
UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

# INVESTIGATING GRADE 6 TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE SYSTEMIC LITERACY EVALUATIONS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

---

**By**

**SIMPHIWE MICHAEL SIGONYELA (3877161)**

**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree**
**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**
**at the University of the Western Cape**
**Faculty of Education**
**Department of Language Education**

**Supervisor : Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo**
**Co-Supervisor: Dr. Pumla Cutalele**

# DECLARATION

I, Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela, declare that this thesis entitled ***Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape*** is my work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination to any other university. I further declare that the work I am submitting for assessment contains no section copied in whole or in part from any other source unless explicitly identified in quotation marks and with detailed and accurate referencing.

……..

**October 2020**

# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Lisakhanya Sigonyela, and my mother, Nobom Doris Sigweba, for being my cheerleaders in this academic journey. I could not have done it without your unconditional support.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks be unto God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has sustained me throughout this academic endeavour.

My gratitude also goes to the school that agreed to participate in this study, particularly the school management team and the Grade 6 literacy teachers, for their support during the data collection stage of this study.

I express my deep gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Vuyokazi Nomlomo and Dr. Pumla Cutalele, for their dedication, exemplary guidance, mentoring and constant encouragement throughout this research work. I have learned valuable skills that will assist me in my academic journey. I thank my God for you.

The love, support and care of my family during this time was invaluable. My children at times had to sacrifice quality time with their father. However, they found opportunities to encourage me and to show their support when I seemed stressed or at my wit's end. Kuhle, Liviwe and Likhanyile Sigonyela, thank you very much, my daughters – Daddy appreciates you.

Thanks, too, to my school principal, whom I affectionately call mom, for steering me towards furthering my education. Mom, you are a blessing in my life.

# ABSTRACT

South Africa's poor performance in local, regional and international benchmark literacy assessments is well documented and has implications for teachers. Both the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS) and the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) reports and research argue that South African teachers lack both the content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of their subjects. Although the studies refer to teachers, their voices are not heard in the studies and their opinions are not known. Investigation was required to examine teachers' experiences of the literacy assessment and thus bring teachers' voices into this hotly debated topic. This study, therefore, set out to explore teachers' lived experiences of the Western Cape English First Additional Language literacy assessments (referred herein as the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations, or SE) through the lens of Systems Theory.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, using a case study design. To ensure method triangulation, data was collected through interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. The study sample comprised six Grade 6 literacy teachers: three retired and three current, all chosen from one primary school in the Western Cape. The study results indicated that the teachers' understanding of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic evaluations is not grounded in the stipulations of the policy. The findings also showed that teachers cannot design quality assessment instruments. Teachers do not fully exploit Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluation (SE) data to assess learners' literacy needs. Another interesting finding was that, although the SEs expose teachers to numerous opportunities for collaboration and professional development, the Grade 6 teacher's felt threatened by the SE as the results are seen to reflect on their content and pedagogical knowledge. This study concludes that there is a need for teacher reorientation to Systemic Evaluations and a need for professional development on how to design assessments and to analyse assessment data for effective language and literacy teaching and learning.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES



# LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| PIRLS | Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies |
| NEEDU | National Education Evaluation & Development Unit |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| EFA | Education for All |
| LIFE | Literacy Initiative for Empowerment |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| AU | African Union |
| WEF | World Economic Forum |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| SACMEQ | Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality |
| WCED | Western Cape Education Department |
| WCSE | Western Cape Systemic Evaluations |
| TIMSS | Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study |
| SE | Systemic Evaluation |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| ANA | Annual National Assessments |
| LOLT | Language of Learning and Teaching |
| NGA | National Governors Association |
| CCSAO | Common Core States Standards Organisation |
| LiEP | Language in Education Policy |
| CALP | Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency |
| OBE | Outcomes-Based Education |
| OBA | Outcomes-Based Assessments |

| | |
|---|---|
| EFAL | English First Additional Language |
| CAPS | Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement |
| NPPPR | National Protocol on Promotion and Progression Requirements |
| NPA | National Protocol on Assessment |
| SBA | School Based Assessments |
| NAPTOSA | National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa |
| SADTU | South African Democratic Teachers Union |
| UN | United Nations |
| FP | Foundation Phase |
| IP | Intermediate Phase |
| SP | Senior Phase |
| GET | General Education and Training |
| NEEDU | National Education Evaluation and Development Unit |
| LITNUM | Literacy and Numeracy |
| UDLR | Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights |
| LANGTAG | Language Plan Task Group |
| NLPF | National Language Policy Framework |
| SASA | South African Schools Act |
| SE | Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| NEPA | National Education Policy Act |
| IEA | International Association for the Evaluation for Educational Achievement |
| PED | Provincial Education Department |
| ST | Systems Theory |
| CST | Critical Systems Theory |
| GST | General Systems Theory |

| | |
|---|---|
| CAPS | Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement |
| HOD | Departmental Head/ Head of Department |
| M.Ed. | Masters in Education |
| S.P.T.D. | Senior Primary Teachers Diploma |
| A.C.E. | Advanced Certificate in Education |
| H.D.E. | Higher Diploma in Education |
| BSc. Hons. | Bachelor of Science (Honours) |
| RDP | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SAP | School Assessment Policy |
| SLP | School Language Policy |

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The promotion of universal literacy as a basic human right and a foundation for lifelong learning has been on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO's) priority agenda since its creation in 1946 (Limage, 2007; Carr-Hill & Pessoa, 2008). UNESCO has consistently maintained that literacy for all age groups, through both formal and non-formal education provision, is one of its most fundamental objectives (Bhola, 1984; Arnove & Graff, 1987; Limage, 1993, 1999, 2005a, 2006).

Since its inception, UNESCO has launched various initiatives in line with the organisation's vision to promote universal literacy. Some of its initiatives include Education for All (EFA) and Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) in 1990 and 2006 respectively. EFA was aimed at universalising primary school education and massively reducing illiteracy (Department of Basic Education, 2014). At the 2000 Dakar Conference, EFA established six goals, with the sixth goal focusing on improving all aspects of the quality of education by ensuring excellence for all, so that recognised and measurable outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and life skills (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2014).



LIFE was a ten-year programme running from 2006-2015, aimed at reinforcing commitment, improving policies and strengthening national capacities in the area of literacy, particularly in the 35 countries facing the most severe literacy challenges – mostly those in Sub-Saharan Africa. The aim was to promote lifelong learning and create an environment where African countries would recognise literacy as the foundation of all learning (UNESCO, 2006).

The Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG 2) spoke of achieving universal primary education, with its goal being to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly in developing countries, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Progress towards MDG 2 has been measured by looking at how many children enroll in primary school education, how many complete the process and how many 15 to 24 year-olds can read and

write. The study results published in 2012 noted that despite the MDGs, 58 million children aged between six and 11 were still out of school (Oghenekohwo & Oputu, 2017).

With the failure of most targeted countries to achieve their set Millennium Development Goals by 2015, new expanded Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations (Oghenekohwo & Oputu, 2017). The SDGs have a strong focus on reducing inequalities and aim to address issues of access and quality of life. SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, good quality education for all by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017; Marope, 2017) and promote lifelong learning. SDG 4.6 specifically specifies that all youth and at least a percentage of adults, both men and women, should achieve literacy and numeracy (Marope, 2017). Marope (2017) argues that achieving target SDG 4.6 would provide the foundation that supports the achievement of all the other targets for SDG 4 and consequently all the other SDGs.

In 2006 the African Union, through its Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology, released its draft plan of action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015). In the plan, education was highlighted as the chief means by which Africa could take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy (African Union, 2006). One of the key focus areas of the Second Decade of Education is to significantly raise educational achievement while addressing teacher education and higher education for development concerns. This stemmed from an acknowledgement that a failure to integrate literacy into a holistic system of education had resulted in many people being denied an education. Two of the priority areas for the Second Decade were universal access to basic education and the enhancement of literacy competencies (AU, 2006). It was envisaged that the plan of action would be managed by the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities and member states' national education authorities.

In his 2015 article for the World Economic Forum, Wagner (2015) makes a compelling argument that literacy is a necessary precondition for advanced education and critical thinking, which are at the core of our ability to respond to the economic, social and environmental upheavals currently facing the global community. Similarly, the national leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa widely acknowledge the value of literacy in creating an

accountable, democratic and peaceful region and promoting national development (Maruatona, 2008). According to Maruatona (2008), countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe have a declared policy on literacy either built into their national development plans or formulated in separate policies on literacy and adult basic education.

It is against this backdrop that South Africa published the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) in 2011. The NDP's vision for 2030 is that South Africa should have access to training and education of the highest quality, characterised by significantly improved learning outcomes. The improvement of literacy outcomes is one of the basic tenets of the NDP. The National Development Plan (NDP) proposes to focus on improving learner performance in international comparative studies. Through the NDP, South Africa aims to improve its average score in the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) Grade 6 learners' literacy results, bringing its rating from 495 to 600 by 2022.

In response to the NDP, in 2012 the Department of Basic Education launched its Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030. The Action Plan is aligned to the achievement of the EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (DBE, 2014). The first three goals of the Action Plan refer to the need to improve learner performance in languages and Mathematics at the Grades 3, 6 and 9 levels. Grades 3, 6 and 9 are the exit grades of the three curriculum phases, the Foundation Phase (FP), the Intermediate Phase (IP) and the Senior Phase (SP). Whilst quality education is far more than just adequate competencies in languages and Mathematics, it is common knowledge that without competencies in these two subjects, quality education in a broad sense is unachievable.

In response to the poor performance of learners, the Department of Education introduced the Systemic Evaluation (SE) as an intervention for improving literacy and numeracy in South African schools (Le Cordeur, 2014). Systemic Evaluation assesses the extent to which the education system achieves set social, economic and transformational goals. The Western Cape Education Department instituted its own Systemic Evaluations which are unique in the sense that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is the only South African

provincial education authority running these types of tests in addition to the national ones. It does this by measuring learner performance as well as the context in which learners experience learning and teaching (Department of Education, 2001a). The Western Cape Systemic Evaluations (WCSE) assess literacy and numeracy (LitNum). This study focuses only on the literacy component of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations; hence the terms Systemic Evaluation (SE), Western Cape Systemic Evaluation (WCSE) and Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations (SE) are used interchangeably in this study.

The learner achievement component of the national Systemic Evaluations seeks to establish trends concerning the acquisition of key knowledge, skills, values and attitudes by learners at different points in the system, through learner assessments (DoE, 2001a). The contextual component is designed to provide insight into the environment in which teaching and learning take place and to establish the performance of the education system concerning the principles of access, redress equity and quality (DoE, 2001a). This is done through the Whole School Evaluation.

Unlike the National Systemic Evaluation (NSE), which is administered on a representative sample, the instrument in the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation is census-based, being run in all provincial schools at the phase exit grades (3, 6 and 9) rather than run as a sample-based test.



The primary purpose of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations (SEs) is to obtain information for effecting appropriate intervention strategies to address learners' poor performance (WCED, 2003a, 2004, 2005b; Kanjee, 2007). The key focus of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is an improvement in language and Mathematics results (Schäfer, 2015). Systemic Evaluations allow the WCED to identify schools where language and Mathematics performance requires intervention, with the WCED then determining what kind of remedial action is required (Schäfer, 2014). The WCED uses the data received from the Systemic Evaluations to plan remedial interventions for all levels, including teacher training and support, school leadership and management support and improvement plans for schools, districts and the department (Atwell, 2016).

The Western Cape Systemic Evaluations were first implemented as a provincial programme in the Western Cape in 2002 for Grade 3 and in 2003 for Grade 6. They started as a sample test administered bi-annually in language and Mathematics. In 2010 the tests were extended to Grade 9, and for the last seven years the tests have been administered annually to Grades 3, 6 and 9 learners in all public schools and some independent schools in the Western Cape. Whilst several reports (Van der Berg, 2015; Modzuka, Long, & Machaba, 2019; Department: Basic Education, 2014) give information on the National Annual Assessments and Systematic Evaluations, the reports are silent about teachers' experiences of these assessments.

It is against this background that the study investigated Grade 6 teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations as a provincial intervention strategy in English First Additional Language Literacy in the Western Cape. This study aims to bring teachers' voices to the fore concerning the ongoing debate on literacy as a national crisis in South Africa.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

All the literacy studies conducted in South Africa between 1998 and 2003 suggest that learner achievement scores are far below what is expected at all levels of the schooling system (Kanjee, Patterson, Prinsloo, Kivulu & Pheiffer, 2001). The study results are of concern to other countries, including other developing countries, and seem to betray the goals and expectations of the new South African Curriculum (Kanjee, Patterson, Prinsloo, Kivulu & Pheiffer, 2001). In addition, South Africa participated in three international tests of educational achievement; the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (1995, 1999, 2002, 2011), Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS) and the regional Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) (2000, 2007, 2013). All these studies showed and continue to show that the level and quality of learning outcomes in South African schools tends to be lower than those of countries that invest significantly less than South Africa does in their schooling sectors (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman & Archer, 2007; WCED, 2008; Moloi & Chetty, 2010).

The National Systemic Evaluations were first conducted in 2001, 2004 and 2007 with Grade 3 learners whilst the Grade 6 learners were assessed in 2001 and 2007. The national Systemic

Evaluations conducted in Grade 3 (first cycle in 2001, second cycle in 2007) showed very low levels of literacy among learners. Reading comprehension and writing scores averaged 39% and 36% for the two cycles respectively.

The national Department of Basic Education further introduced the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) in 2011 to enable a systemic evaluation of educational performance and thereby enhance learner achievement. The Annual National Assessments focused only on language and Mathematics in Grades 1 to 6. The goals of the ANA were partly to expose teachers to better assessment practices, to serve as a systemic measure of performance and to act as an accountability measure for principals and teachers (DBE, 2010). The 2012 Annual National Assessment (ANA) results released by the Department of Basic Education showed that three in four learners in Grade 4, five in six in Grade 5 and three in four learners in Grade 6 could not perform adequately (having a mark of at least 50%) in the language portion of the test (Prinsloo & Heugh, 2013).

Against this the backdrop of poor results, the Western Cape Education Department conducted the Western Cape Learner Assessment Study in 2003, according to which every primary school learner in the Western Cape in Grade 6 was tested in Mathematics and Literacy (Taylor, Fleisch & Shindler, 2008). The Western Cape Learner Assessment study revealed that only 35% of the Western Cape Grade 6 learners were performing at the appropriate Grade 6 literacy level (Taylor, Fleisch & Shindler, 2008). Furthermore, the Western Cape Education Department (2006) noticed that learners' literacy and numeracy skills in the province were below grade levels and that learners were not developing academically. The WCED (2006) report indicated that only 36% of the Grade 3 learners were achieving the reading and numeracy outcomes expected for the grade. The results of the Western Cape Learner Assessment Study have since been replicated in the international and regional literacy studies in which South Africa participated.

The Intermediate Phase is a transitional phase in the South African education system, where learners who have been taught in their mother tongue in the Foundation Phase are suddenly confronted with a second language as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). In most schooling systems around the world, the Intermediate Phase represents a transition where the instructional focus changes from *learning to read* to *reading to learn* (Pretorius, 2014). The transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn* does not automatically or easily take

place with all children (Pretorius, 2014). Pretorius argues that the transition is challenging, with many learners disadvantaged by high-poverty homes and low-income, poorly resourced schools (Pretorius, 2014), as is the case in all lower quintile schools. These difficulties can only be exacerbated when, in addion to a shift in focus, children have to contend with a change in the language of instruction.

Despite the many interventions made to improve the literacy of South Africa's children, research persistently reports an alarming inability to read amongst primary school learners, especially in the Intermediate Phase (Mthethwa, 2015). There exists a strong view that indeed the performance of South African learners in literacy tests is cause for great concern (Jansen, 2013; Le Cordeur, 2013a; Ramphele, 2012). Several assessment studies in recent years have shown that the educational achievement of learners in South African schools is unacceptably poor (Nel, 2011). The poor results pose tremendous challenges for the South African teaching profession (Le Cordeur, 2014) with educators increasingly held accountable for learners' lack of achievement (Kaminski & Cummings, 2008).

The PIRLS 2006 results suggested that South African teachers are struggling to develop their primary school learners' reading abilities (Zimmerman & Smit, 2016). The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) 2012 report concluded that South African primary school teachers generally exhibit poor subject knowledge in language and Mathematics and consequently an incomplete understanding of both the requirements of the curriculum and how to animate the required level of learning in their classes. The NEEDU (2012) report states that 87% of teachers do not have an adequate teaching method to impart readings skills. Getting the whole class to read in chorus is still a practice in many classrooms. Where teachers identify learners who are struggling with reading, they do not always know how to help these learners. This finding was collaborated by Thornhill and Le Cordeur (2016) in a study that showed that teachers' knowledge of the curriculum, language policies, language teaching and learning theories as well as methodologies were extremely limited and that teachers are caught up in traditional language teaching methods and strategies which do not contribute to the enhancement of learners' proficiency in the target language.

NEEDU (2016) further found that teachers in most schools are not able to construct or set assessment items of good quality. Where teachers assess reading, reading assessment results are either not used at all or are not used properly. The Provincial Literacy and Numeracy (LitNum) strategies do not find expression in teacher classroom practices.

The studies draw fairly negative conclusions about teachers, yet to date none have specifically examined teachers' views on the assessments and teachers' voices have been conspicuously absent in the national literacy debate. Zimmerman (2014: 1) points out that although publications about South African learners' poor literacy performance abound, 'few published studies exist that describe and explain the patterns of classroom life that lead to academic achievement or failure.'

The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) argues that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations (WCSEs) put a lot of pressure on individual teachers (Rustin, 2016). SADTU's contention is that teachers are blamed for low scores learners obtained, leading to low teacher morale. According to SADTU, the systemic test is supposed to examine the whole system, but instead, some schools are labelled non-performing schools (Rustin, 2016). The contention between SADTU and the Western Cape Education Department regarding the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations was so huge to the extent that SADTU called on all their members to boycott the October 2016 Systemic Evaluations. As a result testing was disrupted and more that 80 schools did not write the Systemic Evaluations.

Although they were not party to the boycott, the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) agrees with SADTU, stating that the systemic tests are no longer used as diagnostic tools but rather as a content-based test that labels and punishes schools and districts for non-performance (Hendricks, 2015). The WCED acknowledges that 'some officials use the data from the tests inappropriately' (Schreuder, 2016) and 'inappropriate use of the data creates unnecessary resistance and hostility to the programme' (Schreuder, 2016). This is in stark contrast with Kanjee's assertion that teachers need relevant and timeous information from assessment studies as well as support on how to use the information to improve learning and teaching practices (Kanjee, 2017). NEEDU

points out that schools do not use the results of assessment analysis to inform planning and teaching (NEEDU, 2016).

While researchers have investigated the WCED literacy and numeracy tests and their efficacy, nobody has engaged teachers concerning their experience of these tests. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on Systemic Evaluations by bringing teachers' voices into the debate. I believe that investigating teachers' lived experiences of the literacy tests might provide insight into the reasons for the general negative sentiment towards the Systemic Evaluations amongst teachers, particularly those in impoverished school contexts. Secondly, although most reports have drawn conclusions about the teachers, there has to date been no study that deals with the lived experiences of teachers.

In light of the above, I embarked on this research topic to bring the teachers' voices into the current debate regarding English First Additional Language literacy assessments in the Western Cape.

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question addressed in this study is:

What are the Grade 6 teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Systemic Evaluations in English First Additional Language Literacy?

The following sub-questions support the main question:

1. What are the Grade 6 teachers' understandings of the aim and roles of the Systemic Evaluations in English (FAL) literacy?
2. What are the Grade 6 teachers' literacy assessment practices in English First Additional Language?
3. How do Grade 6 teachers engage with the data generated through Systemic Evaluations on literacy?
4. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with Grade 6 literacy Systemic Evaluations?

## 1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY (OBJECTIVES AND AIM)

The central aim of this research is to investigate Grade 6 teachers' lived experiences of Systemic Evaluations in literacy. The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To investigate Grade 6 teachers' understandings of the Systemic Evaluations in English (FAL) literacy.
2. To observe and analyse the Grade 6 teachers' literacy assessment practices.
3. To examine how the teachers analyse, interpret and handle the literacy assessment data.
4. To identify and understand the challenges and opportunities presented to teachers by the Western Cape Systemic literacy evaluations.

## 1.5 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The thesis is divided into five chapters organised as follows:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study. The background and context of the study are discussed, as well as the problem statement. The research questions, aims and objectives are also described.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on language policy, literacy assessments and assessment literacy. "Assessment Literacy is defined as the knowledge of means for assessing what students know and can do, how to interpret the results from these assessments, and how to apply these results to improve student learning and program effectiveness" (Webb, 2002:1). In other words Assessment Literacy is concerned with the ability of teachers to construct quality tests or assessment tools (Yan & Cheng, 2015), ability to interpret standardised assessments and classroom assessments (Mellati & Khademi, 2018). On the other hand

Literacy Assessments refers to decision-making processes resulting in an examination of students' performance on literacy tasks (National Council of English Teachers, 2018)
Secondly, the theoretical framework underpinning the study is described in some detail in this chapter.

**Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter focuses on the research paradigm and design used in this study. The sampling and data collection methods employed in this study are discussed as are ethical issues and quality assurance procedures.

**Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis**

Data from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and content analysis is presented and analysed in this chapter.

**Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter presents a summary of the findings emanating from the preceding chapters, draws conclusions on the findings and makes recommendations. The significance of the research findings are highlighted and opportunities for further research are suggested in this chapter.

## 1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an introduction and background to the study, discussing literacy initiatives undertaken at the national and international level to improve South Africa's markedly low levels of literacy among school children. In addition, it has discussed the objectives of the study and the research questions that guided it. Recognising that literacy assessment results have implications for teachers, the chapter poses the question, 'What are the Grade 6 teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Systemic Evaluations in English First Additional Language Literacy?'

The following chapter reviews the literature and discusses the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that there are different ways to write a literature review, including chronologically, thematically, or by relationship to own work. In line with the data collection and analysis method and the theoretical framework underpinning this study, a thematic approach was employed in this literature review.

In keeping with the thematic approach, the concepts of (i) Language Policy (ii) Assessments, (iii) Teacher assessment practices and (iv) Teacher Assessment Data Literacy are explored in this chapter. These concepts were informed by the main research question and subsidiary questions of the study. The chapter is divided into two broad sections; the literature review and the theoretical framework that underpins the study. As a precursor to the theme of language policy, the first section focuses on the importance of language universally. The spotlight is thrown on work undertaken by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to promote educational literacy, multilingualism and mother-tongue instruction.



## 2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Banga and Suri (2015) suggest that the language is the primary vehicle of communication. Similarly, Sirbu (2015) noted that language is essentially a means of communication among the members of a society. Banga and Suri (2015) also noted that the role of language is not a means of communicating one's thoughts and ideas only, but is also an instrument to forging friendships, cultural ties, as well as economic relationships.

Furthermore, Banga and Suri (2015) postulated that language is a fundamental aspect in the expression of culture. Equally Sirbu (2015 ) suggests that language is the tool that conveys traditions and values related to group identity. Banga and Suri (2015) argue that language reflects both the personality of the individual and the culture of the society. Similarly, Black

(2019) posits that the mere existence of language helps human beings to behave purposefully, persevere and to be consistent.

Furthermore, Banga and Suri (2015) posit that languages make possible the growth and transmission of culture, and the continuity of societies, and the effective functioning and control of social groups (Banga & Suri 2015). According to Villar (2018), language impacts on the daily lives of members of any race, creed and region of the world. The impact of language led to international institutions like the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to promote the Education for All (EFA) initiatives globally. In placing the language question high on the agenda, UNESCO has adopted policies regarding mother-tongue instruction, multilingualism and the use of indigenous languages.

Countries worldwide are guided by their language policies. Hence the next section focuses on the term 'language policy' and expounding on its constituent parts. Thereafter, the South African language policy is discussed, since this study is concerned with literacy assessments in one province in the Republic of South Africa.



## 2.3 LANGUAGE POLICY

The literature suggests that language policy impacts on the execution of the curriculum and assessment (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017).

The term 'language policy' refers to rules set by authorities to govern the acquisition and/or use of languages (Lambert, 2005). Language policy is the regulation of language (Zuniga, Henderson & Palmer, 2017). Zuniga et al. (2017) expound on this by stating that language policy is what a government does officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages are used, and what it does to cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages. Spolsky identifies three independent but interrelated components of a language policy: language practices, language management, and language beliefs and ideologies (Spolsky, 2017, 2019).

Language practice refers to the choice of language varieties and the nature of speech repertoires known and used by speakers in the domain concerned (Spolsky, 2019). Language practice ranges from the supranational (e.g. the European Union, the Southern African Development Community, etc.) through the nation-state and the education system to the city and the family (Spolsky, 2019). On the other hand, language management is the manner in which individuals, groups or institutions set out to modify the practices and beliefs of the members of the community (Spolsky, 2019). Language management is made especially complex by the number of levels of managers, ranging from international and regional organisations, national governments and their interested ministries, local governments and local school boards, school administrators (principals, curriculum directors), teachers and parents' committees (Spolsky, 2017).

Spolsky identifies the advocates of language management as those individuals or groups who lack the authority of managers but still wish to change its practices. Language activists, such as writers or grammarians, may wish to revive a language variety but because of a lack of power remain ineffective (Spolsky, 2019).

Language beliefs and ideology refer to a speech community's consensus on what value to apply to each of the language variables or named language varieties that make up its repertoire (Spolsky, 2004). Similarly, Arya, McClung, Katznelson and Scott (2016) define language beliefs and ideologies as social or political attitudes towards and subsequent public uses of language.

Since education is one of the most important domains of language management, language education policy became a critically important issue in most multilingual societies (Spolsky, 2017). South Africa is a multilingual society with 11 official languages, making the matter especially complex in the South African context.

The following section examines how the various languages are managed in South Africa by probing South African language policy.

### 2.3.1 South African language policy

Language policies are always guided by the country's constitution; in the case of South Africa, by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). The Constitution informs the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (1997). As mentioned previously, there is always the question of language practice in addition to language policy. Schools play a major role in the execution of a language policy such as LiEP. The following subsections dissect the three aforementioned elements of the South African language policy – the policy, the practice and the management.

### 2.3.2 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

One of the first acts of the new democratic state was to appoint the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) in 1995 to advise on the framework for a coherent language policy and plan. This process culminated in the National Language Policy Framework (NLFP). The NLPF recognised the indigenous languages as official languages to approve and support national unity in South Africa (Howie, 2002). In recognising these languages, the NLPF reinforced a significant aspect of a democratic and just society (Joshua, 2007). The NLPF found expression in the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996).



In 1996, eleven languages were granted official status and their rights were incorporated in the South African Constitution. These languages are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) highlights the principal legal framework for multilingualism, the development of the official languages and the promotion of respect and tolerance for South Africa's linguistic diversity.

The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) stipulates that all eleven official languages must enjoy similarity of esteem and be treated equitably and that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions, where education in that language is reasonaby practicable. Despite this constitutional provision, the language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 onward in South African public schools is predominantly English, to the disadvantage of non-English

speakers. Some make Afrikaans the language of teaching and learning. This harms first and second language speakers' assessments result in Grade 6.

However, Section 6(3) and (4) of the South African Constitution contains language-related provisions for national and provincial governments, whereby government departments are required to use at least two of the official languages listed above. These official languages would be used for government purposes, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province (Prah, 2006). In the application of section 6(3) and (4), the Western Cape Provincial government developed its language policy which recognised English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa as the three official languages of the Western Cape. However, English did not lose its supremacy as the language of politics, business and education.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) as the organ of state responsible for basic schooling had to craft a policy to guide its institutions towards meeting the language directives of the Constitution. Empowered by the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), the DBE developed and adopted the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) in 1997. The next section discusses the Language in Education Policy, particularly the risks associated with its implementation or non-implementation in schools.



### 2.3.3 The Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

South Africa's LiEP advocates additive multilingualism, designed to produce citizens who are trilingual (Wright, 2012). The idea is that when learners finish school, they should be proficient in their home language and a second language, as well as having a sound knowledge of an additional language (Wright, 2012). Despite this requirement, the literature suggests that most learners do not meet this standard and struggle to read in any language, including their home language (PIRLS 2016).

Secondly, the Language in Education Policy leaves the choice of language for learning and teaching in the hands of school governing bodies (Makalela, 2016; Sibanda, 2017). The LiEP states: 'Subject to any law dealing with language in education and the constitutional rights of

the learners in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching.' DoE (1997:3). This provision in the policy is in line with Section 6(2) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) which states that 'the governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school, subject to the Constitution, the SASA Act and any applicable provincial law' (South African Schools Act, 1996:8).

Despite this multilingual policy directive, there has been an increasing movement toward monolingualism, with English gaining more influence than any of the 11 official languages (Makalela, 2016). Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2003) noted that despite what may be regarded as a very progressive language in education policy, which in principle enables learners or their guardians to choose the language of instruction, most South African schools use English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. Most schools offer mother-tongue instruction in the first three grades of school and then transition to English as the language of instruction in the fourth grade. This results in learners whose home language is not English being assessed in their first additional language, with dire consequences for their results.



Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) suggest that the predominance of English in schools is not exclusive to South Africa but is typical of all countries on the African continent, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa. The predominance of English over local African languages is one of the challenges affecting all countries in Africa that were once under colonial rule (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004).

The literature suggests an array of reasons for the hegemony of English. One reason is the perceived benefit of English language proficiency in the labour market (Posel & Casale, 2010; Van der Walt & Klapwijk, 2015; Sibanda, 2017). Furthermore, Taylor and Von Fintel (2016) argue that for many children, fluency in the second language does not only give them access to the labour market but also to higher education. In South Africa, English and Afrikaans are the only languages with a developed body of academic literature in which it is possible to write the secondary school leaving examinations, which give access to tertiary education (Taylor & Von Fintel, 2016).

Kamwangamalu (2000) suggests that another reason for the predominance of English is the failure of the government to implement the Language in Education Policy. A third reason may be the rejection of Afrikaans and African mother-tongue instruction, both seemingly for political reasons related to the elevated status of Afrikaans and the perceived inferior status of African language instruction experienced during the years apartheid (Van der Walt & Klapwijk, 2015).

Reinforcing this notion, Nomlomo and Mbekwa (2012) state that many African language speaking parents are suspicious of the use of mother-tongue education in African languages as they perceive it as a means of denying African language speakers access to knowledge and social, economic and international advancement. Nomlomo and Mbekwa (2012) argue that, compared to African languages, Afrikaans enjoys a high socioeconomic status, since it is still recognised as a useful language in formal domains such as education, work and business, despite the fact that many black people resent it as the language of racism and oppression. Lastly, Setati (2008), in Nomlomo and Mbekwa (2012), argues that teachers prefer English as the language of instruction because it is a 'universal language' and provides access to knowledge because 'textbooks are written in English … [and] the question papers are in English.'



The literature suggests that the education system begins to fail the majority of learners in Grades 4 to 6 (Prinsloo, 2007; Plüddemann, 2015). The challenge is that Grade 4 is the entry-level into the Intermediate Phase – a critical transitional developmental stage as, at this stage, learners are expected to have learned to read and are now 'reading to learn' (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker, 2012: 25). Moreover, the Intermediate Phase is critical since it is in these grades that learners have to start using the First Additional Language (FAL) as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT).

