 2002, and continued throughout 2003. Guided by the assessment categories described in the Assessment Guidelines (DoE, 2002a), the approach to portfolios was more systematic and forward-looking than it had been in 2002. By October 2003, the discussion on portfolios shifted to the effective organisation of the portfolios for CASS purposes. Much discussion took place on whether the portfolio ought to be a process-orientated, i.e. showing development and the growth in competency over time, or product-orientated, i.e. showing only best performance or highest level of attainment. The issue of standardised assessment tasks was a subject of intense debate, with some teachers arguing for standardised portfolio tasks on the grounds that it would make the management of the portfolios more efficient, and it would be a fairer and more reliable way of assessing because common tasks would be given to the Grade 9s. Others argued that it would be too rigid, potentially contrived and intruding on an individual teacher's professionalism. The issue was not resolved. Instead, it was flagged as one that needed further exploration in 2004.

In spite of the time, organisational and management effort requi-

red for the learner portfolios, overall the teachers were satisfied that the process had run smoothly. This was not the case with the teacher portfolios. By April, only four of the nine teachers had started compiling a portfolio of evidence of their Grade 9 curriculum and assessment development work and innovation. Those who had not managed identified time as a major constraint. Although they did not have a portfolio *per se*, they were using strategies, for example, a logbook, a diary, a folder of documents, for recording their work. A 'master' teacher portfolio was compiled for history and geography. These were taken to the cluster group moderation meeting. A more systematic approach to portfolio building was planned for 2004.

Table 1 List of contents: Teacher's portfolio

Task number	Type of assessment	Description of task	Date completed	Specific outcomes
1	Test	Development Class test	19 Feb 2003	
2	Contextual analysis	Advert analysis on developments in Gauteng and Coega	5 Mar 2003	
3	Contextual analysis	Contextual essay task on "Water as a Human Right". Completed under controlled conditions.	17 Mar 2003	
4	Creative	Creating an advertisement for a development agency.	24 Mar 2003	
5	Class test	Test on development and technology.	12 Jun 2003	
6	Creative	Research essay task on the Green Revolution.	18 Jun 2003	
7	Contextual analysis	Analysis of text relating to Genetic Engineering.	7 Jul 2003	
8	Creative	Film review on the movie "Gattaca".	18 Jul 2003	
9	Data analysis	Creating own timeline (9.1). Using a timeline to answer questions (9.2).	1 Aug 2003	
10	Class test	Test on Settlement.	24 Sep 2003	
11	Mapwork analysis and data response	Mapwork skills and interpretation Empageni Bar graph analysis	13 Oct 2003	

Analysis of Assessment Guideline document

Following an invitation to the public to offer critical comment to the Assessment Guideline document (DoE, 2002a), the HSS team analysed the document and sent a detailed response to the National Department of Education (Wilmot, 2004). Issues and problems, both conceptual and in terms of layout and organisation, were identified and suggestions made on how to improve the document.

It is impossible to quantify the amount of time that was spent on assessment by the HSS team in 2003, both at the weekly meetings and outside the meetings. Suffice it to say that designing the various types of tasks prescribed by the policy guidelines, together with criterion-referenced assessment pro-forma and descriptive rubrics, took up a considerable amount of time. It gave rise to a great deal of debate and discussion at the weekly meetings. Generally however the teachers felt policy enactment was privileged, and that this resulted in procedural, both technical and managerial matters being fore-grounded. For example, the logistics of how to organise and manage the learner portfolios took a great deal of the weekly meeting time. Despite the frustration of having to focus on these issues, the teachers recognised the necessity of taking a thorough and systematic approach as a pre-requisite for meaningful enactment of policy.

The teachers believed that while their procedural knowledge is sound, there is still room for further critical engagement with assessment on a theoretical, as opposed to practical, level. At the start of this research project, the teachers committed themselves to two years

of collaboration with the university lecturer. As agreed, the university lecturer withdrew from the two schools at the end of the development phase in December 2003. During 2004 the teachers continued with their HSS curriculum and assessment work. The extent, to which the teachers managed to use the experiential learning acquired during the two-year intervention to explore and probe theoretical issues in more depth, still has to be investigated. This will be done during the course of 2005 when the university lecturer will re-visit the schools and interview the teachers. Only then will it be possible to judge the extent to which change is sustainable without the support and encouragement of an outside facilitator.

CASS Cluster Group Moderation process

In November 2003 a CASS Cluster Group Moderation meeting, attended by Grade 9 HSS teachers from the independent schools (three in total) in the area was held. Learners' and teacher portfolios were used for the moderation. It was observed that the types of tasks as well as the depth and breadth of the content varied, and while it was easy to distinguish a good learner from a weak one, the overall evaluation of standards was difficult. The portfolio tasks included in the portfolios varied from school to school with some focusing more on tasks that demanded 'thinking and reasoning skills' whilst others emphasized factual recall type exercises.