In most South African schools, the learners have little exposure to English both in the Foundation Phase and in their home environment (Posel & Casale, 2010) and therefore struggle to read and consequently progress, not having the requisite skills 'that are supposed to be well developed by the end of Grade 3' (Pretorius, 2012: 92). Many learners do not acquire sufficient vocabulary and reading and writing proficiency to cope with the language

demands of English medium teaching in Grade 4 (Woolman & Fleisch 2008; Prinsloo, 2007; Makalela, 2016).

The matter is exacerbated by the fact that children are taught through the medium of their second language mostly by teachers for whom this medium is at best a second language and often only a third language (Makalela, 2016). Taylor and Von Fintel (2016) point out that the transition to English may be extremely disruptive and educationally damaging when teacher expertise does not exist to manage the transitional phase effectively. The mismanagement of the transition in Grade 4 affects learners and its impact is still evident in Grade 6. It seems likey that the mismanagement of the transition in Grade 4 is a strong contributor to learners' struggles with the Grade 6 learner assessments.

Prinsloo and Heugh (2013) posit that the challenge is that the premature reliance on a new additional language sacrifices its effectiveness as a medium of learning and teaching. The overall result for learners whose home and instructional languages have been compromised simultaneously is poor educational achievement throughout school (Prinsloo & Heugh, 2013). The following section discusses the role of schools in expressing the Language in Education Policy.



### 2.3.4 The expression of the language policy in schools

Schools are important sites for the implementation of language policies (Menken & Garcia, 2016; Wright & Ricento, 2016). A school language policy is not independent but influenced by the political, national, religious, economic and ideological environments in which it is developed and which maintain a constantly changing set of pressures. Language policies have long-term consequences in schools, as they can prevent speakers of minoritised languages from learning when teaching and curricula are conveyed in a language they do not know, thus limiting students' future opportunities (Menken & Garcia, 2016).

A great challenge of language policies in classrooms and schools is that often those who are most affected by a school's language policy are learners, especially minoritised ones, and their teachers, who are negotiating macro policies that were developed outside of their context without their input (Menken & Garcia, 2016; Wright & Ricento, 2016). ). Minoritised

learners are not necessarily in the minority as a group, but their language has been 'minoritised' by being relegated an inferior positon in practice, though not in policy.

Teachers play a key role in language policy implementation and how teachers interpret, understand and implement language policy connects intimately with the local construction of classroom-level language policy (Henderson, 2017). Similarly, Da Rocha,2009 suggests that teachers' interpretation of the school language policy and teachers' language awareness are key factors that influence the language and literacy proficiency of learners (Da Rocha,2009). The literature on teacher policy enactment in bilingual education contexts emphasises the important role that teachers play in supporting or constraining the goals of additive bilingual programmes (Zuniga, Henderson & Palmer, 2018).

Plüddemann (2015) defines the various roles played by teachers in language policy practice as (i) policy violators (ii) policy interpreters (iii) policy performers and (iv) policy advocates. He defines policy violators as those teachers who resist non-working language policy by deliberate code-switching in the classroom. He further states that teachers are policy interpreters when they collectively try to make sense of the policy, particularly when the policy directives were issued without due consultation. Plüddemann's view is reinforced by Johnson (2018) who postulates that teachers are significant actors who 'interpret, negotiate, resist and (re)create' language policy. Johnson demonstrates this by referring to research which demonstrates that even though the Finnish educational policy promotes cultural and linguistic diversity, teachers do not. He further suggests that studies show that British teachers rely more on their colleagues than on the official policy (Johnson, 2018).

There have been few published studies that pronounce on and expound on the patterns of classroom life that lead to academic achievement or failure according to Fleisch (2008). Unfortunately, classroom-based decisions are not taken into account by policymakers. This mismatch between official policy and classroom practice may be one of the reasons for poor results; country-wide or provincial tests assume that learners are in full command of the (policy-mandated) Language of Learning and Teaching. Language in Education Policy debates which recognise the shift in the language of learning and teaching in Grade 4 are relevant in understanding learners' literacy development throughout the schooling system. This sudden shift in the language of teaching and learning is likely to affect the assessment results which are used to judge learner performance and school performance. This study aims

to contribute to the literature on literacy assessments by expounding on teachers' experiences of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations.

It is worth noting that researchers accept that the language of instruction is an important contributor to learner performance. It is widely acknowledged that learning and assessment in a language other than one's mother tongue is challenging for learners (Graven & Venkant 2014; Maphalala & Mncube, 2017; Maphalala & Dhlamini, 2017). There seems to be agreement in the educational research community that other factors such as community and home level poverty, school functionality, weak instructional practices, inadequate teacher subject knowledge and a need for greater accountability throughout the school system also constrain the achievement of better education in South Africa (Taylor & Von Fintel, 2016; Spaull, 2013; Jansen, 2013; Fleisch, 2008 ).

Section 2.4 reviews the literature on assessments.

## 2.4 ASSESSMENT

This section commences with a discussion on assessment in general, then examines the role of literacy assessments (2.4.1) and then explores the context of testing in South Africa (2.4.2). From there the study tackles the concept of high-stakes assessments (2.4.3) and thereafter looks at the participation of South Africa in international and regional assessments (2.4.4). Lastly, the discussion moves to standardised tests in South Africa, starting with the discontinued Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations, which are the subject of this study (2.4.5). Although this section discusses assessment in general, the study focuses on the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation, an evaluation of literacy and numeracy at the exit grades of the three phases of the General Education and Training Band of South African schooling. The specific focus is the literacy component of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation, which is why the study refers to the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations (SE).

Traditionally, assessment in schools is a process of gathering information about learner performance and helping teachers to find out what their learners know and can do. Harlen, Gipps, Broadfoot and Nuttal (1992) argue that assessment in education is a process of

gathering, interpreting, recording and using information about learners' responses to an educational task. The implication is that assessment in education is something done with and for learners (Wiggs, 1993) as opposed to the old form of assessments where traditionally assessment was seen as something to be done to learners at the end of a period of teaching and learning (Johnson, 1998).

Gipps (1994) contends that assessment has undergone a paradigm shift and, as a result, is required to achieve a wide range of purposes other than those it was traditionally used for. According to Adam and Nel (2015), this shift is necessitated by the fact that schools are now places where the expectation is for all learners to succeed. Hence, Gipps claims that assessment now has to support teaching and learning, provide information about pupils, teachers and schools and act as a selection and certificating device and accountability procedure, as well as drive curriculum and teaching (Gipps, 1994). In agreement with Gipps, William (2000) identifies three reasons for carrying out educational assessments; formative reasons (supporting learning), summative reasons (certifying individuals) and evaluative reasons (holding educational institutions accountable).

In a study by Adam and Nel, it is suggested that a comprehensive assessment system is a critical element of an effective school-level plan for preventing reading difficulties. Quoting Clarke (2011:4), they define an assessment system as 'a group of policies, structures, practices and tools for generating and using the information on learner learning.' They further claim that an assessment system alone is not an adequate measuring stick to ensure that all learners learn what they need to know to succeed. Teachers need curriculum and instructional tools to teach effectively, as well as the ability to use assessment information skillfully.

The challenge with an assessment system is that it is responsive to a variety of influences. Some influences originate from the top and move down, and others work from the bottom up. States and school districts generally exert considerable influence over curricula, while classroom teachers have more latitude when it coms to method of instruction. The government tends to determine policies on assessment for programme evaluation and accountability, while teachers have a greater influence over assessments for learning.

Thus for the education system to maintain proper balance, adjustments must continually be made among curriculum, instruction and assessment, not only horizontally, within the same

level (such as within school districts), but also vertically, through all levels in the system. Bert suggests that a change in state standards would require adjustments in assessment and instruction at the classroom, school and school district levels. An additional source of complexity is that education systems function at multiple levels; classroom (micro), school (meso), school district (meso), provincial and national (macro) levels. Moreover, because comparisons among educational priorities and achievement results around the world are often sought, international influences also affect education.

Fulmer, Lee and Tan (2015) explain these multiple educational levels using Kozma's (2003) proposed three levels of influence on teachers' understanding and adoption of novel classroom instructional practices. Although conceding resemblance to the synonymous levels proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977), Fulmer, Lee and Tan (2015) explain that the major difference is that Bronfenbrenner considered influences on an individual child's development, whereas Kozma's work focused explicitly on teachers' classroom practices.

The micro level comprises the immediate context of classrooms (Fulmer, Lee & Tan, 2015). These classroom contextual factors could include distinct aspects of the teacher and the students, such as the teacher's assessment literacy, the number of students and the students' prior performance in the topic area (Fulmer et al, 2015). They may also include social factors related to teacher-student interactions in the environment, such as how students respond to formative assessment tasks (Fulmer et al, 2015). Lastly, access to technologies and tools within the classroom itself that could support assessment, such as clickers, whiteboards or other materials, could be considered part of the classroom level (Fulmer et al, 2015).

The meso level consists of factors outside of the classroom which have a direct influence on the classroom. These are typically school-level factors such as school policies, the school leadership support for assessment, the school's climate for supporting assessment practices, and school-wide access to tools and support staff around assessment (Fulmer et al. 2015). According to Fulmer et al. (2015), 'the meso level is conceptually broader than the school alone, as it can include factors that may extend beyond the school if they influence the classroom but are not part of the classroom.' An example of broader meso-level factors that are not school-specific are the requests and expectations of parents and the immediate community (Fulmer et al, 2015).

The macro level consists of distal factors that affect the meso level (school) and thus have indirect effects on the classroom. The macro level includes education policies at the national level, provincial level and district level. Other macro-level factors are the cultural norms around education and assessment, and various social and economic pressures. Although macro-level factors seem relatively distant from the classroom, their effects can still be explicit and pervasive. Section 2.4.1 examines the role of literacy assessments.

### 2.4.1 The role of literacy assessments

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), assessment should be a carefully planned activity, integrated into the teaching and learning process and used to check learners' understanding of the learning tasks which they have been subjected to (Department of Basic Education, 2011) According to Dochy and McDowell (1997), assessment is synonymous with teaching and is also a learning instrument. Student assessment, whether by standardised tests or classroom-based measures, is a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning. The literature suggests that assessments not only monitor and measure learners' performance, but form an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Huba & Freed, 2000; Jordaan, 2010; Le Courder, 2014). Using formative assessments as a part of day-to-day instruction serves to provide a meaningful source of immediate information that teachers may use to re-teach or enrich knowledge in certain sections of work, based on current student information (Brink, 2011).



The use of formative assessment as part of teaching and learning is also supported by Black and William (2008). Black and William (2008) argue that assessments benefit both teachers and learners as they help both parties to develop themselves and can positively affect learning and teaching activities. Assessments are an integral part of literacy teaching methodology, and there is no doubt that on-going assessment of literacy progress is essential for giving teachers the information they need to measure student progress, identify students who may require additional or individualised assistance and guide instructional practice (Invernizzi & Meier, 2001; Snow et al, 2000; Vellutino & Scanlon, 2001). Taken as a whole, good assessments do not only provide a reliable and valid measure of learners' learning and understanding but also help guide both teachers and learners on a day-to-day basis (Paine, 2008; Black & William, 1998; Bennett, 2011).

In support of literacy assessments for learning, Helman (2015) demonstrated how teachers can use assessment data available to them to become more informed about meeting the literacy needs of English learners in their classrooms. She stated that teachers can glean valuable information from literacy assessments and that they could use such information to provide targeted instruction. She concludes that literacy assessments provide teachers with the information they need to organise instructional groupings (Bear et al, 2004; PALS, 2003; Helman, 2015). Hence the Assessment Reform Goup(ARG)(2002) argues that assessment should be conducted for learning. Data gathered from assessments should be used to identify learner challenges and possibilities.

However, as Rehmani (2003) points out, some teachers do not appreciate the educational role of assessments and as a consequence, teach for testing rather than for learning. Likewise, William (2000) claims that because the emphasis is often placed on summative and evaluative assessments, the huge contribution that assessment can make to learning are sometimes lost. In an argument supporting testing for learning, William (2000) states that worldwide research shows that the use of assessments during teaching to find out what students know and what to do next on a daily basis would benefit the country which embarks on them and make it one of the world leaders in education. When teachers examine students' literacy assessments, they may be better able to find the instructional level where learning is most likely to occur (Morris, Blanton, Blanton, Nowacek & Perney, 1995).

A further goal of assessment is the improvement of teaching, the curriculum and the circumstances in which learners have to study (Jordaan, 2010). An assessment helps teachers identify their own strengths and weaknesses concerning curriculum delivery (Guskey, 2003). Language assessment is a primary feedback mechanism in the language education system. It provides information to support decisions and highlight needed adjustments.

Assessment-based information has several useful functions; it provides learners with feedback on how well they are meeting expectations so that they, in turn, can adjust their learning strategies; it provides teachers with feedback on how well students are learning so that they can more appropriately target instruction; it provides districts with feedback on the effectiveness of their programmes so they can abandon ineffective programmes and

promulgate effective ones; and it provides policymakers with feedback on how well policies are working and where resources might best be targeted so appropriate decisions may be made. Assessment practices also communicate what is important and what is valued in education and, in this way, exert a powerful influence on all other elements in the education system.

Assessment systems are balanced when the various assessments in the system are coherently linked (usually through a clear specification of the learning targets), comprehensively support multiple purposes and uses, and continuously document student progress over time (Marion, 2018). A study conducted by Sanchez and Patel (2017) found that because of the dominance of tests, it is important to ascertain their impact on human beings and to ask those for whom tests are part of everyday experience - in other words, teachers. Given the paucity of research on teachers' experiences of literacy assessments, this study examines the experiences of teachers on literacy assessments in the Western Cape, specifically the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations (SE).

Section 2.4.2 focuses on the context of testing in South Africa.

### 2.4.2 The context of testing in South Africa



In this study the words 'testing' and 'assessment' are used interchangeably. In the past, countries with centralised education systems were more likely to implement national examination systems in order to select students for further education than to assess the curriculum and its implementation (Eckstein & Noah, 1993; Kamens & McNeely, 2010). This was also the case with the South African Matriculation examinations before the advent of democracy. Under the new democratic despensation, the transformation agenda for the post-apartheid schooling sector in South Africa meant that assessments came to be viewed as a key driver for improving teaching and learning in schools (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013; Kanjee & Moloi 2014). In 2001, the National Department of Education introduced the Systemic Evaluation System (NDoE, 2001) aimed at establishing systemic functionality through testing at the Grades 3, 6 and 9 levels, thus signalling that matriculation results at the end of Grade 12 were no longer seen as sufficient for monitoring the effectiveness of the whole schooling system (Taylor et al., 2003)

The legal framework for standardised testing in South Africa is the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (NEPA), which requires the minister to monitor and evaluate standards of education delivery and performance throughout the country (DOE, 2002:3). NEPA informs the assessment policy for General Education and Training (DoE, 1998), which makes provision for systemic evaluation to be conducted in Grades 3, 6 and 9, the exit grades of the three phases of the General Education and Training (GET) band – the foundation phase (FP), the intermediate Phase (IP) and the senior phase (SP) (Lubisi & Murphy, 2010). The national Systemic Evaluation instruments are envisaged to be applied 'on a nationally representative sample of learners and learning sites to evaluate all aspects of the school system and learning programmes' (DoE 2002: 2).

However, the Western Cape Education Department has opted to have its own Systemic Evaluations on top of the national ones. Contrary to the practice of the national Systemic Evaluations, the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations are census-based and their instruments are applied to all the learners in the province. These Systemic Evaluations put into practice Jordan's assertion that a goal of assessment is the improvement of teaching, the curriculum and the circumstances in which learners have to study (Jordan, 2010). Muller (2004) asserts that assessment is also the most important system for signalling systemic efficiency and accountability. Muller (2004) further indicates that assessment outcomes as an instrument of managerial accountability and as a gauge of systemic efficiency began to enter the policy discourse in South Africa in the late 1990s. The emphasis now is typically on the use of testing and assessment to judge the adequacy of the educational system to deliver the desired outcomes (Kamens & McNeely, 2010). For this reason, the South African government has embedded Systemic Evaluations in its policies.



### 2.4.3 High stakes assessments

It is widely acknowledged in international literature that high-stakes assessments influence what happens in schools and classrooms (Elmore, Ablemann & Fuhrman, 1996). A high-stakes test is any test used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for the purpose of accountability (Marchant,2004). High-stakes

assessments serve a variety of purposes, such as providing information at a system-wide level about the quality of educational outcomes (Postlethwaite & Kelleghan, 2008). Kellaghan and Greaney (2001) point out that this information often includes information on outcomes at disaggregated levels within the system – for example, by gender, race and socio-economic background. This kind of disaggregation features in the South African government's reporting of results. In some cases, systemic assessments may enable policy-makers to judge the success of intervention mechanisms such as curriculum reform or resource-level changes.

In the South African context, Kanjee (2007) has noted that national assessments provide tools for evaluating the impact of educational policies on the system. Accountability measures often make the differences between schools the subject of particular attention, with this leading to further policy-level intervention consequences for low-performing schools, and praise and market-driven 'choice' consequences for high-performing schools (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). More literacy-orientated forms of disaggregation can also feature, both within the design of tests and the reporting of performance, through a focus on specific content areas in the curriculum and cognitive demand, for instance.

Negative consequences of high-stakes assessment have also been noted in the international literature. Key amongst these consequences is a concern relating to a narrowing of the enacted curriculum through the practice of 'teaching to the test'. In such situations, the focus moves from stimulating thinking and creativity to conveying only the knowledge required by the tests, which naturally has negative implications for the quality of education delivered.

National assessment surveys were first implemented in South Africa in 1996 on representative samples of schools and learners in Grade 9, followed by Grades 3 and 6 (Kanjee, 2007). The Western Cape is the only province to have added its own provincial tests to the national ones; however, the Eastern Cape Education Department (ECED) has some form of Systemic Evaluations but not in the same scale as the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). It is also noteworthy that unlike the WCSE which are census based the Eastern Cape Systemic Evaluations are sample based and take place periodically rather than annually. Gauteng does not have its own provincial systemic evaluations but extra tests do take place at the district level.

### 2.4.4 Participation in international and regional literacy assessments

As mentioned in Chapter 1, South Africa participates in various international and regional literacy assessments, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ). International comparative tests are important for several reasons. First, they provide a measure of learner performance that is objective and scientifically valid. Second, they give diagnostic insights into weak areas of the curriculum that require particular attention. Third, when administered periodically, they indicate the extent to which school systems change over time. Fourth, they indicate how each system is doing compared with countries of the same size, stage of development, expenditure on education and the like.

Under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), PIRLS assesses reading comprehension and monitors trends in reading literacy at five-year intervals (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017). The PIRLS literacy objectives are to assess how well South African Grade 4 learners read, to identify possible associated contextual factors and to compare the reading literacy of Grade 4 South African learners both internationally and at the national level for all eleven languages and all nine provinces (Howie et al, 2017).



The key finding of PIRLS was that South Africa was the lowest-performing country out of 50 countries, with a mean score of 320 in the PIRLS 2016 study. On the PIRLS scale, approximately 40 score points are equal to a year's schooling. This means that South Africa may be eight years behind the top-performing countries. There was no change (no statistical difference) overall in the score between PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2016. Abound 78% of South African Grade 4 learners do not reach the international benchmarks and therefore do not have basic reading skills by the end of the Grade 4 school year, in contrast to only 4% of learners internationally. This is consistent with other benchmark assessments South Africa is involved in. The PIRLS 2016 report also highlighted that teacher absenteeism, late coming and failure to complete the curriculum were problematic and endemic in 60% of South African schools.

Interestingly, PIRLS also concluded that there was no association between teacher qualifications and learner achievements.

South Africa also participates in the regional Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) evaluations. South Africa has participated in SACMEQ II (2000), SACMEQ III (2007) and SACMEQ IV) 2013. SACMEQ's mission is to generate research-based information that may be used as evidence by decision-makers to plan and improve the quality of education (Bandi, 2016). SACMEQ is an extremely important indicator of changes in reading and Mathematics achievement over time (Spaull, 2013). SACMEQ III showed that there was no improvement in South Africa's Grade 6 literacy results between 2007 and 2013 (Spaull, 2013). SACMEQ III also found that 27% of South African Grade 6 pupils were functionally illiterate, since they could not read a short and simple text and extract meaning from it (Spaull, 2013).

Figure 1 below illustrates the different types of literacy assessments taking place at the international, regional, national, provincial and school levels in South Africa in the General Education and Training (GET Band).

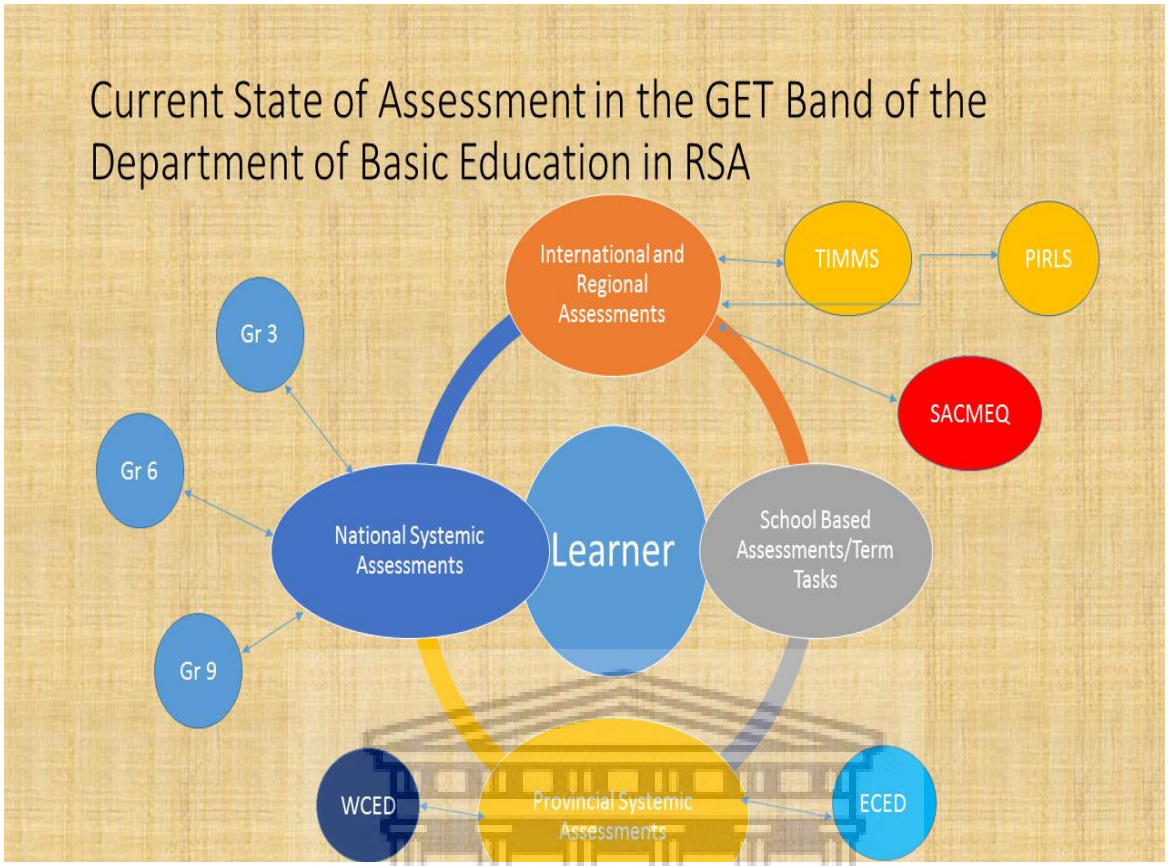



**Figure 1: ASSESSMENTS IN THE GET BAND**
*Source:Kanjee (2017)*



## 2.5 STANDARDISED TESTING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Governments worldwide use standardised tests to address educational deficiencies and improve public accountability and quality of education in their countries (Chisholm & Wildeman, 2013; Maphalala & Mncube, 2017; Maphalala & Dhlamini 2017). In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education resorted to standardised testing to respond to the public outcry about the quality of education in the country (Maphalala & Mncube, 2017). During the 2000s, two standardised tests became established in the South African education system. One, at the national level, was the Annual National Assessment (ANAs); the other was the Western Cape provincial testing regime, the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation (WCSE), a test of literacy and numeracy achievement (Hoadley & Muller, 2016).

### 2.5.1 The Annual National Assessment

The Annual National Assessment (ANA) was introduced by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2011 to enable a systemic evaluation of educational performance and thereby enhance learner achievement. ANA was a government response to public outcry over the quality of education (Maphalala & Mncube, 2017). The ANA tests were introduced to identify specific areas of weakness of individual learners in literacy, Mathematics and science, and to help teachers to design remedial instruction (Maphalala & Dhlamini, 2017). From its inception in 2011 until 2015, when it ws discontinued, ANA was written annually, and from 2012 included all learners in Grades 1 to 6 and in Grade 9. The Annual National Assessments focused only on language and Mathematics in Grades 1 to 6 because these have been found universally to be the key foundational skills for successful learning in school and beyond (Maphalala & Mncube, 2017).

There were differing views on the purpose or function of the ANAs. The Department of Basic Education saw the ANA as a tool for increased accountability (a summative assessment). The goals of the ANA, according to the National Department of Education, were partly to expose teachers to better assessment practices, partly to serve as a systemic measure of performance, and partly to act as an accountability measure for principals and teachers (DBE, 2010). The provincial education departments and schools wanted ANAs to fill a more diagnostic role, informing classroom practice (summative and formative assessment). However, the prevailing perception was that ANA testing was about holding schools and teachers accountable, rather than about diagnosis of problems.

As mentioned, high-stakes tests often have unintended consequences. Research revealed many unintended consequences of ANA, chief of which was that teachers resorted to 'teaching to the test' (Chisholm & Wilbeman, 2013; Jansen, 2005; Maphalala & Mncube, 2017; Khumalo, Maphalala & Govender, 2019). Teachers shifted from paying attention to the curriculum holistically to focusing on what was covered by the tests (Graven & Venkat, 2014; Maphalala & Mncube, 2017; Khumalo, Maphalala & Govender, 2019). Johnston concurs with this view, asserting that what is assessed is what is taught (Johnston, 2005).

The pressure placed on teachers to improve ANA results in their subjects forced them to prioritise sections that appeared in the test and to push topics and activities that did not appear in the test towards the end of the school year, or after the test had been conducted (Chisholm & Wilbeman, 2013; Maphalala & Mncube, 2017; Khumalo, Maphalala & Govender, 2019). This unnecessary pressure often resulted in dishonesty, where teachers would do whatever it took to assist their learners to score high marks to please the departmental officials (Maphalala & Dhlamini, 2017). This happened even though ANA tests assessed only a small portion of the curriculum and covered only a sample of the many topics in the curriculum.

Many studies testify to this unintended consequence. Graven and Venkat (2014), for instance, surveyed 54 teachers across 21 schools in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, and found that national assessments such as ANA influenced both the teaching time and the nature of teaching. They also noted that international studies have shown that teachers adapt the content of what they teach and focus on the test even while overall pedagogy does not necessarily change (Graven & Venkant, 2014).

In another study, Maphalala and Mncube warn of the unintended consequences of high-stakes tests, which include the narrowing of the curriculum and an excessive emphasis on test preparation (Maphalala & Mncube, 2017). In their study, they found that ANA brought about negative changes in the teaching strategies used by teachers in the classroom. According to Maphalala and Mncube (2017), teachers reverted to teacher-centered approaches so that they could to cover a lot of ground in preparation for annual assessments. On the positive side, Maphalala and Mncube (2017) found that ANA had diagnostic value for some teachers, as teachers would use its results to determine shortcomings in learning and improve their teaching in areas of weakness. At the same time, some teachers seemed unable to use ANA tests to streamline their teaching approaches and methodologies and improve the learning process and results as expected (Maphalala & Mncube, 2017). They also found that the assessment language in the intermediate phase put learners at a disadvantage. This was because learners struggled to make a smooth transition from learning through their mother tongue to learning through English. Teachers are of the view that this disadvantages their learners as they have to learn concepts in a new language when they have already been schooling for four years. This led to resistance to the ANAs, to the point that they were discontinued in 2015.

In a study entitled, 'Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of Annual National Assessment (ANA) in South African Primary Schools', Khumalo, Maphalala and Govender (2019) found that most teachers lacked the requisite knowledge of English and Mathematics to improve learners' performance in ANAs. They also found that teachers lacked the knowledge to use ANA data to improve learners' performance. They attributed this to the fact that teachers were not involved in the implementation and development of English and Mathematics in the ANAs that might help them to improve learner achievements (Khumalo, Maphalala & Govender, 2019). The study also noted that teachers were concerned that English in Grade 6 was still a barrier because of learners' poor language and reading levels (Khumalo, Maphalala & Govender, 2019).

The next subsection discusses the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations as another form of standardised assessment.

### 2.5.2 Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations

The Western Cape Systemic Evaluations are unique in the sense that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is the only South African provincial education authority running these types of tests on census basis in addition to the national ones. Secondly, unlike the national Systemic Evaluations, which are administered on a representative sample, the instruments in the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations are administered in all provincial schools at the phase exit grades (3, 6 and 9). As previously mentioned, the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations only test literacy and numeracy. This study focuses on the literacy component of these tests.

The primary purpose of conducting systemic tests in the Western Cape is to obtain information for effecting appropriate intervention strategies to address the poor performance levels of learners (WCED, 2003a, 2004, 2005b; Kanjee, 2007). The key focus of the Western Cape Education Department is an improvement in language and Mathematics (Schäfer, 2014). According to Schäfer (2014), Systemic Evaluations allow the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to identify schools where language and Mathematics performance

requires intervention, and the WCED then determines what kind of remedial action is required (Schäfer, 2014). The WCED uses the data received from the systemic tests to plan remedial interventions for all levels, including teacher training and support, school leadership and management support, and improvement plans for schools, districts and the department (Atwell, 2016).

The Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations (SE) were implemented as a provincial programme in the Western Cape for the first time in 2002 at the Grade 3 level, followed by Grade 6 in 2003. It started as a sample test administered bi-annually in language (Isixhosa in Grade 3 and English in Grade 6) and Mathematics and was progressively extended so that by 2010 the instrument was administered annually in language and Mathematics to all Grade 3, 6 and 9 learners in all public and most independent schools in the province. There is no public reporting of test results by school. Reports provide schools with their mean score against the mean score for the district and the province. The mean Grade 6 language results showed an improvement from 40.9% in 2011 to 44% in 2018 (Schäfer, 2019). The tests are externally administered and moderated. This means that extrenal facilitators hand out the tests to the learners in their classrooms and invigilate as they write. Class teachers play no role in the administration or marking of the tests.



There are no sanctions for poor performance in the test. However, low results do lead to increased monitoring and support. A study conducted by Meyer and Abel (2013) found that although teachers do not set or administer the systematic tests, the tests put pressure on teachers. Meyer and Abel highlight that schools were implementing stricter monitoring of teachers' work in response to pressures associated with the Systemic Evaluations (Meyer & Abel, 2013).

South Africa is not the only country that has embarked on provincially mandated assessments. Canada runs an annual series of provincially mandated tests to students in their classrooms (Simner, 2000). These standardised tests are often used to make comparisons across students, schools and boards of education. Individual teachers and schools are often blamed for poor test results, which are typically reported in the press (Simner, 2000).

## 2.6 TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

This section examines teachers' assessment practices. Teachers' assessment practices in this study refers to (i) teachers' construction and use of assessment methods in the classroom, (ii) conceptions, beliefs and views and (iii) the influences of the micro, meso and macro levels on teachers' assessment practices.

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU 2014; 2016) reported that teachers in most schools are not able to construct or set assessment items of good quality. According to Vanderya and Killen (2003), this might be because some educators still apply the same pedagogical practices they used years ago. The practice of holding on to old pedagogical practices affects assessment, because well-designed and best-intentioned policies can not affect what goes on in the classroom if assessment practices remain the same (Collis, 1992). The disinclination of many South African educators to change their assessment practices in response to new policies and curriculum guidelines may be due to their ingrained ideas of what assessment is and does (Brown, 2003).

According to Brown (2003:1), all pedagogical acts are influenced by the notions teachers have about the act of teaching, the process and purpose of assessment and the nature of learning. Such conceptions act as filters through which educators understand and interpret their teaching environment (Marton, 1981) and act as barriers to change (Richards & Killen, 1993). Building on the work of Gipps, Brown, McCallum and McCallister (1995) and Hill (2000), Brown (2003) suggests that teachers hold one of four major conceptions of assessment; i.e., assessment is: (a) useful because it can provide information for improving instruction and learning; (b) a necessary process for making learners accountable for their learning; (c) a process by which teachers and/or schools are made accountable; and (d) irrelevant to the work of teachers and the life of learners. Brown (2003) further argues that these different conceptions lead to different assessment practices.

According to Brown (2003), educators who view assessment as a useful means of gathering data upon which to base decisions about learning and teaching will attempt to make assessment an essential part of their teaching. Brown (2003) further points out that among other things, such teachers will emphasise formative rather than summative assessment.

Brown (2003) notes that such teachers also tend to take responsibility for the learning that takes place in their classrooms. Educators who view assessment primarily as a tool for making learners accountable for their learning will favour formal, summative, high-stakes assessment, and may tend to absolve themselves from responsibility for learner failure by blaming the learners' socio-economic conditions or lack of ability (Delandshere & Jones, 1999). Educators who view assessment as a necessary (but not necessarily important) part of educator and school accountability will favour summative assessment practices that emphasise the generation of marks that can be reported to external agencies. Educators who view assessment as largely irrelevant will probably avoid formative assessment and take a haphazard approach to summative assessment, thus creating the self-fulfilling prophecy that assessment is a waste of time.

While there is strong evidence that educators may hold a predominant view of assessment (Stamp, 1987; Warren & Nisbet, 1999), there is also evidence that educators can hold multiple, interacting conceptions of assessment (Brown, 2003). For example, an educator could believe that the prime purpose of assessment is to improve learning, but still see assessment as a valuable means of providing evidence for certain measures of school accountability. Calderhead (1996) argues that one of the strongest influences on an educator's conception of assessment is the understanding of the subject s/he teaches. It is no secret that most South African teachers lack both the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of the subjects they teach (NEEDU,2016; Spaull,2013; Howie,2016; TIMMS; PIRLS,2016). NEEDU found that the poor quality of school basedassessments (SBA) reflected poor curriculum coverage. Teachers assess what they have taught, not what they ought to have taught.

As stated in point 2.4, the micro, meso and macro levels of the education system have considerable influence on teachers' assessment practices. At the micro level, there has been a significant body of research on the relationships between teachers' assessment values and their assessment practices. For instance, James and Pedder (2006) surveyed teachers on their values and practices of classroom assessment, finding that most teachers value formative assessment practices, but that there is a disparity between what they claim to value and what they practise. Similarly, Eren (2010) surveyed Turkish pre-service teachers' assessment values and their assessment practices, finding that the teachers reportedly valued

constructivist teaching and learning approaches that favoured assessment for learning. However, the findings showed that their practices were inconsistent with their stated values, as they practised more traditional approaches reflecting the assessment of learning. This inconsistency between what a teacher purports to value and what he or she practices is generally troubling; it implies that there may be more pressing demands on practice that outweigh a broadly held preference. Key exceptions include findings by William, Lee, Harrison and Black (2004) and by Koh (2011), which showed that sustained professional development experiences increases teachers' assessment literacy and results in greater use of formative, alternative and authentic assessment tasks in the classroom.

Mason (2006) postulates that the macro cannot be fully understood without being contextualised through the micro, and that micro and macro cannot stand in opposition to each other, since they are complementary (Zimmerman & Smit, 2016). Lack of interaction between the micro, the meso and macro levels will result in high-quality learning not taking place. (Boeren, 2011). Figure 2 below illustrates the multi-level contextual factors that affect teachers' assessment practices.

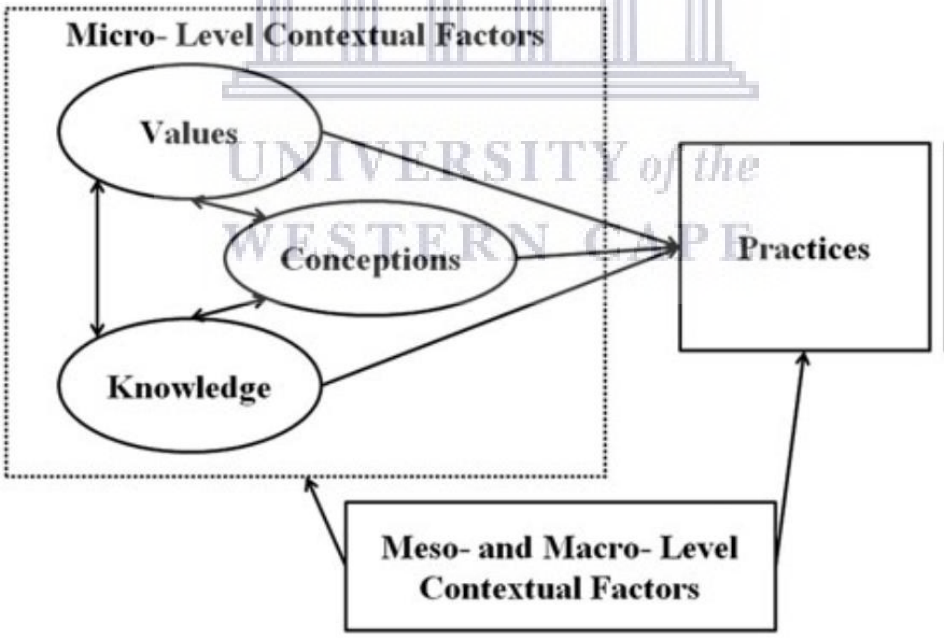



**Figure 2: Contextual factors affecting teachers assessment practices**
*Source: Adapted from Fulmer et al. (2015)*

## 2.7 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF LITERACY ASSESSMENT DATA

The effective use of assessment data to plan, judge and modify teaching is a fundamental competency for good teaching (Adam & Nel, 2015). Language assessment literacy is the competency to work with assessment data to meet pedagogical needs (Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018). Language instructors should have the ability to understand, analyse and use assessment data to improve students' learning and their instruction (Lourie, 2008; Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018). Many researchers argue strongly that the use of assessment information to identify and address learner problems is the most critical contribution of national assessments (Marsh, 2012; Popham, 2011; Schiefelbein & Schiefelbein, 2003). Adam and Nel (2015) claim that making decisions about teaching and learning is as a core component of teaching as providing the teaching itself. They argue that the effective use of assessment data to plan, judge and modify teaching is a fundamental competency for good teaching.

However, South African teachers are not adequately equipped to use assessment results effectively to improve their teaching or instruction (Kellaghan, Greaney & Murray, 2009; Shirley & Hargreaves, 2006 in Kanjee & Moloi, 2014). Kanjee and Moloi (2014) found that teachers did not know how to use assessment results to improve learning and that no plans were in place at their schools for the use of assessment data. They also found that a significant proportion of teachers indicated that they received little or no support from the school district on how to use assessment results (Kanjee & Moloi, 2014). It is also widely reported in the literature that schools do not use the results of assessment analysis to inform planning and teaching (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), 2016). These findings are consistent with the NEEDU (2013) report which reported that the only type of analysis that schools do is level analysis, which is a purely statistical procedure in which learner results are classified into levels, and that few schools have school improvement plans that are informed by assessment results analysis. The NEEDU report also confirmed that schools do not use the results of assessment analysis to inform planning and teaching

Kanjee (2017) argues that teachers need relevant and timeous information from assessment studies as well as support on how to use the information to improve learning and teaching practices. Kellaghan, Greaney and Murray (2009) noted the underuse of the data is a

shortcoming not only in South Africa but in many countries where national assessments are conducted. Chen, Salahuddin, Horsch and Wagner (2000) have noted that even in the United States of America, little has been done to help schools and teachers understand the connection between test scores and day-to-day classroom practices. Without this understanding, score-based accountability systems will not lead to meaningful educational reform (Chen, Salahuddin, Horsch & Wagner, 2000). Hoadley and Muller (2016) suggest that the solution to the underutilisation of assessment data would be to teach teachers and other stakeholders how to interpret and use test results.

Building on the work of Park (2012) and Kellaghan et al. (2009), Kanjee and Moloi (2014) suggest that the issues that constrain teachers' use of assessment data include teachers' lack of data analysis skills, the absence of strong leadership and support from school district personnel, and the format in which data is presented to teachers (Kanjee & Moloi, 2014). They found that another inhibiting factor is the timing of the dissemination of data, with data arriving at the time when it is not needed or is no longer relevant (Kanjee & Moloi, 2014). However, they also noted that where district staff provided good role models of data use, teachers grew to respect and value the importance of data (Kanjee & Moloi, 2014).

The study by Kanjee and Moloi is resonant of a study conducted by Kellaghan and Greaney in 2003. In this seminal work, they argue that when assessment items are not designed to be individually diagnostic, the analysis of results will not provide instructionally relevant information about individual students. Consequently, the degree to which they can provide specific guidance to teachers will be limited. Another limitation in using assessment data relates to teacher competence in terms of content knowledge, data analysis skills and pedagogical knowledge (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2003). Using the example of Mathematics teachers, they argue that close to half of South African Mathematics teachers do not possess a formal qualification in Mathematics. They further argue that several teachers may have a poor command of the language that is the medium of instruction; thus assessment data will not lead to the desired change in teachers' instructional practices (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2003).

This section of the chapter has dealt with the teachers' understanding of assessment data and factors that limit such understanding. The section has highlighted the formative role of assessments and the importance of an effective use of assessment data as a fundamental competency of teaching. The various studies cited make it apparent that South African teachers are not equipped to use assessment data. From the studies reviewed in this section, it also emerged that the underuse of assessment data is not confined to South Africa but is a world-wide shortcoming in educational systems. Hoadley and Muller (2016) suggest that the solution to the underutilisation of assessment data would be to teach teachers and other stakeholders how to interpret test results. However, there are other factors beyond data analysis skills that render assessment data redundant. These factors, as identified by both Kanjee and Moloi (2014) and Kellaghan and Greaney (2003), include lack of support from district personnel for teachers' content knowledge. What became apparent in this section is that data alone is not sufficient; it has to be integrated into other contextual factors in order to be of any use as an educational tool.

## 2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is Systems Theory, pioneered by Kaufmann, Weiner, Boulding and Von Bertalanffy (Sinnott, 1987). Ludwig von Bertalanffy was the creator of the concept of a general Systems Theory in the late 1930s, according to his own claim (Bertalanffy, 1968) and according to others (Bailey, 1970; Marin & Paradise 1997; Harkonen 2007; Kanungo & Jain 2007; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017; Banathy & Jenlink). Bertalanffy was a biologist who developed the concept of an overall theory of systems based on his belief in 'organismic biology'. He believed that 'the proper study of biology is in the order and organisation of parts and processes,' rather than in the study of the parts alone (Bailey 1970). Bertalanffy (1934, 1968) formally introduced the General Systems Theory as a modelling device that accommodates the interrelationships and overlaps between separate disciplines (Kanungo & Jain, 2007).

Systems Theory gave birth to the ecological systems theory developed in the field of psychology and pioneered by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Harkonen, 2007; Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). According to Heil, psychologists began using this theory in family studies after realising the benefits of Systems Theory. The area of family studies falls into the discipline of psychology but often overlaps the theories and studies of interpersonal communication. The

study of families as systems was possible because as long as the family system was functioning properly, it was experienced to be in equilibrium. Problems in families were theorised to be the result of the effects of one or more interlocking systems. Bronfenbrenner defines five concentric systems; the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem macrosystem and chronological system (Harkonen 2007; Wikipedia-The Free Encyclopaedia).

Even though the two theories are related, this study uses Systems Theory because schools operate at different yet interconnected levels, and therefore it is important to have a systems understanding of the various complonents including assessments. Systems Theory is an interdisciplinary theory about every system in nature, in society and in many scientific domains, as well as a framework with which one can investigate phenomena in a holistic way (Capra, 1997). Likewise, Germaine (2015) defines Systems Theory as the study of simple and complex systems, their structures and their behaviours.

Systems Theory came about as a departure from reductionism and other empirical approaches that traditionally study phenomena by looking at individual components (Checkland, 1997; Weinberg, 2001; Jackson, 2003). Reductionism can be understood as an approach to understanding complex things or phenomena by breaking them into their constituent parts and then understanding those simpler and manageable parts (Kanungo & Jain, 2007). Holism, on the other hand, is the idea that all the properties of a given system (biological, chemical, social, economic, mental, linguistic, etc.) cannot be determined or explained by the sum of its parts alone. Instead, the system as a whole determines in an important way how the parts behave (Mitchell, 2005; Nicolescu, 2017).

Laszlo and Laszlo (1997), Jackson (1992) and Banathy (1996) indicate that Systems Theory thinking has undergone some shifts over the years, starting as 'hard systems thinking' practised in the engineering field. In hard systems thinking, the emphasis is on scientific and systematic methods of thinking about and solving problems. The theory then evolved into 'organismic systems thinking', which emerged from the general Systems Theory movement developed by, amongst others, Bertalanffy (1956), Boulding (1956) and Rapoport (1986). Bertalanffy (1956) emphasised that an open system interacts with its surrounding environment and that a change in the environment would in effect initiate a change in the system. In addition, a change in the system would initiate a change in the environment. This notion of an open system has greatly influenced the study of all living systems, including

large social systems. The third stage in the evolution of systems thinking was developed due to weaknesses in both hard and organismic systems thinking to solve the ill-structured, messy problems found in social systems. This evolution of thinking was named 'soft systems thinking', and was developed by Checkland, Ackoff, Churchman and other systems-design scholars. Checkland (1993) found that using the hard systems thinking approach to solve complex social problems was neither suitable nor effective. This incompatibility led to his developing a soft systems thinking approach to solving ill-structured social problems. The fourth stage is a newly emerging branch of soft systems thinking called 'critical systems thinking' (CST), which was spearheaded by Jackson 1991, Flood 1991 and Ulrich 1983

Ontologically, Systems Theory recognises the importance of organising relationship processes between entities (components of systems), from which emerge the novel properties of systems (Banathy & Jenlink, 1968). Banathy and Jenlink (1968) posit that the task of those using systems methodology in a given context is fourfold; namely (1) to identify, characterise and classify the nature of the problem situation, (2) to identify and characterise the problem context and content in which the methodology is applied, (3) to identify and characterise the type of system in which the problem situation is embedded, and (4) to relate specific strategies, methods and tools that are appropriate to the nature of the problem situation to the context or content and to the type of systems in which the problem situation is located. The problem being considered in this study is a literacy assessment system, namely, the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations. The Systemic Evaluations discussed in this study are developed at the macro level, applied on the micro level and influence both the macro and micro levels of the system. In this study, the system where literacy assessments occur (the educational system) may be characterised as an open system. Schools constantly interact with their environments and the environment surrounding the school includes the Education district office and other structures within the Education Department, the community where the school is situated and community stakeholders in the school's sphere of influence, political, and economic forces that impinge on the organisation. Lunenburg (2010) argues that the social, political, and economic contexts in which school administrators work are marked by pressures at the local, district provincial, and national levels.

The analysis in this study takes into account various concepts central to Systems Theory. According to the literature, the key concepts of systems thinking are (i) the problem, (ii) the system (iii) interrelatedness or relationships (iv) open/purposeful systems and (v) feedback loops.

The unit of analysis in Systems Theory is referred to as the problem. A problem in systems thinking is not necessarily something wrong but rather a situation that needs to be understood and a solution to be determined. This study seeks to understand teachers' experiences of the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations. Teachers' experiences, therefore, constitute a problem in this study and hence teachers are the units of analysis.

The next section is an in-depth discussion of the literacy education system according to Systems Theory.

Systems Theory regards society as a big system composed of a myriad interdependent parts (Ritzer, 1992 ). Betts defines a system as a set of interrelated elements that function as a whole to achieve a common purpose (Betts, 1992). The focus is on the interactions and the relationships between parts to understand an entity's organisation, functioning and outcomes (Mele, Pels & Polese, 2010). Therefore, a language or literacy education system is not an isolated system but a subsystem of the bigger education system. In order for the the language or literacy education system to be effective, its subsystems must be effective, too. The subsystems will include the instruction system, assessment system and administrative system. Therefore even though this study is oriented toward understanding teachers' experiences of the assessment/evaluation phenomenon, the study acknowledges that literacy assessments do not take place in isolation but form part of the bigger literacy education system.

The interrelated elements in the case of literacy assessments are the literacy education system, the instructional system, the assessment system, various organisational processes and the users. The goal of a literacy education system is to provide all students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills that they will need to become literate adults. In the South African context, these goals are articulated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement document and other government policies like the National Development Plan.

In this study, the literacy education system forms part of a larger system of the Grades R–12 basic education system and is, itself, comprised of multiple interacting systems. These other systems include the First Additional Language Curriculum and the Assessment Policy Statement Document (CAPS), which together describe what students will be taught, how they will be taught, the conditions under which learning should take place, and how learners will be assessed. To maintain a balance amongst interacting systems there need to be system boundaries. The following paragraphs explore the concept of system boundaries and explain why they are needed.

An additional source of complexity in the literacy education system is that it functions at multiple levels - classroom, school, school district, provincial and national levels. Moreover, because comparisons among educational priorities and achievement results around the world are often sought, international influences also affect literacy education. Public reactions to results from international comparisons of educational achievements, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and SACMEQ, highlight the influence of the international community on literacy in the country.

A literacy assessment system is thus responsive to a variety of influences. Some of these influences work from the top down and others work from the bottom up. The National Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) generally exert considerable influence over literacy curricula, while classroom teachers have more leeway in instructional method used. The national government and provinces tend to determine policies on assessment for programme evaluations and accountability, while teachers have greater influence over assessment for learning. Thus for the education system to maintain a proper balance, adjustments must continually be made among curriculum, instruction and assessment, not only horizontally, within the same level (such as within school districts), but also vertically, through all levels of the system. For example, a change in CAPS standards would require adjustments in assessment and instruction at the classroom, school and school district levels. This shows that there are relationships or a state of interrelatedness between the constituent parts of the system.

For a system to be considered open or purposeful, there should be a continual input and output of both energy and matter. In this study, inputs into the literacy education system include people (teachers, learners, subject advisors), policies (assessment policy, CAPS,

school policy) procedures, materials (learning and teaching support material) and financial resources. The output refers to literate learners i.e. those who do well in the examinations and eventually become better equipped to serve themselves and society (Oyebade, 2001).

Organisations tend to be purposeful systems. A purpossful system is a multi-goal seeking system where the various goals have common properties. Production of that common property is the system's purpose. The essence of productive school-community relations is that society maintains the school system so that schools can exist to serve the needs of society (Oyebade, 2001). The objective of an education system is likely to be to produce 'students in the form of educated people now better equipped to serve themselves and society' (Oyebade, 2001). To achieve this there must be a feedback mechanism which, according to Systems Theory, is called a feedback loop.

Systems must work to strike a balance between stability and change, and they need to have well-developed feedback loops to keep the system from over- or underreacting to changes in a single element. Feedback loops occur whenever part of an output of some system is connected to one of its inputs. Literacy assessment is a primary feedback mechanism in the literacy education system. It provides information to support decisions and highlight needed adjustments. Assessment-based information, for example, provides students with feedback on how well they are meeting expectations so that they may adjust their learning strategies if need be. Assessments provide teachers with feedback on how well students are learning so that they may more appropriately target instruction. For example, when teachers identify difficulties students are having with a concept and adjust their instructional strategies in response, which in turn causes students to approach the concept differently, a feedback loop has worked effectively.

The feedback loop works in the entire system, as districts receive feedback on the effectiveness of their programmes so that they can abandon ineffective programmes and promulgate effective ones. Both the provincial and national Departments of Education also receive feedback that enables policymakers to evaluate how well policies are working and where resources might best be targeted so that appropriate decisions may be made. Assessment practices also communicate what is important and what is valued in sLanguage education and, in this way, exert a powerful influence on all other elements in the literacy

education system. The next paragraph explores the impact of external influences on the school assessment system.

The school is regarded as an open system, being heavily impacted by outside forces. Schools are greatly influenced by what happens outside of the school doors (Dantas-Whitney, Mize & Waldschmidt, 2018). On the other hand, the social environment influences policies at the national and provincial levels, which ultimately affect what occurs in the classroom. Inequities that are prevalent in the greater society are reflected in inequities in student achievements and school outcomes (Dantas-Whitney, Mize & Waldschmidt, 2018). What is being experienced currently in South Africa is an increasing focus on outputs (or student scores) and a decreasing focus on inputs (educational resources). Schools have been asked to produce better results and educators are being held accountable for student progress.

This section has established that the theoretical framework underpinning this study is Systems Theory, pioneered in the field of biology by Von Bertalanffy. The theory has been explained and applied to the education system as a whole and to the literacy assessment component of it. The triangulation method applied in this study will accommodate the comparative nature of Systems Theory and ensure that the theory is applied throughout the study design. The social application of Systems Theory requires much data, which was gathered not only from the literature but from interviews and observations. Systems Theory plays a major role in data analysis and the interpretation stage of this study.



## 2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has dealt with the importance of literacy and the impact of language policies on the execution of the curriculum and assessments (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). The chapter also investigated South African language policies, from the macro (national) to the micro (classroom) level. In addition, the chapter has highlighted the lack of or inadequate implementation of policies in schools, such as the Language in Education Policy (Huegh & Prinsloo, 2013; Lenyai, 2011, 2015; Sibanda, 2013).

The chapter also established that assessment, whether by standardised tests or classroom-based measures, is a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning and that it helps guide both teachers and students in daily teaching and learning practice (Paine, 2008; Black & William, 1998; Van den Akker, 2003; James, 2009, Bennett, 2010). The literature highlighted that when teachers do not appreciate the educational role of assessments, they opt to teach for testing, rather than for learning (Rehmani, 2003). Another issue that came out strongly from this review is the issue of assessment literacy (Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018; Helman, 2015), and how most teachers are unable to use the data gathered through tests to inform their daily teaching practice (Kellaghan, Greaney & Murray, 2009; Shirley & Hargreaves, 2006 in Kanjee & Moloi, 2014; NEEDU, 2013, 2016).

This section has given a broad overview of the issues pertaining to literacy education and literacy assessment in the light of the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Systems Theory has been discussed as a lens through which to view and to understand language and literacy assessments. Key aspects of Systems Theory - the problem, system, inter-relatedness, open systems and feedback loops - have been discussed to indicate how they relate to literacy assessments.

In the following chapter, the focus is the research methodology used to inform this study.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN and METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 laid the theoretical foundation of this study in the form of a literature review and an explanation of the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 discusses the research paradigm and the research approach (points 3.2 and 3.3 respectively); it then moves on to discussing the research design (point 3.4) and the research methodology, which includes the sampling method (3.5.1), research site (3.5.2) and data collection procedures (3.5.3). Thereafter the chapter discusses quality assurance issues such as the trustworthiness of the research (3.6), various ethical considerations (3.7) and the limitations of the study (3.8). I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of the research methodology under point 3.9.

The following section discusses the research paradigm underpinning this study.

## 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The literature suggests that the selection of a paradigm is fundamental for a good research undertaking (Creswell, 1994; Mason, 1996). Kuhn (1962) defines a research paradigm as a set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed. Likewise, Maree (2016) states that paradigms serve as the lens or organising principles by which reality is interpreted. Furthermore, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) state that paradigms are central to research design because they impact the nature of the research questions, i.e. what is to be studied and how it is to be studied. The literature identifies three main paradigms in research, namely the interpretive, positivist and transformative or emancipatory paradigms (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Cresswell, 2009; Maree, 2016; Mertens 2009). Each of these is discussed below.

The positivist and post-positivist paradigm is based upon a belief that a phenomenon is not caused by haphazard or random events, but has antecedent causes. For example, if teenagers in a certain location are drug addicts, the positivist assumption is that there must be a reason that may be identified and understood. The interpretivist paradigm has its roots in

hermeneutics, the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. In hermeneutics, the text is the communication of the thoughts of its writer and explicators must attempt to put themselves into the mind or thinking pattern of the writer to reconstruct the intended meaning of the text. The transformative or the emancipatory paradigm is based upon the premise that knowledge is socially, historically, politically and culturally situated and is influenced by power relations within a society.

The paradigm underpinning this study is the interpretivist paradigm, since the study is interested in the lived experience of teachers in relation to a particular phenomenon.

According to Guba (1990), research paradigms can be characterised by their subcomponents (which answer key paradigm questions) namely, ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Ontology in research refers to philosophical assumptions about what constitutes social reality and how we can understand existence (Punch, 1998). Epistemology deals with what we accept as valid evidence of that reality (how we know what we know, or how we go about finding out what we know). Methodology refers to how we investigate that context, or the approach we use to acquire knowledge. How we gather evidence is called the research method. Axiology refers to the ethics of the study.

The next paragraphs expound on the ontological and epistemological stance of the interpretivist paradigm to illustrate how the interpretivist paradigm is suitable for this study. The methodological stance and axiological stance are discussed under research methodology and research ethics, points 3.5 and 3.7 respectively.

The ontological foundations of interpretivism are that social reality is characterised by diversity, since dissimilar people interpret events differently, so that there are multiple perspectives of an incident (Crotty, 1998; Maree, 2016). Interpretivist ontology acknowledges the existence of multiple 'realities' that are based on the subjective experiences of people (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The ontological assumption of this research is that different stakeholders might experience and interpret the Western Cape Literacy Evaluations differently. There have been several studies on the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations but none has focused on bringing teachers' voices into the discussion. It is one of the aims of this study to give teachers a voice. Maree (2009) points out that the interpretivist paradigm aims at giving a perspective on a specific situation; to analyse this situation and give insight into

how certain people, or a certain group of people, attach meaning to the situation. In this manner, a deeper meaning can be exploited. In other words, the situation can be understood and recommendations can be made. Likewise, Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) assert that the interpretive paradigm is effective in probing daily experiences.

The interpretive epistemology recognises that knowledge is individually or socially constructed and therefore multiple realities are subjective rather than objective (Crotty, 1998). The emphasis of the interpretive epistemology is on description and explanation. This approach makes an effort to 'get into the head of the participants being studied,' so to speak, and to understand and interpret what the participants are thinking or the meaning they are making of the context. Potgieter (2008) considers the interpretivist paradigm important because social contexts, conventions, norms and standards are of the essence regarding a specific person or community if one wishes to understand human conduct. The ultimate aim of the interpretivist paradigm is to offer a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under study to provide insight into how a particular group of people make sense of their situation and the phenomena they encounter. In this study, I seek to find out how English First Additional Language teachers make sense of the Western Cape Education Department Systemic Evaluations on English (FAL) literacy.

The interpretivist paradigm is best suited for this study because the knowledge interest of the interpretivist paradigm is understanding. The interpretivists are concerned with understanding the meanings which people ascribe to objects, social settings, events and the behaviours of others, and how these understandings in turn define the settings. This study explores the meaning teachers give to English First Additional Language Literacy Assessments. Secondly, the interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to study people in their natural surroundings (Connole, Smith & Wiseman, 1995). The teachers who are the units of analysis in this study were interviewed in suitable locations and observed in their classrooms. Thirdly, the methods of data collection used in the interpretivist paradigm allow the meanings behind the actions of the people under study to be revealed.

The next section deliberates on the research approach employed in this study.

## 3.3 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach is a plan and procedure that consists of the broad steps taken to invesitage the topic, and the detailed aspects of the method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is, therefore, based on the nature of the research problem being addressed. The literature identifies three research approaches; the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches. It is generally acknowledged that the choice of a research approach is determined by how data will be collected, analysed and presented (Myers, 2009). What makes a research approach appropriate for a particular study is determined by the context, nature, aims and goals of the research study (Myers, 2009). This study explores teachers' lived experiences of the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations in English First Additional Language (EFAL). To understand and explain lived experiences implies that one has to produce text data. The qualitative research approach employs open-ended questions and text data as a method of data collection and analysis, hence the qualitative approach was a suitable research approach for this study.

The qualitative approach uses constructivism as its philosophical assumption. Qualitative research focuses on a phenomenon that occurs in a real-world setting (Leedy & Ormond, 2001). Furthermore, qualitative research is interactive, face-to-face research, which requires a relatively extensive amount of time to systematically observe, interview and record processes as they naturally occur (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006), and involves an interpretivist and naturalistic approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The qualitative approach allows for studies to take place in natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, a phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to it. To achieve this, the qualitative approach employs open-ended questions and text data as methods of data collection and analysis, as is the case in this study.

This study aims for a holistic picture of a historically unique situation, where peculiarities are important. Therefore, in this study, I used an inductive mode of thinking, letting the data speak, unlike the traditional 'outside' or quantitative mode where the phenomenon is isolated, and where researchers aims to reduce the level of complexity in their analysis and to test a hypothesis derived previously (Ospina, 2004).

The three main reasons why the qualitative approach was ideal for this study are, firstly, the aim was to understand a social phenomenon (Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations) from the perspective of the actors (educators) involved, rather than explaining it from outside. Secondly, the phenomenon being studied was difficult or impossible to approach or to capture quantitatively. Thirdly, employing a qualitative research method enabled the researcher to fosus on the perspective of the educators.

The next section discusses the research design.

## 3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research designs are plans, strategies and procedures for research and involve decisions about a range of matters, from the underlying worldview of the researcher to the selection of participants, the detailed methods of data collection and the analysis to be done (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Creswell 2009). According to Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999) a research design should provide a plan that specifies how the research is going to be executed in such a way that it answers the research question or questions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999). Mouton and Marais (1990) express the view that the selection of the research design helps the researcher to plan and structure a given research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised.



The qualitative approach encompasses various study designs; the case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, the ethnographic study and the narrative study. This study employed an exploratory single case study design.

The case study is used when exploring a phenomenon in context, using one or more data collection methods. It is particularly useful for describing a case or cases in depth. Case study research is a research approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio-visual material and documents and reports), and then gives a case description analysed according to case-based themes (Creswell, 2007:73). Creswell (2009) and Merriam (1998) both suggest that all methods of data collection may be used in case study analysis.

The qualitative case study design was employed in this study because according to Yin (2014), case studies are appropriate when asking 'how,' 'why,' 'what,' and 'who' questions. The main research question for this study is, 'What are Grade 6 teachers' lived experiences of the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations?'

Secondly, the qualitative case study design was employed because qualitative case studies provide tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their context (Baxter & Jack, 2012). Qualitative case studies also afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe phenomena in context using an assortment of data sources, as is the case in this study. Baxter and Jack (2012) propose that the use of different data sources in a case study ensures that the issue to be researched is not explored through one lens but rather a variety of lenses, which allows for numerous aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. It was necessary to use this approach in this study because the study 'seeks to explore, describe and analyse the meaning of individual lived experience: how they perceive it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it and talk about it with others' (Patton, 2002: 104). These include the challenges, opportunities and opinions expressed by teachers with regard to their lived experiences of the First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Assessments in the Western Cape.