The random method of sampling used for selecting Grade 9 learners for moderation purposes was problematised. The teachers observed that the sample did not necessarily include a variety of learners' capabilities. It resulted in one school having mostly strong candidates in the sample and another mostly weak candidates. Without evidence of the range of performance at an individual school, it was difficult to compare standards accurately. Comparability, particularly in terms of standards, was identified as an area in which teachers need additional support and guidance from the accrediting bodies before the GET certification process begins.

Given the range and diversity of tasks included in the portfolios, the teachers found it difficult to judge the validity of the tasks, namely whether or not they are aligned to the specific outcomes of C2005. The GET assessment model relies on a system of internal marking, i.e. teachers set and mark their own assessment tasks for CASS and they mark their pupils' responses to the externally set standardised CTA. This raises questions about reliability. At present too much responsibility rests with individual teachers. One way of resolving this issue, at least in part, would be to set aside a longer period of time for the cluster group meeting so that Section B of the CTA (the validation test) could be marked by teachers attending the cluster group moderation meeting. The cluster-group moderation process is a vital, yet problematic, part of the GET CASS. The success of a teacher-led moderation process will ultimately depend on the quality of the training on assessment that teachers undergo.

This section has outlined the Development phase of a collaborative research and curriculum project in two independent schools. It has described how the teachers and lecturer worked together during 2003 to consolidate and extend the curriculum and assessment development work started in 2002. It has illuminated how assessment and curriculum are interlinked and interdependent and that innovation in one area will have consequences in the other. As was the case in the first phase, the Inception phase of the project in 2002, the second phase has been one in which there has been a high level of activity with the teachers engaging in a myriad of activities. The following section describes the teachers and learners' experience of the new national assessment, the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA).

The Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA)

The Department of Education and Independent Examinations Board took the decision to implement the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA) in the GETC nationally for the first time in 2003. The History and Geography teachers participating in this research project, having

trials the CTA in 2002, were well prepared to implement and evaluate the 2003 CTA.

The CTA, consisting of Section A (the developmental component) and Section B (a validation component written under controlled circumstances) was analysed and evaluated by the research team using three broad criteria generated by the university lecturer for analysing the 2002 CTA (refer to Table 2).

The analysis identified and discussed the concerns and issues arising out of the teachers' experience of implementing the 2003 Human and Social Sciences CTA at two independent schools. Data on the teachers' experiences of the CTA were gathered at three focus group discussions held at various stages of the implementation process. Each discussion was tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were used by the university lecturer as the basis for the writing of a report containing a detailed analysis and evaluation of the principles, design and format of the CTAs. The report (Wilmot, 2004) provides a detailed and constructively critical commentary on the CTA implementation at the two schools. Although context specific, the report nevertheless illuminates issues associated with the new assessment model that educators are experiencing throughout the national school system. The report was submitted as a potential resource to curriculum and assessment developers at the national Department of Education and Independent Examinations Board. The findings of the report are summarised as follows:

Is the CTA aligned to C2005?

Generally, the team felt that the CTAs' focus on different roles of South African women was exciting, stimulating and relevant albeit somewhat biased towards women's political roles. Many tasks required the learners to engage with the issue of women's rights and, as such, provided a springboard for rich discussions and debate on the different roles of women in contemporary society within a local, national and international context. The theme made the learners, particularly the boys, think in new, and socially beneficial ways. The geography teachers were frustrated by the narrow interpretation of geography as skills, particularly graphicacy skills in the CTA.

In terms of the questions asked, and the extent to which these encouraged the development of 'rich' knowledge, the analysis revealed a disjuncture between Sections A and B of the CTA. In Section A, tasks were mostly activity- as opposed to concept-driven. The emphasis was on the practical activity or 'doing', for example, making a poster, drawing a graph or writing a report and this was at the expense of developing an understanding of the 'big ideas' or conceptual framework. This meant that learners could utilise procedural knowledge to complete a task which made it difficult to judge the extent to which they had 'rich' knowledge. Section B contained questions that required learners to demonstrate critical, reflective and inferential thinking skills. This was a pleasing improvement on Section A and the previous (2002) CTA.

How is assessment handled in the CTA?

Section A utilised a traditional point-system of marking for questions requiring factual responses and criterion-referenced assessment with rubrics to assess levels of understanding or competence. Given the different types of questions asked, this two-pronged approach was considered appropriate. The report highlighted the need for Section A to play a formative assessment role, i.e. one that supports learning. It requires the application of analytical, as opposed to holistic, rubrics which describe the sort of evidence that is needed to support claims of competence. The report recognised the danger of atomising learning through too detailed a description but argued against the rubrics used in the CTA. These were seen as too vague to support learning. Suggestions for improving the rubrics are given.