Yin (2003) states that case studies can be divided into three types: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive. The exploratory case study is used when there is no single set predetermined outcome (Baxter & Jack (2013). In the exploratory case study, the questions answered are 'how' and 'what'. The questions associated with an exploratory case study fit well with my main and subsidiary research questions. Exploratory case studies are also appropriate when one wishes to gain an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon, as is the case in this study. Yin (2014) states that the exploratory case study is used to explore presumed causal links that are too complex for a survey or experiment.

Baxter and Jack (2013) define an exploratory case study as a type of case study that is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. The exploratory case study is used when there is no pre-determined outcome. In the exploratory case study, the questions answered are 'how' and 'what'. The questions

associated with an exploratory case study fit well with my main and subsidiary research questions.

Exploratory case studies are also appropriate when one wishes to gain an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon, as is the case in this study. Yin (2014) states that the exploratory case study is used to explore presumed causal links that are too complex for a survey or experiment.

## 3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to both a theory and a way of producing knowledge through research and provides a rationale for the way a researcher precedes. It is important to note that methodology refers to more than particular techniques such as doing a survey or interviews (Maree, 2016). It rather provides reasons for using such techniques to yield the kind of knowledge or understanding that is sought. The interpretive methodology is interactional, with the researcher seeking to understand or interpret. The interpretivist methodology is suitable for all qualitative designs (ethnography, phenomenological research, actions research, etc.).

This section of the study describes the sampling method, research site and data collection methods used in the study. To acquire knowledge, a qualitative case design method was employed. The data collection techniques in the interpretivist paradigm include, inter-alia, interviews, observations, document analysis and field notes.



### 3.5.1 Selection of participants

It is usually impossible to include the entire population in a study. The two main restrictions are time and cost (Maree, 2016). Consequently, one makes use of sampling. Sampling is a method of selecting participants for the study. There aretwo major classes of sampling; probability methods and non-probability methods. Probability methods are based on the principles of randomness, while non-probability methods are purposeful rather than random.

The subjects of investigation are known as units of analysis. In defining the subject of the study or the unit of analysis, the researcher is specifying who or what they want to include in the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim,1993). Babbie distinguishes between four different units of analysis that are common in social sciences: individuals (teacher or learner), groups, institutions (schools) and social artefacts (policy or systems). Hycner (1999: 156) states that 'the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants'. Similarly, Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998) argue that the selection of participants or sampling method depends on the goals of the study. The goal of qualitative research is to provide in-depth understanding and therefore it has to target a specific group, type of individual, event or process. To accomplish this goal, qualitative research focuses on criterion-based (non- probability) sampling techniques to reach the target group.

There are four main types of qualitative sampling; convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowballing sampling (Henning, Smith & Van Rensburg 2004; Maree, 2016). Convenience sampling is applied when population elements are selected based on the fact that they are easily and conveniently available (Maree, 2016). The quota sampling method is used when the researcher has to first identify categories of people that are needed in the sample and the required number for each category (Maree, 2016). Quotas can be proportional or non-proportional.



The snowballing sampling method is used when the population under investigation is hard to find. The researcher then relies on the participants to lead him to others. The method is useful where the research interest is in an interconnected group of people. Examples are the 'elites' of a medium-sized city, homeless people, or people in the same type of unusual job. The starting point with this method is to make contact with one or more people who belong to the population, who then refer the researcher to others.

Purposive sampling is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a certain purpose in mind. Participants in purposive sampling are selected because they are deemed to represent characteristics that are of interest to the research topic (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In purposive sampling, the researcher makes judgments regarding which participants should be selected (Maree, 2016).

The purposive sampling method, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, was used in this study. According to this method, sample members are selected based on their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject (Freedman et al., 2007). Purposive sampling is considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling for identifying the primary participants in a study. Purposive sampling is a strategy of selecting participants who are considered representative of the population under investigation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

To achieve the study goals, the site, participants and documents for analysis were purposively selected. Assessment Primary School (a pseudonym) was selected because as a public primary school, it participates in the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations. Current and former Grade 6 English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers were purposefully approached as they fit the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997). These teachers were approached as they had experiences relating to the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations which is the phenomenon under investigation (Kruger, 1988: 150; Ball, 1990). These teachers also possess an in-depth knowledge of systemic testing in Grade 6 (Ball, 1990). Within this context, the participants of this study were three current and three former Grade 6 EFAL Literacy teachers who had had experiences in systemic literacy assessments in the Western Cape. The next section discusses the sample characteristics.



### 3.5.2 Sample characteristics

The research sample consisted of six teachers; two male and four female. The ages of the participants varied from 23 to 59 years old. The teacher with the least teaching experience had two years' experience, whilst the most experienced teacher had been teaching for 33 years. The six teachers who participated in this study were one principal, one departmental head (HOD) and four Grade 6 English First Additional Language teachers, two of whom had either acted as or been employed as departmental heads. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used in this study. The principal is referred to as Mrs. Madikane, the HOD as Mr. Mvundla and the Grade 6 teachers are Mrs. Mavundla, Mr. Ndobe, Ms. Rondavel and Ms. Malotana.

Table 1 below shows the characteristics of the sample.

**TABLE 1: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

| Teacher | Gender | Age | Home language | Qualification | Teaching experience in years | Designation /post pevel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mrs. Madikane/ T1 | Female | 59 | Sesotho | M.Ed. | 33 | Principal (PL 4) |
| Mr. Mvundla/ T2 | Male | | IsiXhosa | B.Bibl. (Education) | 19 | HOD (PL 2) |
| Ms Mavundla/ T3 | Female | 55 | IsiXhosa | SPTD ;ACE | 23 | Teacher (PL1) |
| Mr. Ndobe/ T4 | Male | 45 | IsiXhosa | B.Ed. | 6 | Teacher (PL1) |
| Ms Rondavel/ T5 | Female | 40 | IsiXhosa | SPTD; HDE | 22 | Teacher/ (PL1) |
| Ms Malotana/ T6 | Female | 26 | Sesotho | B.Sc. Hons | 2 | Teacher (PL1) |

The next section describes the geographical location of the sample, or the research site.



### 3.5.3 Research site

For anonymity, the research site is called Assessment Primary School. The school was chosen for several reasons: First, because it has a history of participation in Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations; second, because the school has shown poor results in the systemic literacy tests; third, the school showed some improvement in its last two tests. In the four years prior to this research, the school's literacy results varied between 0% and 17%, with the percentage being the number of learners who obtained 50% or over in the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation literacy tests. A 0% result means that none of the learners from the Grade 6 learners obtained 50% or over in the literacy systemic tests. Figure 3 shows Assessment Primary School's Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluation results from 2015 t2018. The first row of results shows Assessment Primary School's results. The second row shows the provincial results. What is interesting about the provincial results is that they are

consistent with other assessment studies; particularly the PIRLS, SACMEQ and the Western Cape Learner Assessment Study (see point 1.2 Problem statement and rationale). The third row shows the results of schools in the same quintile as Assessment Primary School. The figures in this row are also consistent with the literature, which indicates that schools from the lower (poor) quintiles do not do well in Systemic Evaluations.

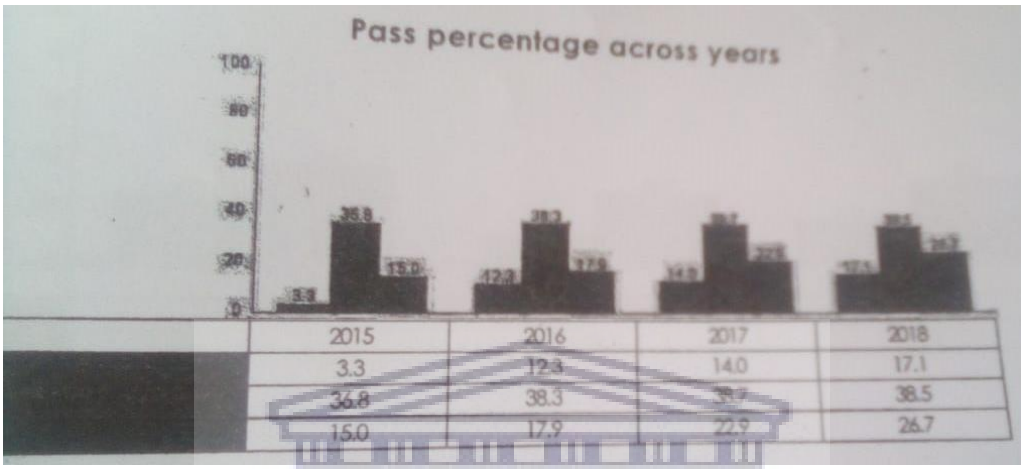



**Figure 3: 2015-2018 SE results of Assessment Primary School**
*Source:Assessment Primary School 2018 Systemic Results*

Fourthly, I chose the school because it is a township school and research shows that township schools underperform in the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations. Systemic Evaluation reports allude to underperformance in township and rural schools. Lastly, the school was chosen because of its accessibility to the researcher.

Assessment Primary School is a Section 20, Quintile 2 government school situated in the Western Cape, a province of South Africa. In response to unequal access to quality public schooling, the South African Schools Act was amended in 2005 to establish a quintile system (Ally & McLaren, 2016). Under this system, schools are categorised into five groups (quintiles) based on the relative wealth of their surrounding communities. Schools in the poorest communities are classified as Quintile 1 and schools serving the wealthiest communities are classified as Quintile 5 (Ally & McLaren, 2016). Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools do not charge fees and are often referred to as no-fee schools (Ally & McLaren, 2016). A Section 20 school is a designated no-fee school because the parent community is considered too poor to afford school fees.

The school is situated in an area that was formally a squatter camp in Old Crossroads in the Philippi East area of Cape Town. The area is characterised by a high rate of unemployment, poverty, a high crime rate and uneducated and illiterate parents. Because of poverty and challenging social circumstances, most parents are unable to support the school financially, hence the school is a section 20, Quintile 2 (no fee) school. Most learners live in shacks or Reconstruction and Development Project (RDP) houses which were built by the government for the poor, and the learner population walks to school.

However, Assessment Primary School is a medium-resourced school. This means it has a computer laboratory, abeit with limited functionality, with only 20 functioning computers. This results in two to three learners having to share a computer when their class utilises the computer laboratory. There are whiteboards and overhead projectors in some of the classrooms, although they are seldom used. The physical structure of the school consists of 32 classrooms, four of which are prefabricated structures. The school is overcrowded in the Intermediate and Senior Phases, with some classes having a population of 45 to 60 learners in one classroom.

Grade 6 has fairly densely populated classrooms, as there are three Grade 6 classrooms with a total population of 135 learners and three educators, translating to a ratio of 1:45. The learner population in all Grade 6 classes combined consists of 52 boys and 83 girls. In Grade 6a there are 17 boys and 28 girls, in Grade 6 b there are 19 boys and 26 girls and Grade 6c has 16 boys and 29 girls. The average age of the Grade 6 learners is 12 years old.

There is no library there are no proper sports facilities at the school. The only available playground is a borrowed municipal site which is very limited.

The human resource component of the school includes teaching and non-teaching staff, learners and the School Governing Body. The school is a relatively large primary school with 1309 learners and 35 teachers. The school management team is made up of the principal, her two deputies and five departmental heads. The Intermediate Phase Departmental Head is responsible for ten classes, while the Senior Phase Departmental Head is responsible for only four classes. This has implications for the management load in the Intermediate Phase where Grade 6 is located. The high class load of the Intermediate Phase Departmental Head can be assumed to affect the quality of monitoring.

The school offers classes from Grade R to Grade 8. The school language policy stipulates that the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the school is English from Grade 4 onwards. However, most or all of the teachers code switch to isiXhosa. This has implications for assessment results, as learners are assessed in English.

The next section discusses the data collection methods employed in this study.

## 3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In line with the methodology of the interpretive paradigm, qualitative data was collected using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. How each method was utilised is discussed in detail below.

### 3.6.1 Interviews

Interviewing entails asking questions and getting answers from participants. Interviews yield a great deal of useful information and are a good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings and definitions of situations, and their constructions of reality (Leedy & Omrod, 2001). Burns (2000) describes an interview as a verbal face-to-face interchange in which a researcher tries to elicit information from another person or participant (Burns, 2000). Likewise, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) define an interview as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information, enabling the researcher to focus on content specified by the research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) identify five different types of interviews in qualitative research. These are structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, informal interviews and focus group interviews.

Structured interviews are interviews where the interviewer asks each respondent the same series of questions. In this type of interview, questions are created before the interview and often have a limited set of response categories; for example, self-administered questionnaires

(Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer develops and uses an interview guide but is flexible enough to deal with issues that come up and which are not addressed by the guide (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Unstructured interviews entail engagement between the interviewer and respondents in which they have scheduled time to sit and speak with each other and where both parties recognise the conversation to be an interview (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Informal interviews are interviews where there are no predetermined questions. Focus group interviews are used to explore new research areas with a group of participants (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006).

Researchers generate interview data that aligns with their research purposes (Roulston, 2013). For this study, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with the teachers, as semi-structured interviews are ideal for providing reliable, comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research (De Vos, 2011). I conducted interviews using a semi-structured interview guide as an interview tool. (See Appendix C.)

As mentioned in section 3.5.1, the study sample comprised three current EFAL teachers and three former EFAL Grade 6 teachers. Interviews were prearranged and an interview schedule was prepared. Participants were involved in identifying and determining suitable places where they would be free to talk without any disturbances.



The interviews were used to collect data on Grade 6 teachers' understanding of the English First Additional Literacy systemic assessments. The semi-structured interviews were divided into six sections, with section one being a tool to collect biographical data of the participants. The questions in section two were about the aims and role of Systemic Evaluations. The third section dealt with the teachers' literacy assessment practices. The fourth section dealt with how teachers engage with the data generated by the Systemic Evaluations. The fifth section dealt with the opportunities provided to teachers by the Systemic Evaluations. The final section dealt with questions related to challenges experienced by teachers with the Systemic Evaluations.

Six interviews with six teachers lasting between 45 minutes to an hour were conducted during the period spanning 9 July 2019 to 15 September 2019. Except for two, most of the interviews were conducted at venues in Assessment Primary School. The two other

interviews took place at locations suggested by interviewees. The use of different venues was to accommodate the participants. It was interesting to note that although the participants were in the same school, they had very different experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation. This will be elaborated upon in the next chapter

To observe research ethics, the participants were informed of the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research. Participants were assured of their anonymity and that their identities would not be divulged. Permission to record the interviews was solicited and obtained from the interviewees. In the next section, I discuss document study as an instrument of data collection used in this research study.

### 3.6.2 Document analysis

Document analysis was one of the data collection methods used in combination with other methods to triangulate this study. Coffey (2013) contends that document analysis may also be employed as the main method for qualitative research. According to Bowen (2009) , document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents - both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted). Document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007).



If we wish to understand how organisations and social settings operate and how people work with or in them, it makes sense to consider social actors' various activities as authors and audiences of documents (Coffey, 2013). Documents should be treated seriously both as resources for understanding complex social life and as topics of analysis in their own right (Coffey, 2013; Plummer, 2001). Likewise, Prior (2008) contends that the recognition of the existence of documents as social facts (or constructs) alerts us to the necessity of treating them seriously in social research. Coffey (2013) argues that it is entirely possible and appropriate to undertake a thematic analysis of documentary data.

The sample for document analysis was purposively selected and consisted of four policies, namely the Assessment Primary School Assessment Policy (SAP, 2016), the Assessment Primary School Language Policy (SLP, 2016), the Curriculum and Assessment Policy

Statement (CAPS) (DBE 2011) and the National Protocol for Assessment (NPfA) (DBE, 2011b). These policies were selected as they have a bearing on the assessment practices of teachers. Secondly, although designed by separate entities in the education system, they relate to each other. The documents were studied to understand what the policy and curriculum have to say about languages and specifically about the assessment of literacy. Moreover, the documents were studied to understand the interaction between policies and practice.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Document (CAPS) is a Department of Basic Education document. It describes what students will be taught, how they will be taught, the conditions under which learning should take place and how learners will be assessed. The purpose of the National Protocol for Assessment is to standardise recording and reporting processes for Grade R-12 (DBE 2011:1) and to provide a policy framework for the management of school assessments (DBE 2011:1). The National Protocol for Assessment focuses on assessment policy for both the school basedassessments and the end of the year examinations (DBE 2011:1). The National Protocol for Assessment applies to all public institutions, including independent institutions following the National Curriculum Statement.

Assessment Primary School Language Policy's purpose is to pursue a language policy that will be most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners and also establish additive multilingualism (particularly isiXhosa and English) as an approach to the language of teaching and learning, and in education as a whole. In addition, the Assessment Primary School Assessment Policy's purpose is to give guidelines and answers to staff about all aspects of assessment. The policy claims that it is based on four assessment principles: (i) the support and management of assessments (ii) internal and external moderation (iii) the principle that all learners can learn (iv) continuous development and training of educators.

Table 2 below summarises the documents selected and the type of data provided by each.

TABLE 2: DOCUMENTS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

| Documents Selected | Data Analysed |
|---|---|
| Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DBE 2011) | Definition of First Additional Language, Purpose, Goal, Approach, Assessment, Inclusivity |
| National Protocol for Assessment (DBE 2011b) | Purpose, scope, the definition of assessment, forms and nature of assessment |
| Assessment Primary School Language Policy (SLP 2016) | Rationale, Approach to multilingualism, First Additional Language Assessment Standard |
| Assessment Primary School Assessment Policy (SAP 2016) | Purpose, Scope, Principles, Assessment Types, Moderation |

### 3.6.3 Classroom observations

As mentioned, the research approach employed in this study is a qualitative case study approach that was triangulated through a variety of data collection and analysis methods. Classroom observations are one of the data collection methods employed to triangulate this study. Observation is a method of data collection in which researchers observe phenomena in a specific research field. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) define observation as the interpretation of behaviours in a particular social setting. Observations are sometimes referred to as an unobtrusive method. The literature suggests that the strength of observations is their ability to provide the researcher with an opportunity to learn things that people may be unwilling to discuss in an interview (Bless et al, 2013).



Observations are divided into naturalistic (or 'non-participant') observation and participant observation. Naturalistic (or non-participant) observation allows no intervention by a researcher (Bless et al, 2013). Only the three current Grade 6 EFAL language teachers' lessons were observed. Nine lessons were observed, of which three were chosen for this report. The three lessons were specifically chosen because they were representative of the six remaining lessons. The lessons observed included reading comprehension, the writing of a newspaper article (transactional text) and language structures and conventions. Lessons were observed in T4, T5 and T6's classrooms where I was a non-participant observer (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). However, for fairness and consistency, the teachers were observed in the same type of lessons. The nine literacy lessons were observed from July 2019 to September 2019.

Table 3 below summarises the data collection methods employed in this study.

**Table 3: Data collection methods employed**
*Source: Author (2020)*

| Source | Data Collection Method | Description | Documentation Method |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 Current EFAL Teachers | Observation | Classroom Observation | Field notes<br>Observation Checklist |
| 6 Teachers | Interviews | Semi-structured interviews using a semi-structured interview guide.<br>Interview schedule | Audio recordings<br>Transcriptions<br>Fieldnotes |
| Policies ( CAPS Document; National Protocol for Assessments(NPA), School Assessment Policy (SAP) the School Language Policy (SLP) | Content analysis | Document study | Notes |

## 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

For data analysis, this study employed an inductive thematic coding using computer-aided software, Atlas. ti. In qualitative research, the step preceding data analysis is the transcription of interview recordings and field notes by typing them into a word processing document (Smit, 2002). The transcribed data is then analysed, either manually or with computer programs (Smit, 2002). Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) define the Inductive Thematic Coding as a way of finding, examining, consolidating, recounting, besides reporting themes contained by a data set (Nowell et al., 2017).

For data analysis, this study employed a qualitative approach to thematic analysis (TA). The thematic analysis approach is widely used to analyse interviews (Judger, 2016), and was found to be the most suitable data analysis approach for this study. In qualitative research, the step preceding data analysis is the transcription of interview recordings and field notes by typing them into a word processing document (Smit, 2002). The transcribed data is then analysed either manually or with computer programs (Smit, 2002). The data is analysed

through the three-stage method: preparing the data for analysis by transcribing the audio interviews into text, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding, and representing the data (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Following the process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), I first familiarised myself with the data by listening to the recorded interviews and internalised the data by transcribing and translating the interviews. To fully understand the meaning participants constructed about the topic, the transcribed data was re-read and the recorded interviews were listened to several times in an attempt to gain a holistic understanding of the data. Each transcribed interview was then analysed to arrive at an understanding of each participant's views, and to code the data.

Key themes were identified by combining several codes. The next step is to review the themes and to decide which themes were not distinct enough to warrant separation. Such themes will be fused into one theme supported by subthemes.

## 3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:407) state that the trustworthiness of qualitative research is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher. The key aspects of trustworthiness discussed in this study are reliability and validity, credibility and dependability, and data source triangulation. The next section discusses these aspects and how they were observed in this study.



### 3.8.1 Reliability and validity

Although reliability and validity are debated from a quantitative standpoint, authors such as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), Dane (2011) and Creswell (2012) argue that qualitative research can be reliable and validated. According to Joppe (2000), validity refers to whether the research truly measures what it is intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. There are different ways in which a researcher may establish the validity of their study. These include face validity, external validity and construct validity.

Face validity is a measure of how representative a research project is at face value, and whether it appears to be a good project, whilst external validity is about generalisations.

External validity allows researchers to take what they have learned on a small scale and relate it more broadly to the bigger picture**.** Construct validity is the degree to which an instrument measures the attribute or theoretical construct that it is intended to measure. To ensure validity in this study, a semi-structured interview guide was developed. In developing the semi-structured interview guide, care was taken to ensure that the questions were clear and unambiguous.

Validity also refers to the degree of similarity between the explanations of the phenomena and the real world, which implies that the realities of the world rest on data collection and analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). A valid study is one that has appropriately collected and interpreted data so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world that was studied (Yin, 2011). The data collection instruments in this study were developed in such a way that the data collected would represent the real world and the phenomenon under investigation.

Similarly, Le Grange (2014:65) argues that validity is an instrument used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon which it is intended to describe. Therefore, the research design, the methodology and the conclusions of the research all need to have taken issues of validity into account. This study followed triangulation both in the collection and interpretation of data in order to enhance validity. Cohen and Manion (1986:254) define triangulation as an attempt to map out or to explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.



According to Le Grange (2014:60), reliability is the probability that repeating a research procedure or method would produce identical or similar results. It represents the degree of confidence that a researcher or reader may have that replicating the process would ensure consistency. Sapsford and Evans (1984) emphasise that reliability applies to people involved in research as well as the instruments used for data construction.

The validity and reliability of this study were enhanced by employing member checking of the primary data. Member checking was attained by making available interview transcripts to the respondents so that they could verify them. To enable thick description, care was taken to meticulously describe the research site and the participants of this study in rich detail. Creswell and Miller (2000) maintain that in a thick description, credibility is established

through the lens of the reader who readsa narrative account and is transported into a setting or situation.

### 3.8.2 Credibility and dependability

Credibility refers to the degree to which a researcher's analysis finds participant agreement. Member checking is the most critical credibility technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). The qualitative research perspective relies on the participants' views for credibility as the only admissible assessor of the results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term 'member checks' to refer to the process of asking research participants to tell whether their experience has been accurately described. To ensure valid member checks in this study, each participant was given access to their interview transcripts and invited to read them thoroughly for clarity and accuracy and to provide additional insights and information. Another strategy employed to strengthen the credibility of this study was the audio recording and transcribing of the semi-structured interviews.

Dependability is the degree to which results are consistent with data, and requires the researcher to account for the ever-evolving context within which the research takes place. The role of the researcher in this study was not to generate replicability, but rather to describe the phenomenon through the experiences of those who lived it. Member checking enhanced the level of dependability of this qualitative study. The data was collected over three months, with interim data analysis and deliberation, and with participants taking the time to ensure that transcripts were an accurate reflection of what had been said.

### 3.8.3 Data triangulation

The qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon multiple sources of evidence to seek convergence and corroboration, and to use different data sources and methods, which is what triangulation refers to. According to Denzin (2009) and Patton (1999), triangulation is the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Triangulation has also been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources. Triangulation helps the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are

simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias (Patton, 1990; Bowen, 2009). Triangulation is considered one of the most important ways to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings (Maree, 2016).

Denzin (2015) and Patton (1999) identified four types of triangulation: (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation and (d) data source triangulation. Data source triangulation methods include interviews, participant or non-participant observation, documents and physical artefacts (Yin, 1994).

To achieve data triangulation, the primary methods of data collection in this study were interviews and document study and analysis. Data source triangulation was employed in this study because it allowed for multiple aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2012).

## 3.9ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Axiology (research ethics) is a branch of philosophy that studies judgments about values (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Research ethics addresses the application of ethical principles or values to various issues and fields of research, including ethical aspects of the design and conduct of research, the way human participants or animals within research projects are treated, whether research results may be misused for criminal purposes and aspects of scientific misconduct. Specifically, axiology is engaged with the assessment of the role of the research's value at all stages of the research process (Li, 2016). Axiology focuses on what the researchers value in their research as this will affect how they conduct the research and what they value in their research findings (Lee & Lings, 2008). In the interpretivist paradigm, the research is considered to be value bound.

Ethical issues are studied and published by many professionals and government groups, who research ways to guard the rights and welfare of research subjects (Bailey, 1996; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Holloway, 1997; MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Ramrathan, Le Grange & Shawa, 2017). The following paragraphs explain how research ethics were applied at different stages of this study.

Permission to conduct the study in a public school was formally requested from the Provincial Department of Education. A letter of permission from the Research Directorate of the Western Cape Education Department is attached (Appendix A). The ethical clearance certificate was applied for and approved by the Higher Degrees Committee of the University of the Western Cape (Appendix B). The School Governing Body (SGB), school principal and participants were informed about the nature of the study in writing (Appendix D), and the 'gatekeeper's' permission was solicited from the school community. Gatekeepers are individuals at the site who provide site access, help a researcher locate people and identify places to study (Creswell, 2008). The gatekeepers in this instance were the School Management Team (SMT) and the principal. The School Governing Body (SGB), through the principal, approved the gatekeeper's permission when the application in that regard was made (see Appendix C)

Participants were informed about all aspects of the research to be undertaken. Before obtaining consent, a full acknowledgment of the nature of the research and a description of the additional safeguards to protect the welfare and dignity of the research participants was made clear to each participant.

Clear explanations were given and it was emphasised that participation in the study was voluntary. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained at all times. The dignity and the worth of all the participants involved were respected. The participants were also informed beforehand about the face-to-face semi-structured interviews as well as classroom observations. They were also made aware of the field notes that would be taken during interviews and observations, and and that the documents they used when teaching would be analysed. It was also made clear to the participants that their names and those of the school would not be disclosed anywhere in the report. Pseudonyms were used for both the participants and for their school to protect them and the school from being exposed by this study. The consent forms were signed by all the participants concerned. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) agree that the nature of research, including all the details of aspects shared with the public and those kept confidential, should be discussed with participants.

Together, the steps taken to ensure validity and the steps taken to ensure the ethical nature of the research made it possible for this study to be considered trustworthy.

## 3.10 LIMITATIONS

It is essential to indicate the challenges or limitations that affected the research and how the researcher dealt with them (Maree, 2016). Limitations could be issues such as time or access to participants. The chief limitation of this study was that the data in the study was gathered from only a few respondents, all from one school. Therefore the results or findings may not be generalised. Secondly, Assessment Primary School is not fully representative of all the schools in the lower quintiles, which further limits the generalisability of my study.

### 3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the methodology, research approaches and instruments of data collection used to generate the data. First, the interpretivist paradigm was identified as the preferred paradigm for the study. The ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological subcomponents of the interpretivist paradigm were discussed to show how they applied to this study. Secondly, the research approach employed in this study was discussed. The case study was identified as the preferred research design. The methodology was discussed in some detail, paying attention to the sampling method used, the research site and the data collection instruments. Quality assurance measures applied and ethical principles followed in this study were described in some detail as evidence of the trustworthiness of the study. Lastly, the limitations of the study were mentioned.

The following chapter presents the data and an analysis of the data collected during this study.

# CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the methodology used in this study and how the data was gathered and transcribed into written text. Qualitative interviews, observations and data analysis were the main data collection methods used in the study to obtain various perspectives on the research questions related to teachers' experiences of the Grade 6 English First Additional Language Literacy Systemic Evaluations.

This chapter presents the data derived from the interviews and classroom observations, and analyses the data. Data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews with educators, classroom observations, and content analysis of policy documents (CAPS, NPfA, SAP and SLP). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the interview sample comprised three teachers who taught English First Additional Language (EFAL) in Grade 6 and three former Grade 6 EFAL teachers. For the sake of anonymity, they are referred to as T1-T6. T1-T3 are the former Grade 6 EFAL teachers whilst T4-T6 are the current Grade 6 EFAL teachers.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, The data analysis method employed in this study was a qualitative approach to thematic analysis (TA). Key themes were identified by combining several codes. Thereafter the themes were reviewed and the themes which were not distinct enough to warrant separation were fused into one theme supported by subthemes. The themes discussed in this chapter are:

- Scope and purpose of Systemic Evaluations
- Teachers' pedagogical approaches and data management
- Challenges to implementation of Systemic Evaluations and
- Towards the successful implementation of Systemic Evaluations.

## 4.2 SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF SYSTEMIC EVALUATIONS

This theme had to do with teachers' basic understanding of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations. The scope and purpose of Systemic Evaluations will be discussed under the following subthemes which address the research questions stated in the first chapter of this thesis: Teachers' definitions of Systemic Evaluations (SE or SEs) (point 4.2.1), Grade 6 teachers' understanding of the orientation and scope of the Systemic Evaluations in English (FAL) Literacy (4.2.2), the role and purpose of SEs (4.2.3) and SE in relation to the Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the School Based Assessments (SBA) (4.2.4).

### 4.2.1 Teachers' definitions of SE

As indicated in the previous chapter, the assessment of teachers' understandings of the FAL phenomenon was evaluated by interviewing Grade 6 teachers to determine their understanding and definition of Systematic Evaluation in English literacy. According to respondents, Systemic Evaluation is a Mathematics and literacy test which started in 2002 and takes place only in the Western Cape. The respondents' comments revealed that some have a limited definition of SE (T1, T5) whilst others provided a broader definition (T2, T3, T4, T6). Teachers' responses to this question are presented below:

> **T1:** *Ok, the systemic evaluation takes place only in the Western Province. The other provinces don't have the Systemic Evaluation.*

Similarly, T5 said:

> **T5:** *Eh, to my understanding, Systemic Evaluation started in 2002. They started with Grade 3 and Grade 6, that time they were looking - they were looking, eh, they wanted to set a standard of teaching in our schools at that time.*

T1 demonstrates her understanding of the Systemic Evaluations by demarcating their boundary in terms of place (the Western Cape Province) and emphatically excludes other provinces by stating that '*the other provinces don't have the Systemic Evaluations*'. This observation by T1 is consistent with the literature which indicates that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is the only South African provincial education authority

running these types of tests in addition to the national ones (Hoadley & Muller, 2016). T5, on the other hand, adds time (2002) and educational level of the first SE (Grades 3, 6, 9). The focus on Grades 3, 6 and 9 is in line with the policy on Systemic Evaluations which requires that Systemic Evaluations be conducted in these three grades of the education system (DoE 1998; 2003). T5 further ventures into the purpose of the Systemic Evaluations (*to set a standard of teaching in our schools*). Together, the teachers talk in terms of place, time and level.

However, most teachers gave a broader definition of SE.

> **T2:** *It is an assessment process conducted by the WCED on Grades 3, 6 and 9 in Mathematics and English.*

> **T3:** *... an integral part of ensuring that all learners derive maximum benefit from the education system. It includes periodic evaluation of all aspects of the school system and learning programmes and it occurs at Grades 3, 6 and 9.*

T2 demonstrates the same understanding as T5 but brings new information concerning the subjects which are assessed. T2's assertion is consistent with the literature which indicates that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation is a test of literacy and numeracy achievement (Hoadley & Muller, 2016; Schafer, 2015). Like, T5, T2 demarcates the boundaries of the SE, not only in terms of place but in terms of the authority responsible for implementing the Systemic Evaluations - the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). T3 delves deeper into the purpose of the Systemic Evaluations. Whilst T5 relates the purpose of Systemic Evaluations to teaching, T3 relates it to learning, learning programmes and the school system.

The teachers' utterances regarding the purpose of Systemic Evaluations are consistent with the literature which suggests that the Systemic Evaluations were introduced in Grades 3, 6 and 9 to monitor the effectiveness of the whole schooling system (Taylor et al., 2003:15). Regarding purpose, participants made the following remarks:

> **T4:** *I think, in my own understanding it is the evaluation done at each of the schools in the Western Cape to check how the whole school effectively teaches or educate its learners*.

**T6:** *In my understanding, systemic evaluation is, are – is the government, the Western Cape, in particular, is testing the Grade 6 learners moving into the Senior Phase. Testing if they understand and know what they are supposed to understand in the Intermediate Phase. In my understanding of Systemic Evaluation is that they are not testing if the learner can speak the language. They are testing if the learner can actually read and comprehend what they are given.*

In contrast with others, T4 does not specify the exit grades (3, 6 and 9) but consistent with the policy seems to see the evaluations as a whole school evaluation instrument. T4 understands that the SE measures both teaching and learning. T6 understands the SE to be a provincial government programme. Clearly, many teachers can demarcate the systemic boundary in terms of the province in which the SEs are written (Western Cape), the authority responsible for policy development and implementation (WCED) and the structure to which the WCED is accountable to (Western Cape Government).

T6 also mentions that the work that is being tested is not grade specific but rather phase-specific, naming the Intermediate Phase, and that the evaluations assess learner readiness for the new phase (the Senior Phase). New information emerges from T6 that the literacy SE assesses reading and comprehension, not speaking.



The Department of Education defines Systemic Evaluation as an assessment of the extent to which the education system achieves set social, economic and transformational goals (DoE 1998; 2003). The measurement of Systemic Evaluation is grounded assessment of learner performance, as well as the context in which learners experience learning and teaching. The Assessment Policy requires that Systemic Evaluations be conducted in three grades of the education system; namely, Grades 3, 6 and 9 (DoE 1998; 2003). The teachers' responses are consistent with the policy on Systemic Evaluations as far as focus grades are concerned.

In defining SE, the responses of teachers mentioned mostly time, place and purpose. They all agreed that the SE started in 2002 in the Western Cape. All also knew that SE takes place in the exit grades of the three phases of the General Education and Training Band (GET). The exit grades are Grades 3, 6 and 9 of the Foundation Phase (FP), Intermediate Phase (IP) and Senior Phase (SP) respectively.

The consensus amongst teachers is that SEs evaluate the school system at the school level and that the authority coordinating the SEs is the WCED. Teachers' responses mention aspects of the education system that may be associated with the various levels of the environment identified in Systems Theory. The Western Cape Systemic Evaluations referred to by teachers form part of the macro-level component of the system; the school is a meso-level component, the phase is a micro-level component and the individual grades and classes are nano-level components. According to Systems Theory, the school system functions at multiple levels; the classroom, school, school district, provincial and national levels. This finding is consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 which suggests that the education system functions at multiple levels, namely the classroom (micro), school (meso), school district (meso), and the provincial and national (macro) levels (Bert, Fulmer, et al., 2015). The literature suggests that a school system is thus responsive to a variety of influences, some of which emanate at the top and work downward and others that work from the bottom up.

The top-down policy approach is based on a hierarchical structure and emphasises the power of the government or government authority, usually referred to as the central actor. Lipsky (1980) argues that the top-down approach perceives implementation as the hierarchical execution of **c**entrally-defined policy objectives (Lipsky, 1980). In the top-down approach, the central actors take decisions that are binding on the end-users at the bottom of the chain (Matland, 1995). Matland (1995) contends that the major benefit of the top-down approach is its focus on the centrally located actors and their ability to issue policy objectives, control implementation and limit the degree of change in context. Sabatier (1986), on the other hand, argues that the top-down approach ignores the significance of the local actors. He advances the argument that in ignoring local actors (teachers), the approach loses sight of the fact that the local actors are directly involved with the target group and are in a much better position to propose and implement purposeful policies (Sabatier, 1986).

In contrast, the bottom-up approach involves a process of interaction and negotiations taking place over time between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom the actions depend (Barret & Fudge, 1981). The literature suggests that because of its hierarchical structure, the top-down perspective often leads to implementation failure (Viennte & Pont, 2017; OECD, 2017). The OECD (2017) posits that education policies are

implemented by individuals and organisations (in this case teachers and schools) and are thus central to the implementation. According to the OECD (2017), the top-down structure and approach does not work and education systems are abandoning it in favour of a more horizontal structure and aproach, where negotiation and co-construction are in order.

Consistent with Schäfer's assertion that the key focus of the Western Cape Education Department is improving the language and Mathematics skills of learners (Schäfer, 2015), there is consensus amongst teachers that SE instruments test only Mathematics and English.

All teachers attempted to define SE. T1 and T5 seemed to have a limited definition, but did include the critical elements of place, grades and subjects. Both T1 and T5 are experienced teachers with the latter having recently returned to the profession after being away for a year. T1 is the principal of the school and T5 had been a departmental head for more than ten years before her resignation in 2017. Her understanding could be attributed to her teaching experience. Rice (2010) claims that experience gained over time enhances the knowledge, skills and productivity of teachers. Likewise, Rice (2010) asserts that teachers with experience are more effective than teachers with no experience.

However, T2, T3, T4 and T6 gave broader definitions of Systemic Evaluations. As mentioned in Chapter 3, T2 and T3 both had over 20 years' teaching experience and both had managerial experience, with the former being a departmental head whilst the latter had acted for two years in that position. T4 and T6 are the least experienced teachers in this sample, yet gave broad and fairly comprehensive definitions of SE regardless. This could be attributed to their continuous professional training and development (CPTD) or more recent exposure to policies. All four teachers' definitions went beyond aspects such as place and time and mentioned the purpose, as evinced in the word they used such as evaluation, school system, levels in the system (e.g. government and school) and the subjects being tested.

In general, there are no significant differences between the ways that the six teachers understood SE. This may indicate that there have been no shifts in the manner in which the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations have been carried out since 2002. Evidence in the literature backs this up; there have been no new policies implemented regarding the Systemic Evaluations since 2002. The lack of new shifts and policies could be attributed to a lack of evaluation of the programme. Evaluation is a process to determine if an intended

outcome is reached, using empirical methods and evidence, or a process of judging the worth of some intervention, strategy or service (Mohajeri-Nelson & Negley, 2016). Evaluation of a programme is very important because it is a structured process that creates and blends information intended to reduce the level of uncertainty for decision-makers and stakeholders about the programme. When programmes or policies are not evaluated, the results are missed opportunities to discover unintended effects of programmes. Not evaluating an assessment programme would be contrary to the concept of feedback loops espoused in Systems Theory.

A feedback loop is the part of a system in which some portion of that system's output is used as input for future behaviour. The literature suggests that a feedback loop involves four distinct stages; (i) evidence (ii) relevance (iii) consequences and (iv) action. Systems Theory suggests that a feedback loop enables policymakers to evaluate how well policies are working and where resources might best be targeted so that appropriate decisions may be made. The literature also suggests that language assessment is a primary feedback mechanism in the language education system (Guskey, 2003; Jordaan, 2010). The feedback is supposed to help the education authority determine the effectiveness of their programmes so that they can abandon ineffective programmes and promulgate effective ones (Guskey, 2003). In the case of Systemic Evaluations, the WCED does not receive feedback from teachers and consequently could not use teacher feedback to check if their evaluations are effective or not.



All the interviewed teachers' responses may be aligned with aspects of Systems Theory, in that they were able to understand the boundaries of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations (subjects, exit grades, school phases, WCED, Western Province). In addition, their responses mentioned components of the education system that fit into the various levels of Systems Theory. It is clear that although the SEs are written at exit grades, they affect all levels of the education system from the micro level (classroom) to the macro level (government).

From the teachers' responses, it appears that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations have not been evaluated since inception. It appears that contrary to the concept of feedback loops espoused in Systems Theory, the Western Cape Systemic evaluations programme has not been receiving feedback from the teachers and the Western Cape Education Department is not in a position to evaluate the success of the evaluations themselves. Not receiving feedback from stakeholders as critical as teachers creates a weakness in the system and

departs from the proper functioning of the system, according to Systems Theory. Mohajeri-Nelson and Negley (2016) assert that the evaluation of a programme is very important in order to reduce the level of uncertainty for decision-makers and stakeholders about the programme. Given the lack of the teachers' voices, the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations run the risk of a lack of buy-in of a significant stakeholder - the teacher.

The literature further suggests that judgments about a test by stakeholders are an important tool for determining its consequential validity (Chapelle, 1999; Crocker, 2002; Haertel, 2002; Kane, 2002; Shohamy, 2000, 2001, 2006). Norris (2008) advocates the importance of teacher feedback on an assessment regime by stating that teachers have a unique vantage point from which to gauge the effects of testing on students. It seems that through the lack of the teachers' perspectives, the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations may be missing valuable pieces of information concerning whether tests affect the curriculum as intended (Winke, 2011). Opening up to teacher perspectives may shed light on the validity of the tests; that is, whether the tests measure what they are supposed to measure and are justified in terms of their outcomes, uses and consequences (Bachman, 1990; Hughes, 2003; Messick, 1989)

### 4.2.2 Orientation to SE and the scope of SE

This subsection deals with how SE was introduced to the schools and consequently to the teachers. It also deals with the teachers' understanding of the scope of SE. The scope in this subsection refers to the physical, phase, grade and subject boundaries of the SE.

Concerning orientation to SE, all the teachers expressed that they were never orientated but rather that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations were imposed on them. For instance, regarding when the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations were first implemented, T5 responded as follows:

> **T5:** *Moreover, systemic was not something that was discussed with the school. We just saw people coming and telling us that they were there to test Grade 3. Up until now, we don't know, we still don't know what the systemic is testing as teachers.*

T5's response shows that the schools were not engaged in the planning or design of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations. According to T5's comment, SEs are a policy decided on the macro level of the education system. Neither the meso level (the school) nor the micro level (the teachers) are engaged in the process of planning and designing the evaluations; instead, both components are compelled to embrace a testing regime they do not know or understand. T5's response is consistent with Adam and Nel's (2014) observation that the government tends to determine policies on assessment and that government's influence in this area is entirely top-down. Her statement is also consistent with the literature which suggests that teachers are struggling to negotiate macro policies that were designed outside their context without their input (Menken & Garcia, 2016; Wright & Ricento, 2016).

In support of this view, T1 argued thus:

> **T1**: *The Western Province decided to have their own Systemic Evaluations which are only based on the exit grades. Teachers were never consulted nor informed why and how long the testing regime will take place. Till now the tests are done and teachers can only speculate. Teachers also need to be re-orientated to what Systemic Evaluation is about. By doing the orientation you put the teachers at ease and systemic is not a bomb waiting to explode.*



The two teachers agree that teachers were not consulted on the planning, design or timing of the implementation of the Systemic Evaluations. Teachers are in the dark regarding why the department decided to embark on this systemic testing regime and the time frame for it. It seems that the lack of consultation results in teachers speculating what the SEs are about. Non-consultation of teachers is consistent with the literature which indicates that teachers are often not consulted in the development of the very policies that they are expected to implement (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016**)**. Sahlberg (2007) argues that one of the elements of driving successful policy change is for the implementers to be able to make sense of why the new policy is necessary. However, according to Hinnant-Crawford (2016), teachers are not afforded the opportunity to engage with the policy but are forced to make sense of the policies handed down to them.

The literature further suggests that teachers and school administrators are certainly stakeholders, especially when assessment programmes are designed primarily to improve the

educational system (Lane & Stone, 2002), as is the case with the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations. Having no input in the development of an assessment regime has adverse effects on the teachers' decision-making process when it comes to the curriculum. The effects become more acute when teachers are forced to participate in high-stakes testing.

Although teachers are mostly viewed as recipients of educational changes, researchers contend that teachers play an integral part in the implementation (Nunahall, 2012). Mohamed (2005) states that there is a need for teachers to be involved in planning policy interventions, as the lack of teacher participation can lead to feelings of a lack of ownership. Taole (2013) also notes that the implementation of policy cannot be achieved without the significant integration of teachers in the process. Sahlberg (2007) argues that one of the habits of driving successful policy change is to make sense of why the new policy is necessary.

Furthermore, T1 and T5 both emphatically lament that teachers do not know what the SEs are testing. Their comments suggest that SEs are somewhat veiled. The literature reveals that a lack of recognising and engaging stakeholders at the core impedes policy implementation. (OECD, 2017). In support of this view, Fullan (2015) states that unless teachers, school leaders and other actors in education understand and share the policy's meaning, the policy is unlikely to get implemented as intended. It is for this reason that Viennte and Pont (2017) advocate for interaction between actors and the various levels of education systems; macro (national/provincial education departments), meso (school) and micro (teachers at classroom level).



T1, however, mentioned that the SEs were not the only Systemic Evaluations taking place in schools. Consistent with T1's argument, the literature reveals that besides the Western Cape Systemic Assessments, the South African Department of Basic Education runs its systemic assessments. The DBE systemic assessments are sample-based whilst the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations are census-based.

T1 further reveals that teachers are unsettled by the SEs and likens their position as that of one waiting for a bomb to explode.

T6 concurred that orientation to SE does not take place at the micro level. She said:

**T6:** *I was informed by the school when I started teaching Grade 6 that learners in October will write the systemic tests and had to prepare them. Beyond that, I was told nothing.*

T6's utterance shows that the lack of orientation impacts on how and what teachers teach; she indicates that she 'prepares' for the evaluations, implying that aspects of the curricum that are generally taught late in the year may have to be put aside in order to practise for the SEs. She mentions that orientation should be done at the meso level (school), particularly for novice teachers. Teachers find themselves in a position where they are tasked with preparing learners for an assessment regime they also do not know, a proverbial case of the blind leading the blind.

Consistent with the literature, which indicates that teachers are negotiating macro policies that were developed without their input (Menken &Garcia, 2016; Wright & Ricento, 2016), evidence suggests that teachers were not consulted regarding the planning of SEs. This is consistent with the systems principles which revealed that Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) generally exert considerable influence over literacy curricula and that provinces tend to determine policies on assessment for programme evaluation and accountability (Clarke 2011). In analysing the Programme for International Student Assessment (2015), the OECD established that students obtained lower scores when the main responsibility for assessment was situated at the macro level.



However, Boeren (2019) suggests that the micro, meso and macro levels should interact to make education more effective and efficient for all. In support, he suggests that teachers should be involved at every stage and every level of curriculum development and assessment (Boeren, 2019).

Concerning the scope of Literacy SEs, five participants revealed that they understood SEs to be taking place only in the Western Cape. One had this to say:

***T1:*** *Ok, the Systemic Evaluation takes place only in the Western Province. The other provinces don't have the Systemic Evaluation.*

T6 commented concurred:

**T6***: It is only in the Western Cape that learners are writing systemic tests.*

The two teachers' statements are consistent with the literature which indicates that the Western Cape is the only province that runs this magnitude of tests in addition to national ones (Hoadley & Muller, 2016).

However, one teacher (T3) demonstrated an understanding that SEs take place or are supposed to take place nationally on a representative sample.

**T3***: The Systemic Evaluation shall be conducted on a nationally representative sample of learners and learning sites.*

T3 shows that she understands that the Western Cape SE is parallel to the nationally sanctioned Systemic Evaluation regime. The literature indicates that the point of synergy between the two testing regimes is that both test numeracy and literacy. T3 also demonstrates knowledge that, unlike the Western Cape Eystemic Evaluations, the nationally sanctioned Systemic Evaluations are sample-based.

Moreover, there was consensus amongst respondents that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations were census-based (applied to all learners) in the exit grades of the three phases of the General Education and Training (GET) band. The three phases were identified by all teachers as the Foundation Phase (FP), the Intermediate Phase (IP) and the Senior Phase (SP). The exit grades were identified as Grades 3, 6 and 9. One of the teachers had this to say:

**T1:** … *the Western Province decided to have their own Systemic Evaluations which are only based on only three grades, that is Grades 3, 6 and 9 and are the exit grades of the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and the Senior Phase.*

In support of this view, T4 commented thus:

**T4:** *It is an assessment process conducted by the WCED on Grades 3, 6 and 9 in Mathematics and English.*

Both teachers agreed on the grades in which SEs are implemented. T1 further explains the position of these grades '*exit grades of the education system*' within the school system. T1 mentions the provincial government responsible for the SE whilst T4 identifies the accounting authority (WCED) and T4 further explains that only English and Mathematics are tested in the SE.

Similarly, all the interviewees agreed that the scope of work tested in the literacy Systemic Evaluations runs across the phase and is therefore not grade specific. Regarding the scope of work assessed in Grade 6 literacy SEs, T1 had this to say:

> **T1:** *So the question papers are based on all the grades like the Grade 6, as they are writing they write Grade 4, 5, 6 and a little of Grade 7.*

In support of this view T6 commented thus:

> **T6:** *In my understanding Systemic Evaluation is, are – is the government, the Western Cape, in particular, is testing the Grade 6 learners moving into the Senior Phase … testing if they understand and know what they are supposed to understand in the Intermediate Phase.*



Both teachers agree that although the grade being tested is Grade 6, the assessment instruments test the whole phase. According to these teachers, the SE diagnoses learner readiness for the next phase.

When reviewing the participants' understanding of the scope of SE, it becomes clear that all the teachers except T3 understood SE to be geographically limited to the Western Cape. T3 did not dispute this geographical boundary but explained that according to policy, SE is supposed to be a national rather than a provincial venture.

T6 was the least experienced teacher, having two years' experience, whilst T1 was the most experienced, having 33 years' experience, yet their understanding was almost the same. This could suggest that there have been no changes in understanding over the years. Secondly, it could mean that T1 has been exposed to the phenomenon through teacher training or

continuous professional development (CPTD). CPTD is a process aimed at the development of teachers with new knowledge, skills, abilities and teaching strategies (Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010). The education landscape is prone to undergo major changes and navigating such an ever-changing landscape often leads to stress when teachers are not equipped to deal with such changes (Lessing & De Witt, 2007). When teachers engage in CPTD, they realise the importance of improving their practice and that often translates to adequate teacher preparation and successful implementation of policies (Lessing & De Witt, 2017). CPTD has a significant influence on teachers' beliefs and practices (Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010). There is a significant correlation between teacher quality and learner achievement (Caena, 2011), hence CPTD is important for teachers.

In contrast to Boeren's (2019) suggestion that teachers should be involved in every stage and every level of curriculum development and assessment, the data reveals that teachers were not consulted on the development and implementation of the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations. This is consistent with the assertion that teachers are negotiating macro policies that were developed outside of their context without their input (Menken & Garcia, 2016; Wright & Ricento, 2016).

The major issue that emerged from this subsection is that teachers were not consulted with regard to the planning, design and implementation of the Systemic Evaluations. Secondly, the WCSE unsettles teachers to the extent that their position is that of 'one waiting for a bomb to explode, ' as one teacher put it.



### 4.2.3 The role and purpose of SEs

This sub-section deals with the reasons why the Western Cape Education Department embarked on Literacy Systemic Evaluations. The literature suggests that the primary purpose for conducting systemic tests in the Western Cape is to obtain information for effecting appropriate intervention strategies to address the poor performance levels of learners (WCED, 2003, 2004, 2005; Kanjee, 2007).

Regarding the role of SEs, the respondents gave a variety of views. According to the respondents, SEs play a crucial role in the Western Cape Education Department. Most indicated that they are used as a curriculum monitoring tool, as shown below:

**T1***: So, therefore Systemic Evaluation is just the evaluation the department just uses to check at the progress of the school and to see if the curriculum has been implemented* as well.

In support of this view, T4 commented thus:

**T4:** *The Western Cape Education Department is trying to gauge the level of all the schools in the province regarding the deliveries of the curriculum.*

Both T1 and T4 understand the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations to be a tool used by the WCED to gauge how well the curriculum is implemented in schools.

Four teachers (T1, T2, T4, T6) were also of the opinion that the literacy SEs are used by the WCED as a diagnostic tool to see if the learners are ready for the next phase. T1 responded thus:

**T1:** *So the question papers are based on all the grades, like the Grade 6 as they are writing … they write Grade 4, 5, 6 and a little of Grade 7. I think in assessing them in the grades that they have not yet started is to see if they are capable and knowledgeable enough to move to the next phase.*



In support of this view, T6 commented thus:

**T6:** *The language is repetitive which means that the next grade builds on what was done on the previous grades.*

T1 mentions that the learners are assessed on the work covered across the phase to determine their readiness for the next phase. T6 agrees and explains progression within the grades.

Another role of the literacy SEs, raised by five teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5), was that the Western Cape Education Department uses the SEs to plan future interventions. One teacher commented thus:

**T2:** *I think the Provincial Education Department wants to gauge learners' performance in Mathematics and English so that it can intervene for future change.*

The teachers' observation is consistent with the literature which suggests that the primary purpose for conducting systemic tests in the Western Cape is to obtain information for effecting appropriate intervention strategies to address the poor performance levels of learners (WCED, 2003, 2004, 2005; Kanjee, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, the evidence shows that teachers held a range of opinions regarding the purpose of SEs. Some view SEs as a tool used by the department to monitor curriculum implementation. T1 and T4 see SEs as a departmental diagnostic tool to check if the school system is effectively preparing learners for the next grade. In agreement, T2 took the idea further by stating that the recorded performance of learners is used to determine future interventions.

The view that SEs are used to determine future interventions is consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2, which indicates that the WCED uses the data received from the SEs to plan remedial interventions (Atwell, 2016). Atwell also argues that the interventions are for all levels of the education system, including teacher training and support, school leadership and management support and for improvement plans for schools, districts and the department (Atwell, 2016). This view is supported by Schafer (2014) who posits that SEs allow the WCED to identify schools where language and Mathematics performance requires intervention, and the WCED determines what kind of remedial action is required. The reviewed literature also states that the primary purpose for conducting Systemic Evaluations in the Western Cape is to obtain information for effecting appropriate intervention strategies to address the poor performance levels of learners (WCED, 2003a, 2004, 2005b; Kanjee 2007).

However, T6 dissented on the futuristic view and responded thus:

**T6:** ...'*cause they are supposed to come to school, especially the schools where they see, OK, the learners at this school are suffering with this matter, that and the other. They are supposed to come to the school, support the teacher if they feel the teacher is lacking or not qualified to do this, support the learners as well. I do not see any of*

*that happening, I just hear like, OK, we have analysed the results. These are the results but I have never heard what they do after they analysed the results*.

T6 espouses the view that, contrary to the literature that implies that the WCED uses Systemic Evaluation results to support schools (Schafer 2016), there is a lack of visible support by the WCED for schools that are not doing well in Systemic Evaluations. According to T6, there is no strategy to remedy the issues that have been picked up during the analysis of the results. It seems, according to T6's argument, that the teachers are left to their own devices with no one offering the needed support.

Kanjee and Moloi (2014) argue that another inhibiting factor is the timing of the dissemination of data, with data arriving at the time when it is no longer needed or relevant. This is consistent with the literature ( Muskin,2015;OECD,2013) that states that teachers are also of the opinion that these tests do not help the learners, as the results are only released in the following year and are not individualised to enable the school to follow up on those learners who require remedial action.

However, Atwell (2016) argues that over the years the WCED has implemented a wide range of interventions based on the SE results. He argues that the WCED has a targeted training and support programme for primary schools. He further cites support offered to teachers by subject advisors and training in Mathematics and language offered by the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI).



Based on their responses to questions regarding the purpose of SE, the teachers were asked whether the Literacy Systemic Evaluations fulfilled their intended purpose.

All six respondents felt that systemic literacy assessments do not fulfill their intended purpose.

**T1:** *I think it was going to be better for us if we were just told or informed on how the question papers look like so that we can be able to prepare our learners. Therefore, in my opinion, these assessments are not fulfilling their intended purpose. So, I think the intended purpose is not met up until we as teachers who are busy in the classrooms,*

*... we can be given the platform where we can share with the examiners, people who are setting papers, to let us know what to expect.*

T1 feels that the secrecy around Systemic Evaluations places limitations on how she can prepare her learners. She suggests that to meet the purpose there ought to be synergy between teachers and examiners. She also makes a veiled suggestion that the examiners are clueless about what is happening in the classrooms. However, I find this teacher's expectations and comments to be unreasonable. Firsly, even though the invigilators are external people they have background knowledge of what is happenning in the classroom as the WCED and its coporate or Institutional partners always make sure they appoint and train former teachers to invigilate the Western Cape Systemic Literacy exams.

T5 raised the unintended consequence of the Systemic Evaluations on curriculum delivery in the classroom.

**T5:** *No, they do not fulfill it; to me, the systemic is just a load to the teachers and a threat because now the teachers are teaching for the systemic. They do not teach for the lifelong learning of the child.*



According to T5, Systemic Evaluations have consequences for the teachers, the curriculum and the learners. Firstly, she mentions that they are burdensome to teachers. Secondly, they are a threat to teachers. She mentions deviations from teaching the curriculum to teach to the test. Her observations are consistent with other studies which found that in many poorer schools, which typically serve a large population of students, testing and test preparation becomes the curriculum, which lowers the quality of the students' education (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Hatch, 2002; McNeil, 2000).

Thirdly, the focus is on learners passing the test instead of on the lifelong learning of the child. As mentioned previously, this utterance could be attributed to T5's experience as a departmental head. In support of this view, T2 and T3 commented thus:

**T2:** *I am not convinced because there are rumours that the question papers leak to schools and schools drill their learners.*

> **T3:** *Because, I remember this year some schools were saying it is not working well because there are schools that - that get the layout of the paper before they write, and that they are able to have that short period of drilling and training and engaging the learners in terms of mastering, which means the learners are only - are only trained to master that for that short period of time … whereas we don't want that because we want the learners to go to the next level using that knowledge.*

Both teachers think that the SEs do not fulfill their intended purpose because of examination irregularities that are perceived to take place in the period of the SE. According to T3, this harms learning, as learners progress to the next grade without the prerequisite knowledge to do so. According to T3, teachers are aware of the ramifications of the practice of drilling learners for the test. T3 also indicates that teachers are aware that in the long run, this practice robs learners of key knowledge needed to succeed in the next phase.

The literature also refers to the impact of examinations on teaching and learning as 'washback' which is defined as 'the extent to which the introduction and the use of a test influences language and teachers to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning' (Messick, 1996: 4). Similarly, Alderson and Wall (1993: 1) argue that washback compels 'teachers and learners to do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test'. Pearson (1988, p. 7) argues that 'public examinations influence the attitudes, behaviours and motivation of teachers, learners and parents and because examinations often come at the end of a course, this influence is seen as working in a backward direction, hence the term, washback'.

Thirdly, teachers flagged the lack of visible interventions from the WCED. For instance, T6 commented:

> **T6:** *I think they don't, because I think the reason why they are doing these tests is to actually test if the learners are where they are supposed to be. But now they do these tests, get the results, do the analysis but then what do they do after that?*

Teachers also alluded to assessment irregularities that take place, with desperation leading to some teachers getting hold of leaked papers. The implication is that one ends up with learners

who were drilled to master the test but do not have the requisite knowledge needed for the next phase. Assessment is supposed to support learning. However, it appears that this is not the case in schools. Teachers are teaching to the test at the expense of lifelong learning, according to T5.

This is consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this study which indicates that pressure is counterproductive to learning, resulting in teachers teaching to the test (Hoadley & Muller, 2016). The drilling of learners by teachers suggests that external assessments promote examination-oriented pedagogies as the results of the external assessments, which are seen to define the quality and standards of the schools (Islam, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2014). Available scholarship further suggests that those institutions where examinations are conducted by external bodies and whose performance and reputation are associated with the results usually promote examination-oriented teaching practices (Adegoke, 2010; Aftab, Qureshi & William, 2014; Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2014; Rehmani, 2003).

In a study conducted in Arizona, Smith and Benavot (2019) found that as testing approached in Arizona, teachers had to give up valuable teaching activities to increase time for test preparation. The literature also suggests that rote instruction practised as test preparation does not promote a full understanding or motivation to learn the content material (Brady, 2008). According to Nichols and Berliner (2005), teaching to the test does not only compromise learning but compromises the assessment, as it becomes quite difficult to interpret any assessment so compromised. The literature also indicates that teachers are aware of the negative effects of drilling learners but continue with the practice as the test scores are used to judge the school's effectiveness (Nichols & Berliner, 2005).

The demands of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations and the lack of teachers' voice has resulted in teachers feeling overburdened and threatened. In agreement with this view, a study conducted by Meyer and Abel (2016) found that Systemic Evaluations were putting pressure on teachers, since schools were implementing stricter monitoring of teachers' work because of the pressure associated with the evaluations. Ali, Akhter, Ramzan and Tabassun (2016) noted that the pressure of stricter monitoring is demoralising to teachers. They argue that the resulting psychological effects of stricter monitoring may affect teachers' efficiency and creativity. Likewise, Beach (1989) asserts that teacher monitoring activities only help authorities to force teachers to go to class; they are, however, unable to

compel teachers to teach. However, Ali, et al. (2016) argue that monitoring of teachers is necessary in order to increase teacher efficiency and improve education.

Teachers have strong feelings towards SE and used strong words to describe how they felt, e.g., *threat (T5), bomb about to explode (T1), Gqoloma (big snake)* (see page 125), and the learners are treated as *prisoners*. T5 responded thus: '*To me, the systemic is just a load to the teachers and a threat ...'* while T1 associated it with a bomb about to explode. It is noteworthy that although T5 was a teacher returning to the system, she found the things to be quite the same. She was the teacher who said said, '*Gqoloma* (big snake or dragon) and threats are still there.'

According to Stomff (2013), the perceived threatening atmosphere generates frustration and high anxiety. The anxiety has a significant effect on teaching and learning. According to Brady (2008), assessment pressure hurts teachers' relationships with their students and thus makes them less open with their students, more vulnerable and more inclined to be short with them. The literature also indicates that pressure results in teachers' time and energy being consumed by anxiety and anger, and causes them to alienate themselves from their students (Berliner & Biddle, 1991; Borko, Davinroy, Bliem & Cumbo, 2000). Brady (2008) contends that such a level of anxiety in some teachers impedes the development of rich relationships between teachers and students. According to Brady (2008), good teacher-student relationships are essential for teachers' personal and professional satisfaction. Research shows that student motivation is sustained and enhanced by teachers and their interactions with their students (Atkinson, 2000; Frederickson, 2001; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon & Barch, 2004; Wentzel, 1997).

This section has revealed that teachers perceive the Systemic Evaluations as a diagnostic tool to determine learners' readiness for the next phase, a curriculum implementation monitoring tool, and a tool whose data is used to plan future interventions.

However, T6 dissented on the intervention view, saying that she had observed that there was no visible intervention by the WCED and there seemed to be no strategy to remedy systemic issues picked up during data analysis.