Further, the report recommends that copies of rubrics be included in the Learner's book. This is seen as pre-requisite for transparency as advocated by policy (DoE, 1998), and necessary for supporting learning. Learners need to develop a shared understanding of the assess-

Table 2 Criteria developed for analysing and evaluating the CTA (Source: Wilmot, 2002:47)

Criterion	Questions asked
1. Is the CTA aligned to C2005?	Do the activities develop the concepts, skills and values and attitudes embedded in the HSS curriculum? Are the activities encouraging the development of 'thin or 'rich' knowledge? Do the activities require critical and creative thinking? Is the CTA learner-centred? Do the activities build on the learners' prior knowledge? Do they promote problem-solving? Do they involve the learners in decision-making? Do the activities encourage the learners to question the status quo and to identify and explore alternative ways of living? Are they free of bias? Do they break down stereotypical roles? Do the activities provide opportunities for learners to think about issues, make decisions, consider the consequences of their decisions and take responsibility for them? Is the CTA valid in terms of what it purports to achieve and what it actually does?
2. How is assessment handled in the CTA?	Is the assessment aligned to the curriculum goals? Do the questions assess 'thin' or 'rich' knowledge? Is knowledge with understanding assessed rather than an ability to access and recall information? Is the approach to assessment aligned to national policy? Is the assessment transparent, explicit and criterion-referenced? Is the guidance provided for learners and teachers sufficient? Have rubrics been included to guide the teachers and learners in terms of expected depth and breadth of knowledge and skill acquisition? Does the CTA provide a model which will help teachers to develop and implement CASS? Is the CTA a valid form of assessment?
3. Is the CTA accessible in terms of language and design?	Do the activities take account of the fact that English is not the home language of the majority of learners and teachers in South Africa? Are the materials accessible? Are the questions clear and unambiguous? Is the memorandum accurate? Has the document been edited and proof-read?

ment criteria, and the type of evidence sought. Further, the report contends that it is impractical and unfair to suggest that teachers are at liberty to copy the rubrics included in the Teacher's book for their class as this will only work well in resource-rich and affluent schools.

The report reveals a disjuncture between the approach to assessment in Section A and B. This is evident in the shift away from rubrics in Section B with not a single rubric being included in the memorandum. Instead, possible responses based on inferences and divergent thinking are suggested with far more responsibility given to teachers' professional judgment. For the Education lecturer and this writer, this represents a move in the right direction, namely, away from responses based on recall and memorization of factual information to those requiring the utilization of a more sophisticated network of cognitive skills. The latter includes inferential, as opposed to deductive, reasoning. At the same time she cautions that, exciting as it may be, the shift has high risks. It assumes a high level of teacher competence and subject knowledge, and the responsible use of professional judgment.

This section of the article has identified and discussed a number of issues and concerns arising out of implementing the 2003 Human and Social Sciences Common Assessment Tasks (CTA) at two independent schools. Despite its critical comments, the research team felt that the 2003 CTA was a significant improvement on the one they trialled in 2002. More specifically, Section A was shorter, easier to manage and less intrusive of 'normal' teaching and learning time; in both Section A and B of the CTA, the tasks were shorter and more focused; the layout and design was clear and uncluttered; the source materials were of a better quality; a wider range of types of questions requiring the utilization of a greater variety of cognitive skills were asked; there was a closer alignment to the curriculum goals, and the content of the CTA was relevant and stimulating.

On a more cautionary note, we must avoid falling into the trap of thinking that because, as the above discussion suggests, progress has been made in the development of the CTA, the new instrument of assessment in Grade 9, all is well in terms of the GET assessment model. The merits of privileging teacher assessment and the potential threat this is to reliability requires serious attention as does the issue of the nature and form of teacher training in assessment to support meaningful change.

The DoE's decision to postpone the certification of the GETC until 2005 provided a window of opportunity for refining the new assessment model. This article has opened up windows on both the

CASS and CTA component of the General Education and Training assessment model currently being implemented in Grade 9 nationally. Further, the article has described how teachers are playing a part in the ongoing process of educational transformation in South Africa.

Conclusion

This article has described the second phase, the Development phase, of a two-year collaborative research and curriculum project focused on the Grade 9 Learning Area of Human and Social Sciences. The case study has involved a dynamic partnership between nine teachers and a university lecturer playing the role of 'outside facilitator'. Although the sample is small and the study context-specific, the tensions and the issues associated with assessment policy implementation illuminated in this article are likely to be experienced, albeit in varying degrees and configurations, by all Grade 9 teachers nationally.

This article has described the time and effort required by teachers, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary for creative and meaningful engagement with and enactment of policy. It provides evidence that teachers, as 'extended' professionals, i.e. reflexive practitioners, can be creative and effective agents of change, and they can make a meaningful contribution to discussions about their subjects.

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