Teachers listed the shortcomings of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations as (i) limitations on teachers' planning (ii) teaching to the test (iii) compromised learners and (iv) teacher anxiety.

### 4.2.4 SE in relation to the Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the school based assessments (SBA)

This part of the discussion continues to examine teachers' understanding of Systemic Evaluations. However, the focus is on how the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations compare to other assessments taking place in schools. Teachers responded by comparing SEs to the now-defunct Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the school based assessments (SBA).

It should be noted that T4 and T6 had no experience of the ANAs and consequently could only relate their comments to the SBA. The teachers' responses regarding this are presented in two groups: (i) responses regarding the SE versus ANA and (ii) responses regarding SE versus SBA.



In the past, there were two sets of ANA, namely the universal ANA and the verification ANA. Universal ANA refers to the annual national assessment administered across schools in grades designated by the Minister of Basic Education (DBE, 2015). Verification ANA refers to the annual national assessment administered across a selected sample of schools by an independent agent to validate the scores of the ANA. For this study, ANA refers to the universal ANA. I have chosen universal ANA because it was mandatory and also census-based, so teachers would have lived experiences of it, whereas they may not have had such experience of the sample-based verification ANA.

Relating to the Annual National Assessments (ANA), four teachers, namely T1, T2, T3 and T5, agreed that the ANAs were an externally designed assessment instrument like the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Assessments. However, unlike the SE, the ANAs were conducted nationally across the provinces. One teacher commented:

***T1:*** *It was ANA which was done nationally for all the provinces and that is whereby they were checking how the schools were doing in terms of the performance of the schools.*

T1 observes that although it was a national assessment regime, unlike the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations, the ANAs were similar to the SEs in that they also measured the effectiveness of schools. Like the SEs, the ANAs were census-based (applied to all the learners). They highlighted, however, that unlike the SEs, the ANA instruments were applied to all the grades and not just the exit grades in the GET band.

Regarding the user-friendliness of the assessment instruments, all four teachers agreed that ANA was implemented in a better way than the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations. One had this to say:

**T5:** *The Annual National Assessments were more transparent than Systemic Evaluations ... The Annual Assessments are easier and clearer than the systemic, assessments because we were reading to our learners in ANA ... we were hands-on. But on the provincial one, we don't know what is happening.*

Transparency was identified by the teachers as a major difference between the ANAs and the SEs. T5 also mentioned that the ANAs were easier and clearer than SEs as teachers would read the material to their learners. In addition to transparency, teachers also mentioned that in ANA they were hands-on.

The consensus amongst teachers was that both the ANAs and the SEs were externally designed. However, unlike the SEs which were designed by an external service provider, the ANA instrument was designed by the Department of Basic Education. Similarly, both instruments were used to measure school performance. Both the ANA and the SE were census-based although they were applied nationally and provincially, respectively. However, verification ANA was sample-based. The main difference mentioned by teachers was that the ANA instruments were applied to all grades rather than to the exit grades, as is the case with the SEs. Teachers were hands-on in ANA and felt that ANA was clearer and more transparent than the SEs. T5 expressed that during ANA they could read the test aloud to their learners.

Regarding the Literacy Systemic Evaluations and school based assessments (SBA) the teachers' understanding and appreciation of differences and similarities between the two was evaluated. The teachers were in agreement that there were fundamental differences between the Literacy Systemic Evaluations and school based assessments. These differences included the purpose of the assessments, the scope of the assessments and the application of assessment instruments.

Concerning the purpose of the two assessments, the teachers agreed that these assessments serve two distinct purposes. The SE results are targeted at all role players and are intended to influence changes in the education system. For instance, T3 commented:

> **T3:** *Systemic Evaluation is an instrument to monitor standards and effectiveness of the learning system and provide feedback to all the role players so that appropriate action may be taken to improve the performance of both the learning sites and the learning system.*

According to T3, Systemic Evaluation is a measuring and monitoring tool for standards in schools and the effectiveness of the school system. SE also functions as a feedback mechanism resulting in interventions both in the learning sites and the educational system. On the other hand, school based assessments are used to understand the learners' development and to improve the process of learning and teaching at a learning site.



All the teachers agreed that the focus of the SEs is the phase (all grades in the phase) while school based assessments are grade-specific. According to the teachers, the SE tests the work covered in the entire phase to see if the learners have gained the requisite knowledge and skills to prepare them for the next phase.

> **T1:** *So the question papers are based on all the Grades like in Grade 6, they (learners) are writing Grades 4, 5 and 6 in Systemic Evaluations.*

In support of this view, T3 commented:

**T3:** *Systemic tests cover the texts across the grades … Grades 4 to 6, whilst in the school based assessment the formal assessment tasks cover the things you have taught within the grade.*

Another point of difference concerns the logistical arrangements of the tests. The instruments of the SEs are designed by an external service provider to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). The assessment instruments are administered by another external service provider to all the learners in public schools and some independent schools in the Western Cape. For example, T1 said:

***T1:*** *It is different because it is an external assessment and conducted by a service provider. Invigilators are not known to the learners.*

The OECD indicates that the major advantage of external standardised assessment is its high reliability. An external assessment ensures that all learners are assessed on the same tasks and that their results are measured by the same standards (OECD, 2013). Crooks (2004) asserts that standardised external assessment is usually conducted in supervised conditions which ensure that what is assessed is the students' work. The assessments are marked by external assessors and the marking criteria are standardised so that a high degree of reliability is given. Under these circumstances, the marking is expected to be free of bias or discrimination, as the markers do not know the students whose work they are marking (OECD, 2013).



However, the downside of external assessments is that they tend to have lower validity than teacher-based assessments (OECD, 2013). The major contributor to their low validity is their tendency to be in the form of a test written under supervised conditions, so that only a limited range of curriculum goals can be covered. Moreover, external assessments typically take place on very few occasions (the exit grade of the phase in the case of SEs) and thus gives limited information about students' competencies due to the normal daily variations in performance. It can also have detrimental effects on teaching and learning, as teachers may end up focussing on test-taking skills, especially when high stakes are attached to the test results. Crooks (2004) argues that tests that are attached to a single external examination can cause stress or test-anxiety among students, resulting in their achievements being reduced on the examination day.

On the other hand, school based assessments (SBAs) are designed by teachers using exemplars provided by the WCED. The instruments of an SBA are administered by teachers to learners in a specific grade in a specific school. One teacher responded by saying:

> **T1:** *You are able to get a direction in terms of drafting your assessment following the exemplars that you get.*

Supporting this view, T6 commented:

> **T6:** *SBAS differ from classroom to classroom.*

The literature suggests that school based assessments have a higher likelihood of covering the full range of curriculum goals (Crooks, 2004; Harlen, 2007). However, Harlen (2007) argues that the validity of teacher based assessment depends to a large extent on the assessment opportunities provided by individual teachers. It is difficult to ensure that all teachers indeed use the potential of internal assessment to cover the full range of goals specified in the curriculum (Harlen, 2007). Another criticism of school based assessments is that teacher-made assessments often encourage rote learning and recall of fragmented knowledge rather than critical thinking and deeper learning (Crooks, 1988; Black, 1993; Black & William, 1998; Harlen, 2007). The OECD (2013) suggests that for school based assessments to work well, it is critical to ensure that teachers receive adequate training to develop their assessment skills. The literature also reports that there is a risk of conscious or unconscious bias in teacher based assessments, where teachers may give more help to some students than others, or in their marking may give inappropriate weight to prior knowledge and expectations of particular students (Crooks, 2004; Harlen, 2007).

The common narrative amongst teachers is that these assessments serve two distinct purposes. The SE results are targeted at all role players and are intended to influence changes in both the learning site and the education system. This ought to be accomplished by the Western Cape Department of Education providing feedback to all role players to effect appropriate action. The Western Cape ED is *supposed* to provide this feedback to effect appropriate action (but does not). SBAs are aimed at improving learning by providing feedback to both teacher and learner to improve teaching and learning. With SBAs there is a far higher chance of the results being used to make changes by the individual teacher, since

the results are immediately available to the teacher, who can see not just a list of results but the corrected worksheets or tests. The issue of feedback is consistent with the demands of the National Protocol for Assessment which advocates that feedback must take place after each assessment episode (DBE, 2011b).

The literature, too, suggests that a further goal of assessment is the improvement of teaching, the curriculum and the circumstances in which learners study (Jordaan, 2010). Literacy assessment is a primary feedback mechanism that provides information to support decisions and highlight needed adjustments (Guskey, 2003). Guskey suggests that the feedback helps students to adjust their learning strategies and teachers to appropriately target their instruction (Guskey, 2003). The literature also suggests that even at the macro level, assessment feedback plays a crucial role as it helps districts to gauge the effectiveness of their programmes and also helps guide the distribution of resources by policymakers (Guskey, 2003; Marion, 2018; Sanchez & Patel, 2017).

The concept of feedback loops as espoused in Systems Theory suggests that there ought to be feedback loops in the education system. Systems Theory suggests that this feedback loop ought to apply across the entire system. So assessment based information, for example, should provide students with feedback on how well they are meeting expectations, so that they may adjust their learning strategies and target them more appropriately if necessary. A feedback loop has worked effectively when, or example, teachers identify difficulties students are having with a concept and adjust their instructional strategies in response, which in turn causes students to approach the concept differently.

As mentioned, the SE tests knowledge acquired over the phase whilst SBAs cover only the work done in the grade. The SEs are externally designed instruments applied all over the province. The SBA is internally designed and is only applicable to a particular classroom. T6 noted that *'they differ from classroom to classroom'*. However, it is noteworthy that SBAs are externally influenced by the exemplars provided by the WCED. OECD (2013) posits that while schools tend to have considerable freedom in establishing their assessment policies, certain basic requirements are generally set in central policy frameworks. Different levels of education are involved in ensuring compliance with these frameworks (OECD, 2013).

From the comments of the teachers, it became clear that the designers of the literacy systemic tests make use of Bloom's taxonomy when designing the assessment instruments. Bloom defined low- and high-order learning in his learning taxonomy (Bloom, Krathwohl & Masia, 1984). Bloom categorised learning in a hierarchal manner, placing learning skills on six levels according to their cognitive complexity.

He named the first level of Knowledge, where students memorise facts and figures. The second level is Comprehension, where students understand and interpret facts in their way. The next level is Application, where students apply their knowledge. These first three levels fall in the low lower-order learning category. The fourth level is Analysis; here students analyse different situations to draw their conclusions. The fifth level is Evaluation, where students make judgments after a comprehensive learning process. The sixth and final level is Creation, where students are expected to produce new knowledge. These learning levels are also commonly used by course designers to set benchmarks and students' learning objectives for specific courses. Usually, there is an alignment between students' learning objectives, their course material, their teachers' strategies and assessment strategies.

Teachers contended that the designers are well trained in using the taxonomy to set assessment instruments. However, the teachers do not use the taxonomy, as they are not trained in using it. For instance, T2 had this to say:



> **T2:** *They are different because the designers of the systemic tests make use of Bloom's taxonomy and they are well trained on that. They set a standard question paper for all the learners in the province, whereas in schools we need to be trained more on Bloom's taxonomy. As a result, we do not cater for all the levels of the learners from lower-order to higher-order questions. I notice that most of my questions cater for lower-order although we want our learners to do well on an assessment activity.*

T2 points our that there is a capacity discrepancy between teachers' abilities and those of the designers of systemic tests. She feels that the teachers design substandard assessment instruments due to a lack of training. The assessment instruments designed by teachers may well be missing certain levels of thinking according to Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, Krathwohl & Masia, 1984), and cater mostly to lower-order questions. The argument put

forward by T2 is consistent with the results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), conducted by the OECD in 2008 in 23 participating countries, where 15.7% of teachers indicated having 'high professional development needs' in the area of student assessment practices in 2008.

Even though teachers expressed that they struggled with and needed training on Bloom's taxonomy, they were aware of the existence of different ability groups within their classrooms. They were also aware that when assessing they needed to cater to all the groups. Concerning the need to cater for learning difficulties, one teacher said:

> **T1:** *You must know your learners' problems and learning difficulties.*

In support of this view three other teachers commented:

> **T2:** *You choose the text and ask questions according to their ability groups*.
> **T3***: The lower questioning, the mediocre and for those who are the gifted ones.*
> **T5:** *So that you accommodate all the learners, you don't do a special paper for those who can't read and write you must accommodate them and that is inclusive education. Include them.*



Teachers showed an understanding that learners are different and their assessment instruments should meet the needs of the different groups. They also show an understanding of inclusive education. Lastly, the teachers asserted that the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations instruments were applied to all provincial schools whilst school based assessments differ from classroom to classroom. T6 expressed this difference by saying:

> ***T6:*** *... whereas when you are setting your test you know that your learners are First Additional Language learners, so it is going to be at a different level than what the systemic is testing.*

In support of this view T4 commented:

> ***T4:*** *They are different because one, they are done once a year, they are not continuous ...ehhh ... they are not continuously done every grade. They are common*

*all over the province which is unfair because the schools are not operating in the same way e.g. There are functional schools and dysfunctional schools … ja.*

T5 espoused the point that there are socio-economic differences between schools and such differences are not catered for by the Systemic Evaluations.

Teachers mentioned the desire for training in the use of Bloom's taxonomy as one of their developmental needs. Teachers felt that lack of ability to apply the taxonomy compromises the standard of their school based assessments. This is consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this study which indicates that educators have a minimal level of skills to construct high-quality assessments (Neluheni, 2011; NEEDU, 2014, 2016). The literature also shows that the quality of assessment tasks is below the expected standard (Neluheni, 2011; NEEDU, 2014, 2016). This may explain why the learners on SBAs get better results than on standardised papers. Brookhart (2004) suggests that to draw valid conclusions about what one's students have learned one must develop items that represent the content and the modes of instruction in the classroom. However, in this study educators admitted that they were still struggling to develop tasks that are of a high quality and standard, as most of the assessment tasks focused on lower-order questioning.



Teachers, however, demonstrated knowledge of the existence of different groups within their classrooms. They showed that these groups necessitated that the assessment instruments be pitched at different levels. According to teachers, inclusion demands that they accommodate all learners regardless of their abilities and learning problems. T5 put it aptly when she said:

**T5:** … *you don't do a special paper for those who can't read and write. You must accommodate them …*

This is consistent with the curriculum (CAPS) policy which states that the teaching and assessment of languages should make provision for all learners (DBE, 2011:5). Inclusivity should become a central part of the organisation, planning and teaching at each school. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning and how to plan for diversity (DBE, 2011:5). This necessitates in-service training and refresher courses where teachers are taught how to identify learning barriers.

What emerged from this section was that teachers had an understanding, albeit not an identical one, about what the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation is.

In terms of initial teacher orientation, the evidence revealed that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations were from the onset imposed on teachers. Teachers revealed that the knowledge they have on the phenomenon is purely speculative and not based on the solid footing of policy awareness. The resultant behaviour was that teachers were not at ease with the SEs and saw them as a threat. One of the teachers even compared their uneasiness to waiting for a bomb to explode.

Regarding the purpose and role of the SEs, the teachers felt that SEs are meant to serve varying purposes. These purposes included (i) curriculum monitoring, (ii) a diagnostic tool regarding learner readiness for the next phase (iii) a school effectiveness monitoring tool and (iv) a future intervention planning tool. However, the interviews revealed that the teachers did not feel that these purposes were being fulfilled. An array of reasons was given for this shortcoming, including, amongst others, the teachers' lack of voice on the phenomenon and their uncertainty regarding what the assessments entail. Gozali, Trush, Sonia-Pena, Whang and Luschei (2017) indicate that teachers possess unique knowledge that is key for successful policy formation and implementation. Teachers are said to have the most direct stake in the policies developed in the education sphere (Lefstein & Perach, 2014). Teacher involvement in policy design processes results in teachers having a better sense of ownership and responsibility, and makes them more likely to implement the assessments correctly (Bangs & Frost, 2012; Gozali, et al. 2017; Heneveld, 2007).

Carl (2005) suggests that teachers' being denied input is detrimental to the process of taking ownership. He further suggests that teachers should be provided with opportunities to make an input in the initial stages. Gozali, et al. (2017) recognise teachers as 'the most important school input, influencing student outcomes'. When it comes to teachers' voices influencing policy, the literature is fairly scant, and their voices remain entirely absent from the policymaking process. Carl (2005) observed that the lack of teachers' voices generates the impression that teachers operate only within the context of the classroom and limit their

contribution to that domain. Hargreaves and Shirley (2011) suggest that giving teachers a voice may help erode their resistance and increase their trust in those responsible for creating policy.

It also emerged that teachers threatened by the phenomenon resorted to drilling learners and some became involved in irregularities like sourcing leaked assessment tools. The most positive aspect was the feedback in the form of analysed results that were customised for each school. Hattie (2009) asserts that the most powerful aspect of assessments for enhancing achievement is feedback. Feedback in the systems approach is used to determine the effectiveness of the output in restoring equilibrium. As can be seen, the systems approach focuses on the means used to maintain organisational survival and emphasises long-term goals rather than the short-term goals of the goal-attainment approach. A feedback loop in learning is a cause-effect sequence where data (often in the form of an 'event') is responded to based on recognition of an outcome, with that data used to inform future decisions in similar or analogous situations Heick (2020). However, this aspect was overshadowed by the lack of visible departmental support and interventions and sometimes a complete lack of communication.

On the issue of comparisons between the WCSE and other assessments taking place in schools, it emerged that the WCSE was similar to ANA in design, purpose and application. However, unlike the WCSE, the Annual National Assessment instrument was applied to all grades rather than exit grades. Teachers felt that ANA was more transparent and that the teachers were able to be more 'hands-on' with ANA, whilst WCSE is mysterious to teachers, who do not have a voice in designing or implementing it. Even during the test external invigilators bring in and handout the papers to learners and teachers are not allowed to handle nor see the assessment instruments. It appeared that teachers would have been more comfortable with the WCSE if they had a voice and the process was unveiled.

It also emerged that teachers were struggling with designing good school based assessments. This struggle could be attributed to their lack of training on how to use Bloom's taxonomy to set a standard paper designed for all levels. It appeared that teachers think that their inability to design assessment instruments of high calibre could be one of the reasons why their

learners did not do well in the SE. It also emerged that teachers were drilling their learners to pass the SE at the expense of long-term and higher-order learning.

The following section deals with Grade 6 teachers' pedagogical approaches and data management.

## 4.3 TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL AND DATA MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

In this section, I examine the literacy assessment practices of teachers by breaking down question two of my research questions. The question was, 'What are the Grade 6 teachers' literacy assessment practices in English First Additional Language?' I ask the teachers probing questions on various aspects of this question in the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of their literacy practices. Specifically, I asked teachers to distinguish their assessment practices from the style of questions asked in the SE. Secondly, I asked them what their primary considerations were when designing their assessment instruments. The presentation of data in this section is divided into four subsections: first, presentation of observed data of lessons (4.3.1), secondly, presentation of the interview data (4.3.2;4.3.3 and 4.3.4).



### 4.3.1 Classroom Observation Data

In this sub- section, I present the data collected through observations of the teachers' classroom literacy practices in the Grade six classes. During classroom observation, the researcher's focus was on how teachers activated learners' prior knowledge. I was interested in how teachers assessed the different parts of their lessons, how they assessed the overall lesson, and how they used different levels of questioning to develop the lesson. I was also interested in the kinds of activities they engaged learners in. I observed a lesson each from the three teachers currently teaching Grade 6 English First Additional Language.

In each of the lessons observed, group work and individual work were encouraged. The learners engaged with the text, with each other and with the teacher, facilitating learning. The lesson on listening comprehension focused on the elements of the story and thinking skills,

while the lesson on language structures and conventions focused on different types of adjectives and nouns. The goal of the newspaper article lesson was to test the learners' knowledge of the elements of a newspaper article and teach learners how to write a newspaper article using the writing process. The purpose was to write and publish a newspaper article based on the text given. The next section presents lessons from observations.

***Lesson 1: Listening comprehension***

All the teachers worked with a listening comprehension text entitled *Hungry George*. However, T4 did not only read with the learners and ask comprehension-related questions, she also introduced a reading strategy that she called a reading salad. According to this strategy, the learners had to 'mix' the text with their thoughts. The thoughts could be in any form, such as questions, connections, etc. The teacher modelled the strategy using the title *Hungry George*. Table 4 below illustrates how the reading salad was used.

**Table 4: Reading salad illustration**
*Source: Author (2020)*

| **TEXT** | **THOUGHTS** |
|---|---|
| Hungry George | • Who is George?<br>• Is George a person or an animal?<br>• Why was George hungry?<br>• Is George always hungry?<br>• 'This reminds me that I have not eaten this morning.' |

T4 began her lesson by handing out the *Hungry George* text to each of the 45 learners present. Once they had the text, the learners read with the teacher. Figure 4 below shows an image of the listening comprehension, *Hungry George.*

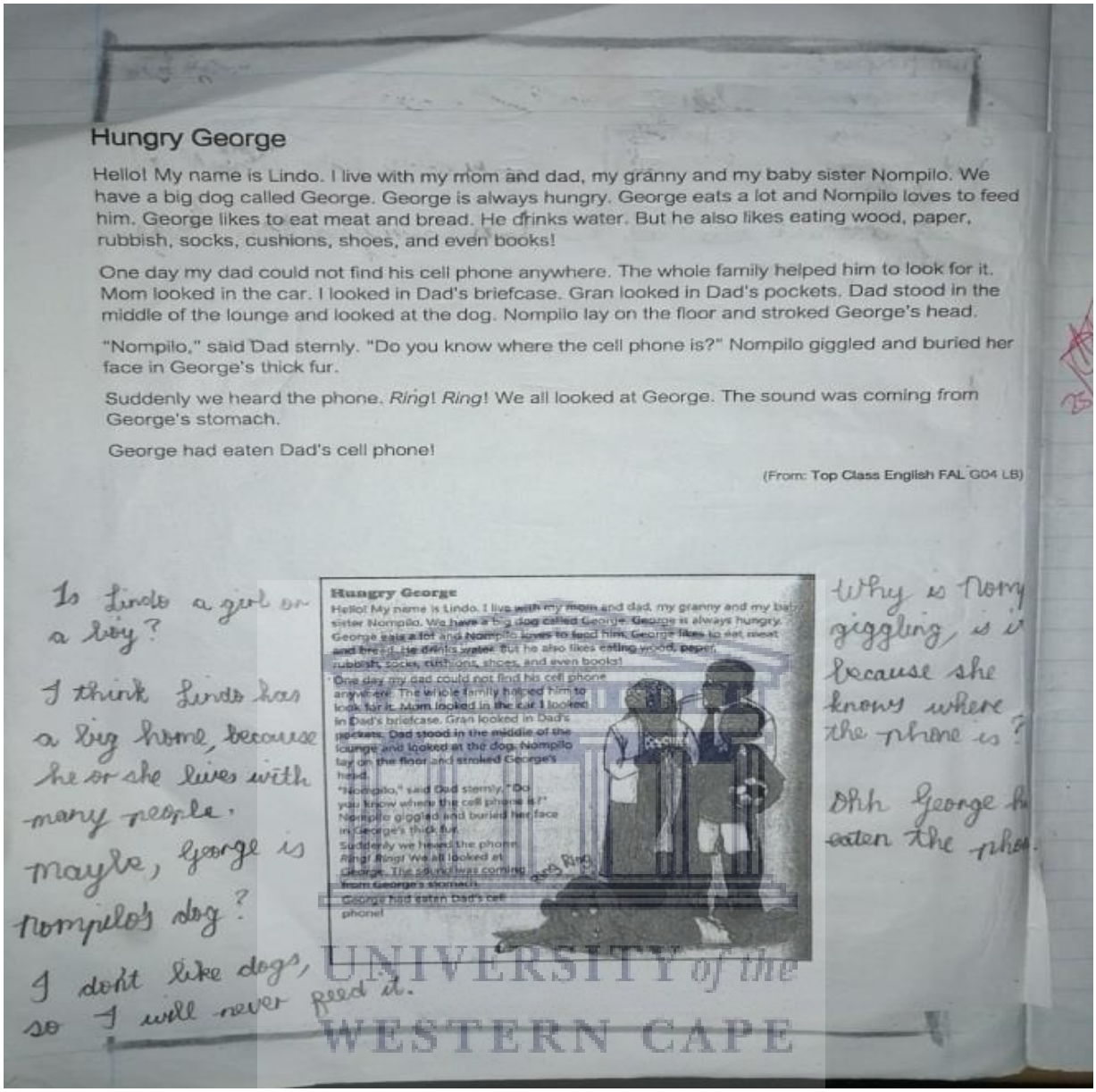



**Figure 4: listening comprehension text**
*Source: Assessment Primary School learning material*

In this lesson the teacher employed different teaching styles. Since,she was introducing a new concept (the Reading Salad) at first the teacher had to adopt a lecturing style. She was not only lecturing the learners, she was at times demonstrating how learners could utilise this new concept. She also scaffolded the lesson by first allowing learners to work with her then as group before she let them loose to work individually.

***Lesson 2: Newspaper article***

The second lesson observed was a lesson where learners had to write a newspaper article. The text used for this lesson was 'Father Christmas in Bloemfontein'. This lesson took place over three days. Day one was introductory, on day two the learners read another text and had to plan and write a draft newspaper article, and on the third day, the learners wrote and published a newspaper article. Each period was one hour long.

The lesson began with the teacher asking learners what the elements of a newspaper article were. The answers were written on the board. On day one the learners read a newspaper article entitled 'A Christmas Cheer'. At the end of day one, the learners wrote down the elements of a newspaper article in their workbooks, as follows:

Elements of the newspaper article:

1. Name of the newspaper
2. Date of publication
3. Headline
4. By-line
5. Lead (information on who, what, when, where, why and how in the first paragraph)
6. Picture
7. Quotation

On the second day, the learners, together with the teacher, read the text, 'Father Christmas in Bloemfontein'. From this text, learners were to plan a newspaper article using a writing frame. The end product at the end of the period was an article plan like the one in Figure 5 below.

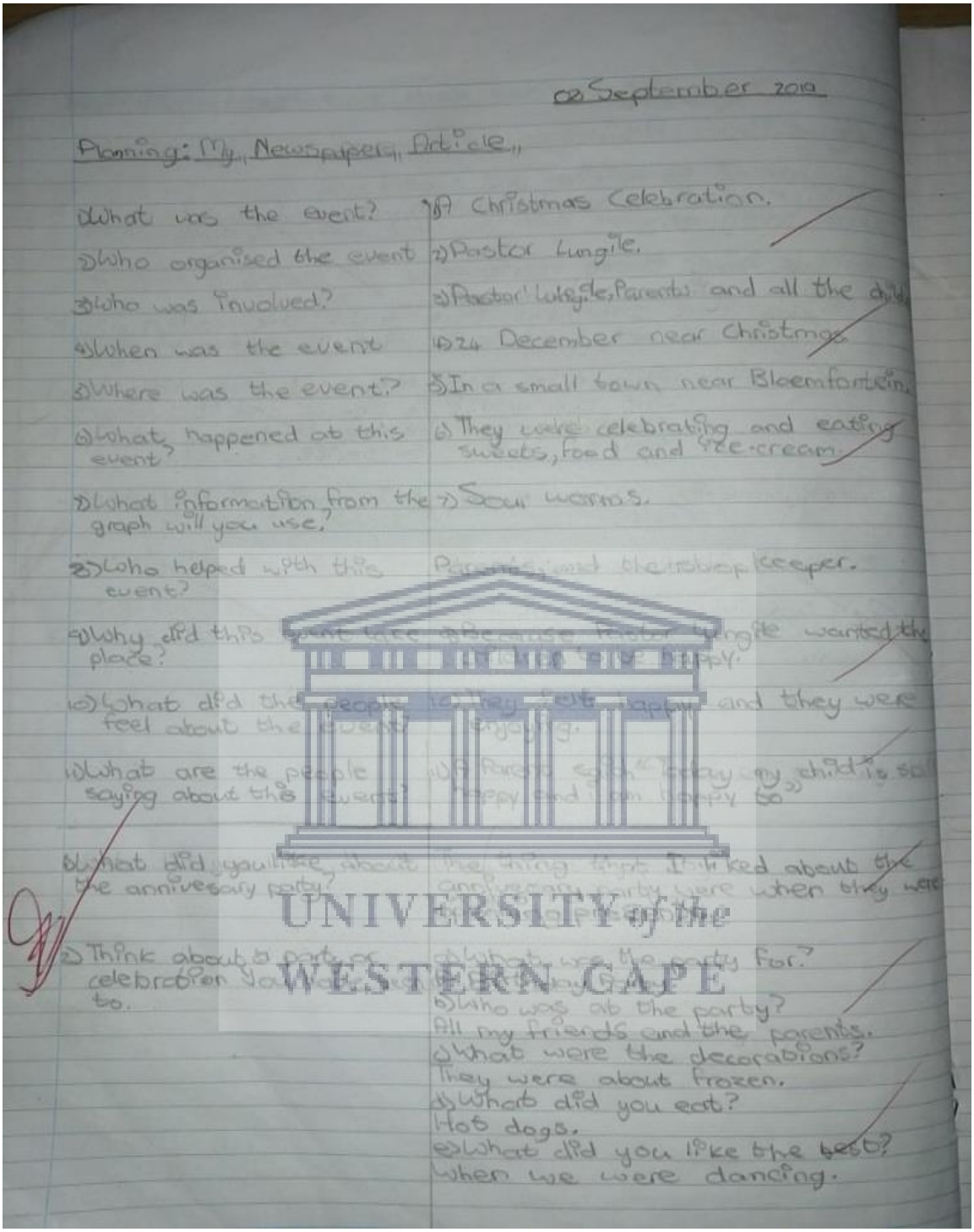



**Figure 5: Newspaper article planning**
*Source: Assesment Primary School learner*

On the third day, the teacher, together with the learners, reread the story, 'Father Christmas in Bloemfontein'. The objective on this day was for learners to use the story to write a newspaper article of their own. This purpose was accomplished as evidenced by Figure 6 below.

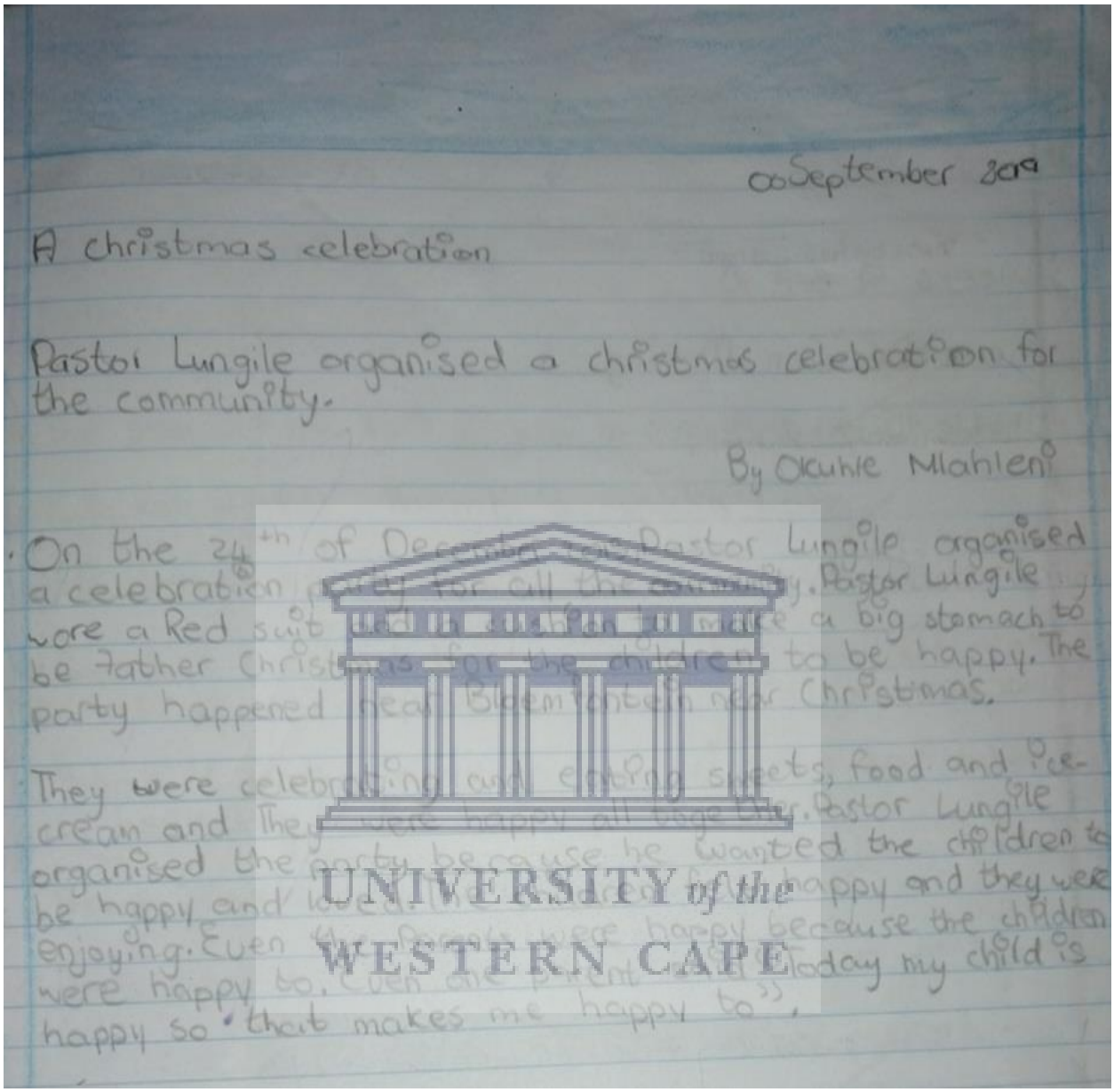



**Figure 6: Learner's newspaper article**
*Source: Assesment Primary School learner*

In this lesson consistent with the CAPS (DBE ,2011) the teacher effectively used a lot of texts hence learners were able to produce good quality newspaper articles.

***Lesson 3: Adjectives and Nouns***

The third lesson observed was a Language Structures and Conventions lesson dealing with adjectives and nouns. The text used was, *How Guinea Fowl got his Speckles.* The learners wrote adjectives and nouns from the text and they also had to draw an adjective flower. In

this lesson the teacher firstly used a question and answer method intended to activate learners prior learning particularly on the subject of nouns and adjectives. What was interesting about this lesson was the manner in which the lesson catered for different learning styles.

Figure 7 below illustrates the adjective flower made by a learner.

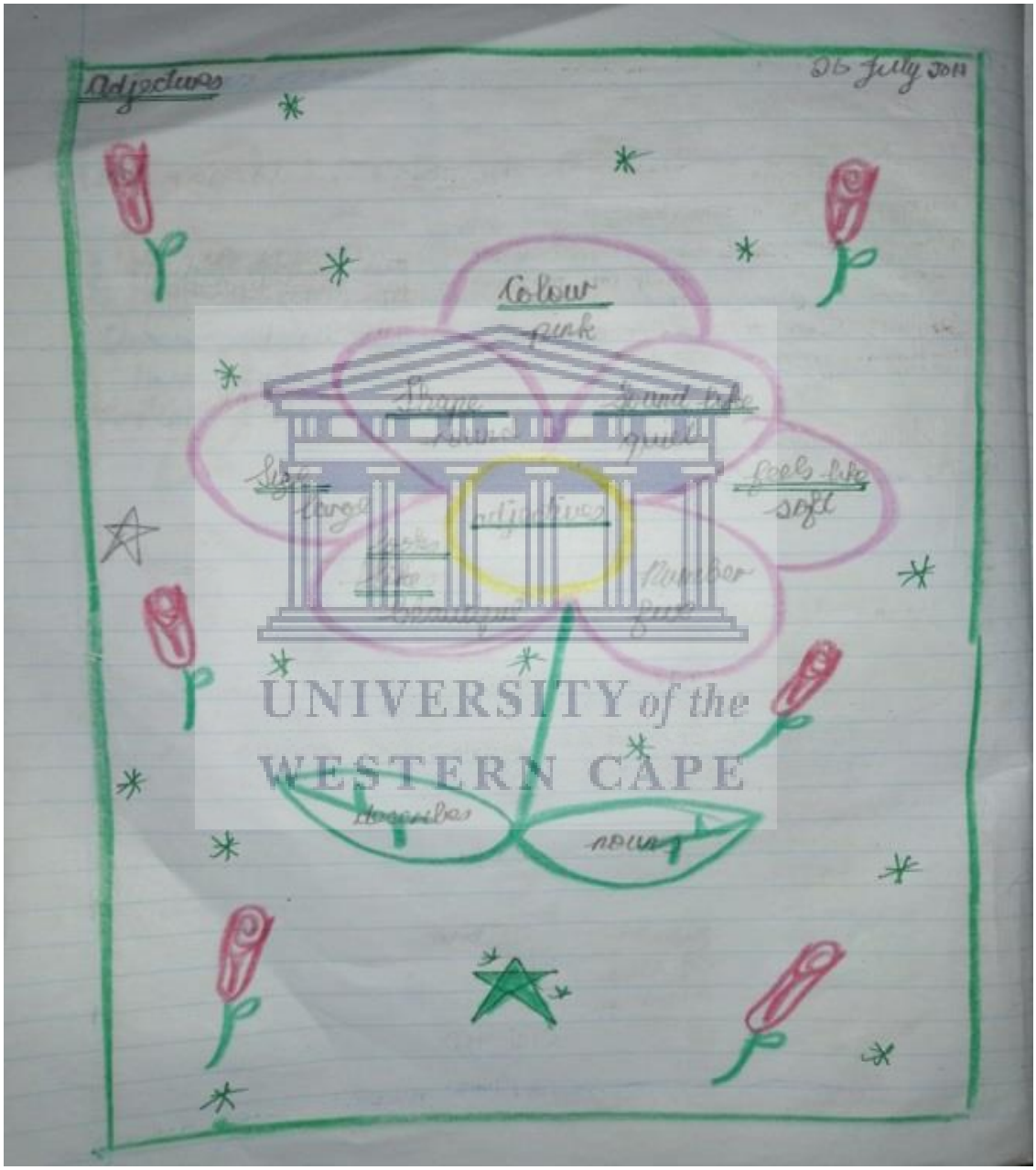
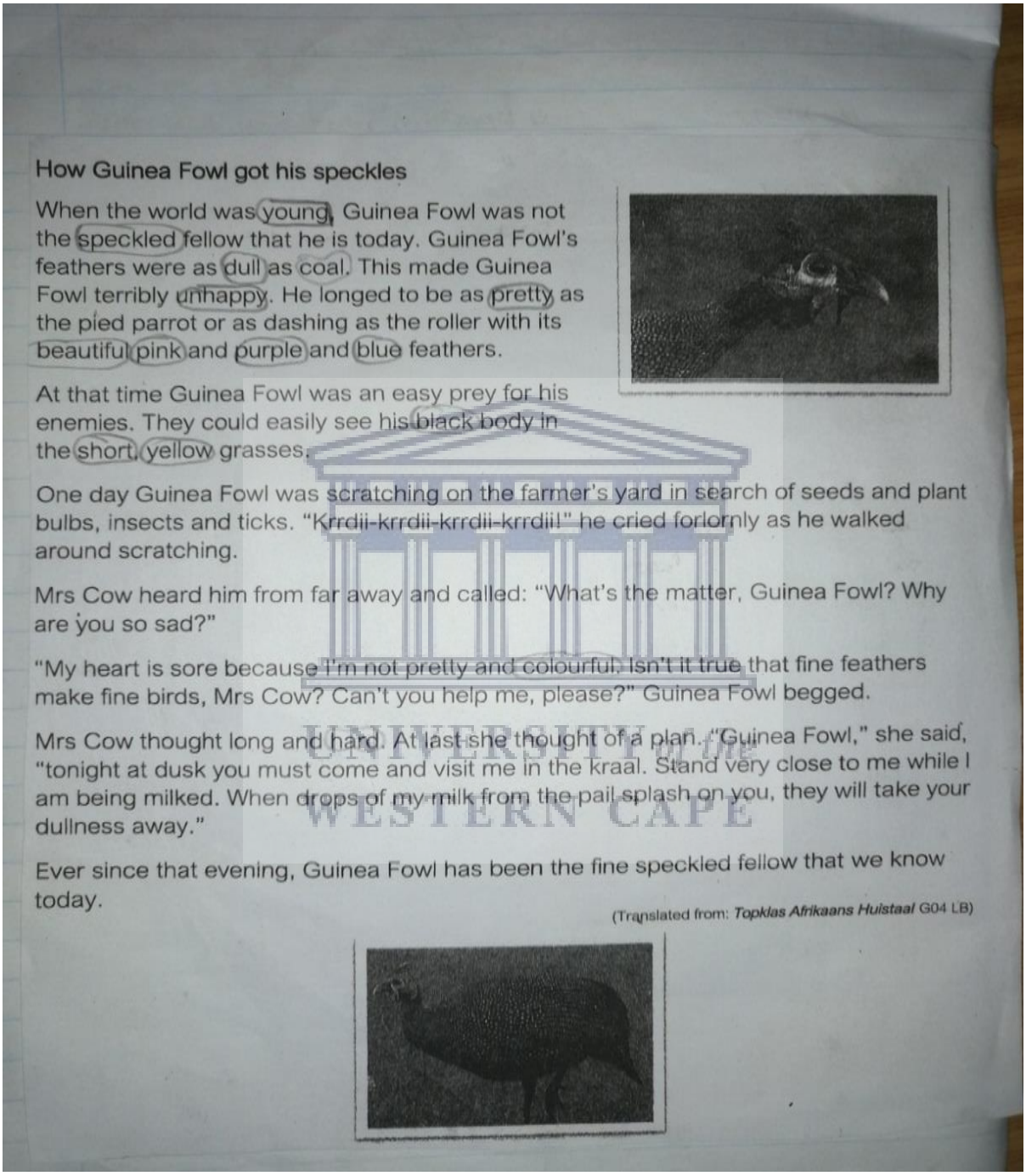



**Figure 7: Adjective flower**
*Source: Assesment Primary School learner*

Figure 8 below shows the text the learners worked with to identify the adjectives..



How Guinea Fowl got his speckles

When the world was young, Guinea Fowl was not the speckled fellow that he is today. Guinea Fowl's feathers were as dull as coal. This made Guinea Fowl terribly unhappy. He longed to be as pretty as the pied parrot or as dashing as the roller with its beautiful pink and purple and blue feathers.

At that time Guinea Fowl was an easy prey for his enemies. They could easily see his black body in the short, yellow grasses.

One day Guinea Fowl was scratching on the farmer's yard in search of seeds and plant bulbs, insects and ticks. "Krrdii-krrdii-krrdii-krrdii!" he cried forlornly as he walked around scratching.

Mrs Cow heard him from far away and called: "What's the matter, Guinea Fowl? Why are you so sad?"

"My heart is sore because I'm not pretty and colourful. Isn't it true that fine feathers make fine birds, Mrs Cow? Can't you help me, please?" Guinea Fowl begged.

Mrs Cow thought long and hard. At last she thought of a plan. "Guinea Fowl," she said, "tonight at dusk you must come and visit me in the kraal. Stand very close to me while I am being milked. When drops of my milk from the pail splash on you, they will take your dullness away."

Ever since that evening, Guinea Fowl has been the fine speckled fellow that we know today.

(Translated from: *Topklas Afrikaans Huistaal* G04 LB)

**Figure 8: *How Guineafowl got his Speckle*s text**
*Source: Assesment Primary School learning material*

What I emerged from the lesson observations was the use of multiple teaching strategies by the Grade 6 teachers. For instance,the newspaper article lesson was both text based and

process based and in my opinion this assisted the learners to get the gist of the lesson and hence they produced quality newspaper articles. I am also of the opinion that in the listening comprehension T4 seemed to be attentive to scaffolding learning as she deliberately looked for and utilise moments to bring learners into the lesson.. For instance, in the listening comprehension lesson the teacher demonstrated how the concept works and scaffolded learners to the point where they can work on their own. It was encouraging to see that the learners' artistic sides were utilised particularly in the adjective lessons where learners had to draw an adjectives flower. Throughout the lessons I was amazed by how the teachers tried every everthing to ensure that the lessons were text based.

Consistent with Dorgu (2015) the use of varying teaching methods by teachers ensured that learning was effective as the diverse learning styles of learners were catered for. Having observed the different lessons, I came to the conclusion that the teaching methods employed were appropriate for the lessons in which they were employed. The teachers embarked on a student centred approach because although the teachers were still an authority figure in this approach, yet students play an equally active role in the learning process (Muhammad, 2019). T4 used both modelling and scaffolding as prescribed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement ( DBE,2011; Mohlabi-Tlaka, de Jager & Engelbrecht, 2017).

### 4.3.2 Teachers literacy assessment practices

Regarding the differences between the teachers' assessment practices and the style of the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations, the teachers struggled to give direct answers. They indicated that this difficulty was because they had never seen the systemic evaluation assessment instruments. As previously mentioned, during Systemic Evaluations the teachers are barred from entering the classroom except to escort a learner who might need to go to the bathrooom so teachers do not have an access to the assessment instrument. Participants said the following:

> **T1:** *This is the question that we cannot answer because we don't know how the paper (systemic literacy test) or the questions are laid out. Hence I said tha, if maybe there was a platform from where we can share so that we can be able to assess according to how the questions are drafted in the question papers*

> **T2:** *They are different because the designers of the systemic tests make use of the Bloom's taxonomy and they are well trained on that.*

**T4:** *They are similar because we follow the CAPS guide when we teach which is the same strategy used on how these papers are prepared.*

**T5:** *In the Grade 6 systemic tests you find out that the learners are given an article whereas in the classroom they are not exposed to the article.*

T1 claims not to know how the systemic question papers are laid out. It seems that there is a discrepancy between teachers' knowledge and how Systemic Evaluations are designed. The discrepancy limits how teachers prepare their learners for Systemic Evaluations. Systems Theory espouses that every system has a system boundary that regulates data flow from one system to another. The system boundaries are categorised into permeable and impermeable system boundaries. It seems that when it comes to the design of the SE, the WCED has developed an impermeable boundary. According to Systems Theory, an impermeable boundary is one that strictly controls or even restricts the dispensing of data, resulting in a closed system. A permeable boundary would allow data to flow freely, resulting in an open system.

T1's utterances also reveal that teachers are not involved in the development and design of the SE. The comment reveals that the Systemic Evaluations were imposed on teachers and that the Western Cape Education Department employs a top-down approach in their development, as discussed in 4.2.2. T1 also advocates for the creation of a platform where teachers and designers of the Systemic Evaluations share information regarding their design.



T2, T4 and T5 seem to have an idea of what the SE entails but they differ in their understanding of how SEs differ from the teachers' pedagogical and assessment approaches. For instance, T2 feels that SEs are different from the teachers' assessment practices in terms of design. However, T4 considers them to be similar because both are guided by CAPS. T5 agrees with T2 that there is a difference between them but her argument is based on the discrepancy between what is assessed in the SE and what the learners are exposed to in the classroom.

T2 also raised the issue of teachers' incapacity to apply Bloom's taxonomy. Norman (2017) suggests that Bloom's taxonomy helps with assessments in terms of matching assessment items to the level of one's objectives. When an assessment is designed one must be clear as to what level of knowledge one wishes to assess and to set questions accordingly (Anil, 2017).

Crews (2010) indicates that many teachers utilise only the lower levels of cognitive processes in their instruction. This indicates the need for a paradigm shift in how teachers prepare and conduct their lessons so that learners may learn to use higher-order thinking skills. Nagappan (2000) asserts that the goal of an educator is to improve the quality of students' thinking so that they can think more effectively. Crew (2010) asserts that using Bloom's taxonomy in the development of the curriculum ensures that the skills taught include the full range of the taxonomy. Students can only do well in high-stakes tests when they know how to think, which occurs when they have been taught to analyse, synthesise, evaluate and interpret information when reading.

Regarding the role that the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) plays in teachers' assessment practices, all the teachers felt that although CAPS is somewhat scripted, it is still fairly flexible.

> **T1:** *We are allowed to take something that is in term four if it goes with what is in term two or term one.*

However, teachers indicated awareness that Systemic Literacy Evaluations are a reading test and are text based. Teachers' observation is consistent with the literature which suggests that in the educational setting, students are required to read and comprehend a great quantity of complex information. Teachers revealed that they also used various texts in their teaching and assessments. Concerning the Literacy Systemic Evaluations being text-based reading tests, teachers said:

> **T3:** *The systemic test is a reading test. Learners are expected to read different types of texts with understanding. Non-fiction and fiction will be tested. Visual texts are also included. Approximately five reading pieces are tested.*

> **T5:** *They also get a story and also another comprehension. They get between four and five stories.*

Supporting this view, T6 commented:

> **T6:** *Yes, they only test reading and comprehension. Another difference is that home language, English home language learners and English First Additional Language*

*learners, are writing the same test ... I think that the First Additional Language learners are kind of at a disadvantage if the entire province is writing the same test.*

All three teachers agree that the SE is a reading test and is text-based. Another point of agreement for the teachers was their common understanding that learner comprehension is tested in the SE. They also speculate on the type and number of writing or texts being used in the systemic assessments. T3 and T5 agree that learners are tested on five texts. Both T5 and T6 talk about comprehension.

T6 raises the issue of a lack of differentiation in Systemic Evaluations. She claims that since the English Home language learners are assessed with the same instrument, English First Additional Language learners are at a disadvantage.

Regarding planning, all the teachers agreed that they planned purposefully by first looking at the whole curriculum for the year and then moving things around to suit the pace of their learners. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and to be purposeful, teachers need to have:

**T3:** *... an understanding that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and not something that is added as an afterthought.*



Regarding what they first consider when designing an assessment instrument, all the teachers responded that what had taken place in the classroom is their primary consideration. For example, T1 had this to say:

**T:** *… as one cannot assess what she or he had not taught.*

The other point of consideration is the learners' understanding of the concept(s) to be assessed. T1 and T6 said:

**T1:** *You cannot assess when you also have knowledge that not everybody is on board. But the consideration is checking if everybody is covered and everybody understands and consolidation and feedback is important.*

**T6:** *I try to choose stories that are relevant, for instance, if it is a story about an animal I choose an animal that my learners could relate to.*

Both teachers agree that for an assessment instrument to be valid, the instrument must cater for all learners. According to T1, checking learners' understanding of the work to be assessed is crucial. She further points out the value of consolidation and feedback before designing an assessment instrument. T1's comment suggests that it is possible to exclude the slow learners and learners with learning barriers if the designer of the assessment instrument does not consider them. T6 raises the issue of the relevance of the texts incorporated into the assessment instrument.

The consensus amongst teachers is that SE is a reading test meant to test the extent to which learners comprehend what they read. There seemed to be agreement amongst the teachers regarding the number and types of texts in the SE. Their knowledge of the types and number of texts in the SE might be attributed to the workshops organised by the district subject advisors. These workshops are not SE specific but rather are general workshops on a range of topics where it is possible that there might be a reference to the subject of SEs without getting into detail about the nitty-grities of SE.

Interview data also revealed that teachers use a text-based approach in their classroom assessments. Content analysis of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) reveals that the language aspect of CAPS is text based, communicative and process orientated (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) stipulates that a variety of text types be taught. According to CAPS, the text-based approach is meant to ensure that learners become 'competent, confident and critical readers, writers and viewers of texts' (DBE, 2011:18). CAPS indicates that the text-based approach involves listening to texts, and reading, viewing and analysing texts to understand how texts are produced and what their effects are (DBE, 2011:18). The text-based approach also involves producing different kinds of texts for particular purposes and audiences (DBE, 2011:18).

Richards (2006:37) asserts that the foundation of teaching in the text-based approach is exposure to a variety of text types, together with a focus on mastery of text features such as grammar, vocabulary, topics, functions and graphics presented in texts. The concept of texts as a foundation for language teaching is corroborated by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) Grade 4 tests (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker, 2012).

Tingting (2011) noted that the text-based approach has promising results in the area of vocabulary acquisition. John and Davies (1983:9) assert that a text may be used as a springboard for another task which is usually a reading or writing task. Tingting (2011) indicates that in the text-based approach, the learning material is more than the text, as there are also target words. However, Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) suggests that the major deficiency of the text-based approach is its failure to develop learners' communicative competence. The literature also suggests that another disadvantage of the text-based approach is its interference with learner creativity, as learners may end up writing genres as a meaningless reproduction.

The teachers' claims that they used the text-based approach was substantiated by classroom observations. The teachers were observed teaching comprehension, newspaper articles and language structures and conventions using texts. Therefore, there was a synergy between the interview data, content analysis data and the observation data regarding the use of the text-based approach.

T6 highlighted that First Additional Language learners might be disadvantaged by SE if the same instrument is applied to Home Language speakers. Another disadvantage to learners that was raised is that at times a text type assessed in the SE may not have been taught in the classroom.



There was consensus amongst the teachers that their primary consideration when designing an assessment instrument in the classroom is context. They looked at what was taught, and tried to ensure that everybody was 'on board'. Data from document analysis shows that the work on which assessment is conducted must have been covered during the term (DBE, 2011:8; DBE, 2011b; SAP, 2016). To ensure this, teachers emphasised the value of consolidation and feedback. Feedback is, of course, is an issue that teachers strongly felt is not being taken into consideration by those who design the literacy systemic assessment instruments, as has been established.

What strongly emerged from the set of data discussed in this section is that teachers' literacy assessment practices involve planning, the use of texts and the importance of quality assurance of assessment instruments. This last element is discussed under 4.3.2.

### 4.3.3 Quality assurance in literacy assessments

Teachers expressed a need for a standardised paper. T6 commented:

> **T6:** *Even though you assess what you have taught, your assessment instrument must be of a quality standard.*

To ansure a high quality of assessment instrument, teachers prioritised the requirements of the curriculum. T5 commented that the teacher should pace their lessons accordingly and subject their assessment instruments to internal moderation by the departmental head. T5 said:

> **T5:** *You must teach according to the requirements of the term so that you can assess a standardised paper.*

Regarding moderation and monitoring, the teachers claimed that they subjected their assessment instrument to both pre- and post-test moderation. In explaining the process of pre-test moderation, teachers said that the moderator, who is often the departmental head, has to satisfy herself that the paper is of the required length and time, and that all learning levels are catered for. For instance, T1 said:



> **T1:** *When you set a question paper it must be evaluated, let's say by the language committee, then they will take the exemplar and your question paper and check if you follow what the exemplar is giving you.*

In support of this view, T3 commented:

> **T3:** *The moderation process must also ensure that the ratings given are consistent across all classes in the grade and all grades in the phase.*

T1 and T3 acknowledge that it is the responsibility of the subject teacher to design an assessment instrument, but that they are accountable to some form of moderation structure, which, according to T1, could be a language committee. T1 suggests that those who moderate the assessment instrument should compare the instrument to an already defined template. T3 asserts that moderation must ensure consistency of ratings across classes and grades.

Teachers' comments indicate that teachers are committed to the idea of assessment instruments of a high standard. They revealed that to design quality assessment instruments they consider the requirements of the curriculum. For quality assurance, teachers revealed that they subject their instruments both to pre- and post-test moderation. They also identified the role players in the moderation of assessment instruments to be 'a language committee' and head of department, with the latter being the final quality assurer in the school. Teachers' responses are corroborated by document analysis, as the SAP and NPfA identified the subject heads, departmental heads and curriculum advisors as key players in the moderation of assessments. Data from document analysis suggested that teachers should subject their formal assessment tasks to moderation for quality assurance and to ensure that the tasks are of a high standard (DBE, 2011:94; DBE, 2011b; SAP, 2016).

Teachers indicated that the proper planning of assessments involves planning a programme of assessments. The programme of assessments is designed to spread formal assessment tasks across all subjects in a school throughout each school term. The programme of assessments must be drawn up by the school assessment committee, indicating the dates in which tasks will be done. Quoting the National Protocol for Assessment, T5 commented:

> **T5:** *The assessment programme is supposed to be done before the end of the term by the teachers of that particular subject or that particular phase. Secondly, it gives the layout of what is expected for the next term. From the assessment programme, the teachers do their assessment plan. The assessment plan is what you are going to test and when and how and that one you send to the parents. The assessment programme is the programme that gives you what is you going to teach for the whole term. It is a guide that guides you.*

Likewise, T4 commented:

> **T4:** *The phase decides and we sit down as a grade. Afterward, we draft what needs to be assessed and moderate it ourselves and then we take out the papers to our head of departments that they continue with their moderation as well.*

Both teachers espoused the idea that the phase is responsible for drafting a programme of assessments. T5 suggests that there is eeway for subject teachers to draft an assessment programme for their subjects, but in contrast, T4 suggests that such flexibility is extended to

all grade teachers rather than to subject teachers. T5 asserts that the assessment programme provides guidance on what will be taught during the term and therefore acts as a guide for the teacher. She also mentions that the assessment programme gives rise to an assessment plan. The assessment plan amplifies what will be tested, how it will be assessed and when. This plan is used as a form of communicating to the parents, as it details what, why, when and how testing will take place. T4 also indicated that the grade or phase does the initial moderation but the main quality assurer is the departmental head (HOD).

Teachers' involvement in moderation helps build and strengthen teachers' assessment capacity. The OECD (2013) argues that there is considerable evidence that involving teachers in moderation is a powerful process, not only for enhancing consistency but also for enabling teachers to deeply understand student learning objectives and to develop a stronger curriculum and instruction. The OECD further asserts that moderated assessments and scoring processes are strong professional learning experiences that can drive improvements in teaching, as teachers become more skilled at various assessment practices and the use of assessment information to make adjustments to teaching and learning approaches (OECD, 2013).

Data from document analysis, particularly the National Protocol for Assessment and the School Assessment Policy, reveals that each teacher must submit the annual formal programme to the school management team before the start of the school year (DBE, 2011b; SAP, 2016). However, some teachers like T6, for instance, had no idea of who decides on the school programme of assessments. As mentioned earlier, T6 is in her second year of teaching and her comment could be attributed to her lack of experience as a teacher.

This section has focused on teacher assessment practices. Although the teachers claimed never to have seen the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluation assessment instruments, they showed awareness that they contain reading texts. According to the teachers, a variety of issues are considered when designing their assessment instruments. They further emphasised the importance of pre- and post-test moderation of assessment tasks. What emerged from the data in this section was that, contrary to the demands of the curriculum, not all text types are taught in the classrooms. It seems that teachers' classroom practices could jeopardise learners' chances in the SE as they may be confronted with unfamiliar text types. It also emerged that the fact that teachers had never seen the SE instruments themsleves, but only

the exemplars, caused uncertainty amongst teachers. The data shows that teachers are aware of and are practising assessment quality assurance by subjecting their school basedassessments to pre- and post-test moderation by the relevant structures, including the departmental head. Nonetheless, weakneses are found in the knowledge and abilities of their learners when it comes to the SEs.

What does strongly emerge from this set of data is that teachers' literacy assessment practices involve planning, the use of a variety of texts and the disciplines of quality assurance in their planning of assessment instruments.

The next subsection focuses on teachers' management of the data yielded by Systemic Evaluations.

### 4.3.4 Engagement with the data generated through the Literacy Systemic Evaluations

Concerning the data yielded by the SEs, all the teachers agreed that the SEs are written in October and the results are released in February of the following year. According to T1:

> **T1:** *They are sent to the Central Education Management and Information System (CEMIS) and the first people to see that the results are out are school CEMIS administrators. The Education Department will also send a message to say that the systemic results are out, check your CEMIS. So the school receives them as a soft copy but then makes hard copies to distribute to the staff.*



Teachers who are involved with assessment receive second-hand information. There is a link between what T1 observed and the tenets of Systems Theory as there is a chain of information dissemination in the education system. However, teachers receive second-hand information as they are at the bottom of the information chain.

Concerning the analysis of the results, T5 commented:

> **T5:** *But, firstly the principal calls all the SMT members and they discuss it. After that, they take it to the grade teachers. After the grade, it goes to the staff meeting because those results are not for the grade teachers but are for the school. So the whole school must know the failure because it is not my failure because I am in Grade 6, it is the failure of us all. We then read out the shortcomings of each question and then we*

*consult the diagnostic tool on how we can remedy that. It is difficult for the Grade 6s because the learners are already in Grade 7.*

In support of this view, T1 commented thus:

**T1:** *The results affect the entire phase and hence the phase should work together in drawing up strategies to improve results.*

The utterances of T5 and T1 raise issues of how power influences communication and interdependence. Dunbar (2015) asserts that power is prevalent in all interpersonal interactions and it affects how people communicate. Dunbar (2015) observes that power is not a personal attribute of an individual but is rather a system property. In the systems approach, power denotes a relationship of authority and responsibility between higher- and lower-level units. According to teachers' comments, it seems that teachers receive second-hand information, yet they are the people who have to implement the Systemic Evaluations at the school level.

T1 referred to the interdependence amongst the grades in a phase, commenting on how working together could lead to strategies for the improvements of results. This comment is consistent with the assumption of Systems Theory, which asserts that communication is the key to how systems are created and sustained. In the context of this study, the school operates systemically by facilitating and ensuring communication amongst the grades. This behaviour demonstrates the interdependence of the grades. However, the same interdependence does not apply when it comes to the Education Department, which fails to interact in person with the teachers on the question of Systemic Evaluations. Secondly, Salazar (1995) indicates that accordings to Systems Theory, group effort accomplishes more than any single individual effort. This implies that when the components of a system work together, the goals of the system stand a higher chance of being achieved than when any one entity works alone.

Concerning how user friendly the literacy systemic evaluation data is, T2, T3 and T6 felt that it was easy to navigate the systemic assessment data sent to them. They attributed the easiness to the layout of the document sent to the school containing the results. However, T4

cautioned that this depended on whether the teacher had previously been exposed to the assessment data or not. In agreement, two participants said:

> **T5:** *It is a little bit difficult because firstly we were never trained on how to actually look thoroughly at … at how they get in terms of grouping learners according to their understanding. Right, they are a little bit difficult.*

> **T5:** *And they give you how to help those learners but how-to help part comes as a booklet. That diagnostic tool (booklet) shows you randomly that the learners in the province did not understand this particular question. For example, data handling in Maths whereas in English it could be creative writing but creative writing is always the problem.*

T5 believed that the data received from systemic tests posed a difficulty as teachers had never been trained in how to interpret data. She indicated that teachers were not given an explanation of how the data was organised. However, she concedes that the data received by teachers came with an analysis and suggestions on how to help the learners. She further mentions that the deficiency of the diagnostic tool is that it is not tailored to the school but rather shows the areas that provincial learners are struggling with. T5 highlights that generally learners are struggling with creative writing.



Some of the teachers expressed that since the results were given per class and per concept it was easy to analyse them. However, some expressed that they experienced a level of difficulty in understanding and analysing the SE results. T5 commented:

> **T5:** *The results for Mathematics and English are separated and the percentages for the previous years are included. Even the areas or concepts where the learners struggled are there to see. Each classroom performance is also already analysed and every concept is written and they are given the percentage of learners that did well per concept. And then, in the end, they give you the shortcomings of your school, what were the problems, the questions that your learners could not answer, or could not answer correctly.*

The results sent to the school are compartmentalised according to the two subjects (Mathematics and English) written in the SE. The concepts in which learners did not do well are identified in the feedback. T1 commented:

**T1:** *The four of us, for instance, are teaching literacy and the data is per class so you are able to say my learners did well in this and the second one says mine did not do well in this.*

It seems that although they write SEs in October, schools get the analysed results only in the middle of the first term of the following year. The evidence suggests that there is a systemic way in which results are received and analysed by the school. Three levels of analysis could be deduced from the evidence; namely, analysis by the school management team, by the exit grade teachers and by the teachers who are responsible for the phase. The evidence further suggests that the format in which the results are received is user friendly. The results are per class and per subject and that makes it easier to consider the context of the class when analysing the results,

The literature cautions that a lack of exposure to assessment data can make it difficult to analyse the results. This caution is consistent with Kanjee's assertion that teachers need support on how to use assessment information to improve learning and teaching practices (Kanjee, 2017). The solution to the underutilisation of assessment data would be to teach teachers and other stakeholders how to interpret and use the results.

Concerning using the literacy SE data to teach the next cohort of learners, the interviewees agreed that once the data from Systemic Evaluations had been teased out into chunks that they understood, they could use it to teach the next cohort of learners. The literature shows that teachers can use assessment data available to them to become more informed about meeting the literacy needs of English learners in the classroom (Helman, 2015). The use of assessment information to identify and address learner problems is the most critical contribution of national assessments (Marsh, 2012; Popham, 2011; Schiefelbein & Schiefelbein, 2003). Helman (2015) stated that teachers can use assessment data that is available to them to become more informed about meeting the literacy needs of English learners in their classrooms (Helman, 2015). Teachers can glean valuable information from literacy assessments and use such information to provide targeted instruction (Helman, 2015). Literacy assessments also provide teachers with the information they need to organise instructional groupings (Bear et al., 2004; Helman, 2015; PALS, 2003).

Teachers highlighted, however, that they might not use all of the systemic assessment data because learners are not all the same. Teachers mentioned that in the first term of the year they did a baseline assessment of the new cohort of learners to determine their strengths and weaknesses. For example, T3 commented that they did a baseline assessment for the early identification of their learners. In support of this view, T5 commented on why they do baseline assessments:

> **T5:** *To assist with the early identification of learners who might experience barriers to learning and development as well as to provide them with learning support.*

Both T3 and T5 agreed that baseline assessment help in the identification of learning barriers. According to T5, early identification helps teachers to target their support interventions.

Regarding the use of systemic data to help the new cohort of learners, three teachers saw value in the data. For example, T1 suggested:

> **T1:** *The only thing that you can do for the new learners is to take the results in order to identify every concept where they are lacking. Guided by the systemic results, because it is possible to know how they have done in the concept previously and how is that you can change teaching the concept for this new group of learners ... In the classroom you just need to change, check your methodologies, check your techniques, you check your planning and what does enhance that concept.*



In support of this view, T3 commented:

> **T3:** *Maybe you think, for example, your learners could not identify adjectives. So you should try and tweak how you teach your adjectives*.

T5 agreed, saying:

> **T5:** *You must do your interventions through your teaching.*

Both T1 and T3 advocate that SE results should be used to identify students' weaknesses and they suggest that this could be accomplished by identifying the concepts in which the learners are not doing well. The teachers encourage reflective teaching, particularly on methodology and teaching techniques. T1 states that planning should consider what would best enhance the

concept to be taught. There was consensus between T1 and T3 that reflecting on systemic results should lead to a change of teaching methods to enable learners to master concepts that were not mastered by the previous cohort. All three teachers agreed that interventions must be incorporated into teaching and not conducted as a separate undertaking.

Evidence from the data suggests that at the beginning of the term the teachers do a baseline assessment of the learners to determine learning barriers and the type of support needed. Baseline assessments are consistent with the document analysis which showed that both the School Assessment Policy and the CAPS document advise that at the beginning of the year, learners write a baseline test. On the strength of the baseline results, teachers may incorporate some of the information from the SE to assist learners. The SE results could lead to teachers adopting new methods to teach certain concepts. SE results could also lead to collaboration amongst teachers where they have identified that a particular teacher is stronger on a certain concept. That teacher would assist others, either by teaching that concept or by offering demonstration lessons.

Concerning using the literacy SE data to assist the cohort that was tested, three teachers found no use for it. T5 said:

> **T5:** *What types of remedial interventions you can do to a child who is no longer in your class, … who is now in Grade 7 to learn new subjects … do you understand? So you can't go there and say here is the problem of this child, remedy this. Because the child is on another experience now, that she is not familiar with.*

However, T1 commented:

> **T1:** *The best way for me is to have time to share information with the next or receiving teacher. So that the next teacher could be able to say, OK, this group of learners struggled in terms of understanding a certain concept. So the data received plays a role in terms of following up on the learner because you have the information that the learner is not mastering all the concepts. If you can just assist as the sending teacher by looking at this learner in terms of how you deal with these concepts. The data plays a very important role, hence I said it is very important to do data analysis per term so that you can be able to tackle that challenge the second time.*

In support of this view, T2 and T3 commented:

**T2:** *OK, a chain in the communication of what, eh, is happening on the previous and the next coming grades, so we get that opportunity of getting that. You can see what is happening in the grade before this one and the next coming grade.*

**T3:** *That systemic is not just about the mastery of the current phase but also how ready the learner is for the next phase. That means that you as a teacher in this particular phase, you still have a role in that child going to the next phase. And this necessitates communication and collaboration amongst the teachers.*

According to T1, there is value in the data since weaknesses revealed by the SEs follow the learner to the next Grade. T1, T2 and T3 commented that the systemic results necessitate that teachers of the cohort (Grade 6) which wrote the systemic test collaborate with the receiving teachers (the Grade 7 teachers) to enhance learning. They share, or ought to share, information on the concepts that various the learners struggled with, so that the receiving teacher may plan appropriate interventions.

The teachers' observations are consistent with the OECD (2013), which asserts that the results of student assessments can help teachers communicate about student achievement in a school and make decisions about targeted support. The OECD further notes that assessment results can contribute to easy transitions when students are changing schools or phases, and may help to ensure consistency between different levels of education (OECD, 2013). Likewise, Horn (2008) asserts that every teacher in a school has a big effect on every other teacher's success. She makes a compelling argument that teachers are inherently dependent on one another since none of them constitutes the learners' entire source of education. She further brings forward the argument that learners move from teacher to teacher and teachers have to make such movement coherent; hence the need for collaboration.

The sentiment amongst teachers is that one does not abdicate one's role once the learner goes into another grade, but that best practice is to follow up on the cohort that has progressed to another grade. T2 mentioned progression within the grades and how imperative it is that the teacher is aware of what is happening in the previous as well as the following grades.

The three former Grade 6 English teachers agreed that one could use the data to communicate and collaborate with the receiving teacher. In that way, the sending teacher would still have a

role to play in the education of the learners going into the next phase. However, one Grade 6 teacher felt that there was no way that she could use the data to assist the learner in the next phase, stating that any intervention at that stage would simply disrupt the learner.

This section has dealt with teachers' engagement with the assessment data. The study revealed that teachers make an effort to analyse the data received. The level of difficulty in analysing the data depended on the teachers' level of exposure to literacy data. This is consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, which indicates that teachers need support on how to use assessment information to improve learning and teaching practices (Kanjee, 2017). More could be said about the management of assessment data to support teaching and learning.

It emerged from this data that schools receive customised and already-analysed results from the WCED. Once received, there is a systemic way in which the schools handle them. In general, teachers felt that the assessment data received was useful for teaching the next cohort of learners. What emerges from the data usually leads to teachers adopting new methods of teaching certain concepts. This is consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 where Adam and Nel (2015) stated that effective use of assessment data to plan, judge and modify teaching is a fundamental competency for good teaching. Also, Lourie (2008) and Yastıbaş and Takkaç (2018) suggest that language instructors should have such an ability to understand, analyse and use assessment data to improve students' learning and their instruction (Lourie, 2008; Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018).



It also became apparent that the assessment data leads to collaboration amongst teachers on two levels. The first possibility being that the teacher whose class did well in a particular concept co-teaches that concept with the other teachers or organises demonstration lessons. Teachers were split evenly on the question of the use of the SE data to help the cohort that have written and moved on to Grade 7. The former Grade 6 teachers felt that the data could be used to communicate and collaborate with the receiving teacher. Yet the current Grade 6 teachers felt that it was no use doing so, and intervening in the receiving class would disturb the learners. Also, the results are not customised per learner. The current Grade 6 teachers' arguments could be explained according to Kanjee's claim that when data comes at the wrong time it loses value (Kanjee 2017). Kanjee and Moloi (2014) contend that teachers need

relevant and timeous information from assessment studies as well as support on how to use the information to improve learning and teaching practices.

This section has revealed that teachers receive no training on how to work with assessment data and as a result, there is underuse of the data generated by the Systemic Evaluations. It also emerged from this section that the assessment data when handled well could lead to collaboration amongst teachers on two levels; one at the school level and one on the district level. The teacher whose class did well in a particular concept co-teaches that concept with the other teachers or organises demonstration lessons in the school. The teacher could also collaborate with other teachers as part of the cluster group or part of a professional learning community.

## 4.4 CHALLENGES WITH THE GRADE 6 LITERACY SYSTEMIC EVALUATIONS

This section deals with various challenges associated with Systemic Evaluations that confront teachers. The main challenge for the teachers who taught English First Additional Language in Grade 6 was that they tended to construe the SE results as a reflection on how well they taught. For example, T6 responded by saying:

> **T6:** *If the learners do not do well they think that you are not teaching well. If the learners do well then everybody looks at you as a miracle teacher.*



This is a burden that causes some anxiety amongst teachers. For example, T6 said:

> **T6:** *So now if you are being judged based on what the learners have done in an hour is unfair.*

In support of this view, T1 commented:

> ***T1:*** *What is not nice is that when the results come out the teacher in Grade 6, if the results are not good the burden is put on top of the poor teacher who was not even advised.*

There is also the pressure of wanting to improve on the previous year's results.

**T5:** *And systemic should not be a threat, systemic is like … I do not know, like, what? Like* Gqoloma [a mythical snake or dragon].

T6 observed that her identity as a teacher was linked to how well the learners fare on an external examination and she felt that it was unfair to be judged as a good or bad teacher based on an hour of assessment – particularly when one is not involved in formulating that assessment. Blake (2008) argues that teacher identity is tied to complex social and cultural dimensions of educational settings where teachers' ways of positioning themselves account for the essential qualities of teacher identity. She asserts that the context of a teacher's work plays a significant role in the embodiment of their teacher identity. Teacher identity can 'shape teacher dispositions, where they place their effort, whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities and what obligations they see as intrinsic to their role' (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald & Zeichner, 2005). Palmer (1998) posits that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. When teachers are forced to conform, their vulnerability increases and they lose heart and begin to disconnect from students and content material to reduce that vulnerability (Kelchtennans, 1996). This seems to be the case with the participants of this study. For one, they believe that the system unjustly judges their professional identity based on the result of an hour-long test instead of taking into consideration all that they do.

Brady (2008) asserts that teachers do not work in a vacuum but experience many emotional events and the appraisal the teacher makes of the situation leads to the recognition that she/he has something to gain or lose, which generates quite strong emotions. T6 felt that the outcome of the SE was unfair. Brady (2008) also explains that teachers have strong feelings about how policies on which they had say affect themselves and their students.

T6 raises the issue of self-esteem, a statement which is consistent with Brady's (2008) argument that teachers' self-esteem is closely linked to their self-efficacy in the classroom. The pressures imposed by standards and high-stakes testing results in teachers feeling they have less and less control in their classrooms, and thus their level of efficacy decreases. Bandura (1995:20) makes a compelling argument, saying, 'Teachers who lack a sense of instructional efficacy show weak commitment to teaching and spend less time on academic matters.'

In light of T6's comments, it seems that teachers feel a constant pressure to get students to reach certain benchmarks that do not necessarily match the way the student learns or take into account the time frame in which this learning occurs. The literature suggests that teacher stress and pressure to get through content adversely impacts the learning environment. The adverse impact on learning is a result of constant tension for the teacher to get through the curriculum and show that students are achieving outcomes. When such a situation takes place, behavioural issues are created in the classroom, as learners may be left behind, not being able to keep up with the fast pace demanded by the teacher.

Another challenge for the teachers was the insistence by their principal that they do Saturday and holiday interventions in preparation for the Literacy Systemic Evaluations. The teachers preferred to do their interventions whilst teaching, as they felt incovenienced by the Saturday classes. The reason for this insistence on the part of principals was that the results had implications for the school in terms of monitoring by the district level of the Department of Education. For example, T5 commented:

> ***T5:*** *If the school has not done well they will label that school as a red school, an underperforming school. And then the District and the Province will be after that school and they will be always in that school.*

Secondly, if the school has done well the school – not the teachers – receives an incentive. T5 commented:

> ***T5:*** *No, they are rewarding because if you get more than 80% there is something that the school gets, but not the teachers.*

According to T5, when the school does not do well, the school gets labelled and the result is stricter monitoring of the school both by the district and the Provincial Education Department.

T5 also mentions that there are incentives for doing well in the Systemic Evaluations. However, she takes issue with the school receiving the incentive and not the teachers.

The other issue that teachers raised as a challenge with SEs is the blanket approach to how the instrument is used, rather than an approach that considers the context of each school. Regarding this challenge, T4 said:

**T4:** *You cannot assess well-advanced schools with dysfunctional schools using the same tool. Also, the challenges of schools have an impact on the assessment, which systemic evaluation does not cater for those things e.g. drugs, gangs, crime around schools, abuse within the families, social challenges, overcrowded classes, poor management within the school, teenage pregnancies and discipline challenges, eh… dysfunctionality of families that results into things like absenteeism. So you need to consider all these challenges before you can now decide on the blanket way of assessing because each area has its own problems that differ in other areas so therefore you cannot use the same tool in terms of assessing them and expect to get the same results.*

T4 raises two major issues that affect school performance. Firstly he alludes to the issues of inequality amongst schools. The literature suggests that 80% of South African schools are dysfunctional (Moloi, 2019; Motshekga, 2010; Pretorius, 2014; Spaull, 2013). Pretorius (2014) defines a dysfunctional school as a school that does not accomplish the true purpose of teaching and learning for which it was instituted. The literature suggests that most educators in dysfunctional schools lack the required subject knowledge and pedagogical skill to teach the subjects they are currently teaching (Spaull, 2019). According to Moloi (2019), the dysfunctionality of South African schools could be attributed to various factors (De Vos, 2015) that include, inter-alia, the results of unequal education in the past, and a state that has failed to effect the radical transformation of public education (De Vos, 2015; Jansen 2015). Poor teaching results more from poorly functioning systems than from individuals (Pretorius, 2014). As mentioned in Chapter 2, to address the issue of socio-economic status and inequality in access to education, and to allocate financial resources, South African schools are divided into five quintiles, according to their levels of poverty, with quintiles 1-3 classified as poor or no-fee schools, whilst quintiles 4-5 are considered wealthy schools (Dass & Rinquest, 2017; Graven, 2014). Studies have consistently revealed that learners in the higher quintiles (4 & 5) outperform learners in the lower quintiles in assessments (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019; Spaull, 2011; Van der Berg, 2014).

The second important factor raised by T4 is the role of the family in learners' academic attainment. Kerr and Bowen (1988) suggest that individuals cannot be understood in isolation but should be viewed as part of a family, because the family is an open system. Li and Qui (2018) argue that families affect children's learning behaviours and academic achievements as they are the primary and most significant environment that the children are exposed to.

Also, the literature suggests that family background and economic status may affect learners' academic achievement (Coleman, Campbell & Hobson, 1966; Peaker, 1971 & White, 1980). Likewise, Shestunova (2017) indicates that a dysfunctional upbringing distorts a child's development. Children from dysfunctional backgrounds drop behind in mental and physical development and at times suffer from psycho-emotional disorders. Lunenburg and Irby (2002) noted that students whose parents are actively involved in their learning are more likely to be successful in school. Many of the children in the research site come from dysfunctional family backgrounds and as a result, their parents are not actively involved in their learning.

The other challenge was that participants reported little to no communication between the Systemic Evaluation facilitator and the class teacher. Sometimes the facilitators were not friendly to the learners. To illustrate this point, T1 commented thus:

> **T1:** *What makes this a challenge is that teachers do not prepare their learners in terms of bringing a new person that they do not know into the classroom. Learners must be taught confidence to express themselves even if it is not their teacher in front of them. It is very important to have a test, even a short test, and ask another teacher to come to your class and invigilate it.*

The outside facilitators were not aware which learners had learning difficulties and as a result tended to be quite rigid in the classroom. T5 said:

***T5:*** *'Now* aba *(these) learners are the ones who are going to drop the results.*

Hardman, Drew and Egan (1999) define labelling as the process by which society comes up with descriptors to identify people who vary significantly from the norm. Crossman (2014) argues that negative labels contribute to low self-esteem and lack of confidence, and that the experience of rejection and denial may cause more deviancies in the affected person. Samkange (2015) suggests that labels can last a lifetime when imposed on learners by those with power, such as teachers. He further contends that the teacher's interaction with the learner is influenced by the label she gives to the learner. The literature further indicates that labelling results in 'silently' excluded learners who are present in classrooms but learn very little. Labelling learners as 'other' is contrary to recommendations in the literature, which

suggests that the challenge teachers have is to ensure that the needs of all learners are equally valued and equally served (Corley, 2005).

Corley (2005) suggests that to counteract the negative effects of labelling, teachers must employ differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is an approach that enables teachers to plan strategically to meet the needs of every student (Corley, 2005). The cornerstone of differentiation is active planning; the teacher plans instruction strategically to meet learners where they are and to offer multiple avenues through which they can access, understand and apply learning. Corley (2005) argues that for access to be meaningful, it must include regular attendance, timeous progression and transition through and between grades, and the meaningful acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills.

However, Samkange (2015) asserts that postive labels enable a child's talent and abilities to be recognised and helps teachers to plan accordingly. Supporting the idea that labels may have a positive effect, Henly, Ramsey and Algozzine (2010) noted that labelling enables teachers to communicate with one another, as each label conveys a general idea about the student's learning characteristics.

The major challenge for teachers is that poor SE results have negative implications for the teacher in the exit grade. Instead of attributing results to the school system, the results are attributed to the teacher. The teacher at the exit grade bears the brunt of poor results, even though the whole phase was assessed. Evidence suggests that teachers felt that the contexts in which they were teaching were not taken into consideration; they were blamed for results that may have their origins in all sorts of societal and family ills. Another challenge for the teachers was their lack of voice, including with the outside invigilators.

What emerged strongly from this section was the adverse impact of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations on teachers' professional identity. It also emerged from this section that teachers were pressurised to work longer hours and even at weekends as negative results often resulted in schools being labelled 'red' or underperforming schools. The third challenge raised was the issue of inequality amongst schools and social contexts and how the SE does not consider such inequalities. Lastly, it emerged that in a bid to master SEs, the learners with barriers were left behind as the teachers were not trained in differentiation.

## 4.5. TOWARDS THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF GRADE 6 LITERACY SYSTEMIC EVALUATIONS

Concerning opportunities associated with Grade 6 Literacy Systemic Evaluations, all the teachers agreed that the data received from the literacy systemic assessments necessitated collaboration amongst literacy teachers teaching different grades within the phase. This is because the whole phase is tested. For instance, T1 and T6 said:

> **T1:** *It is very nice when you discuss an analysis and come with plans on how to overcome your challenges when you do the analysis as the team.*

> **T6:** *A chain in the communication of what … eh … is happening on the previous and the next coming grades, so we get that opportunity of getting that. You can see what is happening in the grade before this one and the next coming grade.*

T1 advocates for teamwork in discussing and analysing the systemic results and in planning strategies to overcome systemic challenges.

Secondly, the data helps the teacher to follow up on the cohort that was tested by supplying information to the receiving teacher in the next phase. For example, T1 commented thus:

> **T1:** *The best way for me is to have time to share information with the next or receiving teacher. So that the next teacher could be able to say, OK, this group of learners struggled in terms of understanding a certain concept.*

In support of this view, T4 commented:

> **T4:** *Also this passes communication between teachers in the phase because the grade, the phases need to sit down because that link or chain, that continuity of information from one grade to another grade. That means now the walls between the phases must be taken aside and then there will be continuity of communication. So it helps us in that regard as well.*

There is consensus between T1 and T4 regarding the necessity of open communication channels amongst teachers. Such communication assists the receiving teacher in their planning, as when they are informed about individual learners they are better able to accommodate such learners in their teacehing. In addition, they are made aware of overall weaknesses in the class – possibly of sections of work with which the learners are not yet familiar.

T4's observation is consistent with the Systems Theory concept of interdependence. The core of Systems Theory is a focus on the interdependence that develops whenever people interact with each other (Daiton & Zelley, 2005). Systems Theory espouses the notion that systems and subsystems do not exist in isolation. To illustrate this interdependence of grades, T4 uses colourful words such as *'link, chain and continuity'*.

T4 also indicates that to ensure information flow, *'walls between phases must be taken aside*' Both T1 and T4 credit the systemic assessment data for creating opportunities for teachers to share information and collaborate.

The Literacy Systemic Evaluations also give teachers opportunities to grow and improve as a teacher through workshops organised by curriculum advisors. In these workshops, teachers are exposed to new teaching pedagogies and good teaching material. T6 said:

> **T6:** *Like recently, the workshop I went to, we were given really good material and we were taught strategies of teaching reading.*

Teachers agreed that as a teacher analyses the Systemic Evlauation data, they see gaps in their teaching and get an opportunity to change and implement different methodologies in teaching the concepts in which their learners did not do well. For example, T1 said:

> **T1:** *In the classroom so you just need to change, check your methodologies check your techniques, you check your planning and what does enhance that concept.*

Another opportunity arising from the SEs is that in preparation for the assessments, teachers are afforded opportunities to learn from their peers from other schools. For instance, T4 said:

**T4:** *One, I attend numerous workshops whereby we exchange practices, experience with the advanced schools.*

There is consensus amongst teachers that the SE provides teachers with different opportunities. The first thing mentioned by teachers was the communication and collaboration opportunities made possible by the SEs. These communication and collaboration opportunities transcend the grade and phase and affect the whole school. T4 put it aptly when he said:

*That means now the walls between the phases must be taken aside and then there will be continuity of communication. So it helps us in that regard as well.*

Secondly, teachers felt that SEs presented them with opportunities for professional growth. According to the teachers, this growth was through continuous professional teacher development in the form of workshops organised by subject advisors. As they analysed the SE results they were also able to identify gaps in their pedagogies. This necessitated a change in the way they teach, and they embraced new pedagogies. This is consistent with the theoretical framework of this study which suggests that assessments provide teachers with feedback on how well students are learning so that they may more appropriately target instruction. Thirdly, the Systemic Evaluations gave teachers opportunities to share good practices with their colleagues from their own school and others.

In summary, this section has dealt with both the challenges and opportunities presented by the SEs to teachers. The negative aspects of SEs suggests that teachers' anxieties and dissatisfactions with SEs may be overtstated. Nobody likes having their performance assessed negaitively, so it is natural that they would complain of the SE process. Yet in the end teachers do have to accept that they are assessed indirectly, and that they cannot be involved at every stage of every process. If they were invited to be involved in designing the SEs, would they actually have the time and expertise? They complained of not being involved, yet to me, the whole value of an outside assessment is that you are not involved. Sometimes people just have to accept that they are assessed and that the assessment can be negative.

It emerged that despite numerous areas of dissatisfaction with the SEs, they do give rise to opportunities for improvement in practice. Firstly, the SEs open up avenues for collaboration amongst teachers across the phase and the entire school. This opens up a flow of information across phases and as a teacher aptly put it, '*the walls across the phases must fall down*'. Although teachers speak about collaboration with other teachers within and outside of their school, and all the things that ought to be taking place as a result of going through the SE results, one has to question whether they actually do it. There is the possibility that are talking about what should happen, not what does happen.

Through workshops organised by subject advisors, teachers saw opportunities for growth and exposure to new ways of teaching. It also emerged from this data analysis that through reflecting on assessment results and concepts where learners were not doing well, teachers became aware of gaps in their teaching. It appears, then, that the SEs lead to teacher professional development. Another opportunity that emerged from the data is the possibility of teachers learning from their peers. This would necessitate teachers organising themselves into professional learning communities (PLC).

On the other hand, the major challenge found was that teachrs experienced the SE results as a reflection on themselves rather than on the phase, the learners, or the context in which they taught. This perception can lead to some teachers being 'deified' whilst others are 'demonised'. Hence, teachers feel threatened by the phenomenon, to the extent of calling it *uGqoloma* (a mythical snake or dragon that swallows people), while another called it a bomb waiting to explode.

Another challenge that emerged is that based on the SE results, some schools are labelled as focus schools (non-performing schools). The teachers felt that labelling schools as non-performing gave the department carte blanche to put the school under the spotlight. It appears that such schools undergo close monitoring once they have been flagged in this way. This view is consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this study which indicates that accountability measures often make the differences between schools the subject of particular attention – with this leading to further policy-level intervention consequences for low-performing schools and praise and market-driven 'choice' consequences for high-performing schools (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). Although teachers seem to have issues with the Department closely monitoring their schools yet the department views it as a way of

supporting struggling schools. Similarly, Smith, Gamede, & Uleanya, (2019) postulate that monitoring of schools by curriculum advisors provides teachers with support which may limit the problems encountered by educators in their daily process of dealing with problems and questions related to curriculum delivery.

Another issue that cropped out was that the SE does not factor in the socio-economic factors of the school, resulting in 'comparing apples with oranges'. The issue of contextual factors in education features widely in research as a strong contributor to assessment results. There seems to be agreement in the educational research community that factors such as community and home level poverty, school functionality, weak instructional practices, inadequate teacher subject knowledge and a need for greater accountability throughout the school system constrains the achievement of better education in South Africa (Fintel, 2016; Fleisch, 2008; Jansen, 2013; Taylor & Von Spaull, 2013).

Consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the teachers raised the challenge of learners who are not at the requisite reading levels. Posel and Casale (2010) postulate that in most South African schools learners have little exposure to English, both in the Foundation Phase and in their home environment (Posel & Casale, 2010) and therefore struggle to read and consequently progress without the requisite skills 'that are supposed to be well developed by the end of Grade 3' (Pretorius, 2012: 92). In agreement, other researchers claim that many learners do not acquire sufficient vocabulary, reading and writing proficiency to cope with the language demands of English-medium teaching in Grade 4 (Makalela, 2016; Prinsloo, 2007; Woolman & Fleisch).

What emerged from this section was that the SE offers teachers opportunities to communicate and collaborate, receive support from curriculum advisors and be part of professional learning communities. Whether or not they do these things is another matter.'

## 4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented and analysed the data collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and content analysis of documents. The data shows that teachers' understanding of Systemic Evaluations is linked to the notions of time (2002), place (Western Cape), authority (WCED, government), purpose, level (Grades 3, 6 and 9; phase) and subjects (Mathematics and English). It became apparent that the teachers' understanding is closely linked to policy even though they claim no knowledge of the policy governing Systemic Evaluations. The analysed data also revealed that teachers were not consulted in the planning, design and implementation of the Systemic Evaluations. Thirdly, teachers listed shortcomings of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations as (i) limitations on teachers' planning (ii) teaching to the test (iii) compromised learners and (iv) teacher anxiety.

The data also revealed that teachers' own literacy assessment practices involved planning, the use of a variety of texts and quality assurance of the assessment instruments. Regarding the quality of assessment instruments, it emerged that teachers struggled with designing good school basedassessment instruments. The teachers attributed their incapacity to design quality assessment instruments to a lack of training on how to use Bloom's taxonomy to set a standard paper designed for all levels. Moreover, the data reveals that teachers were never trained to work with assessment data. Furthermore, the analysed data showed that teachers felt somewhat resentful of the Systemic Evaluations, yet condeded that Systemic Evaluations presented them with opportunities that enhanced their pedagogical practices.

The following chapter discusses the key findings of this study.

# CHAPTER 5 : MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore Grade 6 teachers' lived experiences of the implementation of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations as a provincial intervention strategy in English First Additional Language Literacy. This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings related to the research questions stated in Chapter 1. Also included are recommendations stemming from the key finding of this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the limitations of the study, a brief summary of how the research questions and problem were addressed, the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge, and implications for further research based on gaps revealed by the study.

## 5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The key findings related to teachers' experiences of the Systemic Evaluations in the Western Cape are discussed below. They encompass the following:

(a) Varying understandings of Systemic Evaluations

(b) The text-based approach as a key element of literacy instruction

(c) Lack of teacher training on data analysis

(d) Barriers to effective Systemic Evaluation implementation

(e) Collaboration as a way of strengthening teachers' classroom practices

### 5.2.1 Varying understandings of Systemic Evaluations

The data collected through interviews demonstrates that teachers have varying degrees of understanding of Systemic Evaluations and their rationale. Data showed that the more experienced teachers had a deeper understanding of the SEs as they had been exposed to them for longer. Most of the experienced teachers were already teachers when SEs were first implemented. Even these teachers, however, revealed that their understanding of SEs was

speculative. However, it is noteworthy that even though they claimed that their understanding was speculative, the combined understanding of all the teachers closely resembled the goals of the Systemic Evaluation policy. Teachers' understanding was demonstrated by their notions of time (2002), place (Western Cape), authority (WCED, government), purpose, level (Grades 3, 6 and 9; Phase) and subjects (Mathematics and English).

This finding is consistent with the available literature. For instance, Hoadley and Muller (2016) indicate that the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations are unique because the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is the only South African provincial education authority running these types of tests in addition to the national ones such as the Annual National Assessments. Secondly, the policy on Systemic Evaluation requires that they be conducted in three grades of the education system; namely, Grades 3, 6 and 9 (DoE 1998; 2003). Thirdly, the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation is a test of literacy and numeracy achievement (Hoadley & Muller, 2016; Schafer, 2015). Therefore the teachers were correct when they identified literacy and numeracy as the subjects that are tested in Systemic Evaluations.

### 5.2.2 Text-based approach as a key element of literacy instruction



Consistent with the CAPS requirements, both the interview data and classroom observation data revealed that teachers used a text-based approach as a key literacy practice. This was evident in the way they taught language skills and the different types of texts they used. This finding is consistent with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which stipulates that a variety of text types have to be taught to enhance learners' literacy. According to CAPS, the text-based approach is meant to ensure that learners become 'competent, confident and critical readers, writers and viewers of texts' (DBE, 2011:18).

The text-based approach also involves producing different kinds of texts for particular purposes and audiences (DBE, 2011). This finding is also consistent with Richards' (2006) assertion that the foundation of teaching in the text-based approach is the use of a variety of text types and mastery of text features such as grammar, vocabulary, topic, functions and graphics presented in texts. The literature also suggests that the use of texts as a foundation for language teaching is consistent with the use of literacy and information texts in the Grade

4 tests reported in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker, 2012).

### 5.2.3 Lack of teacher training on data handling

Another key finding of this study was that teachers had never been trained to work with assessment data. This finding contradicts the assertion that language instructors should have an ability to work with assessment data in order to understand, analyse and use assessment data to improve students' learning and their instruction (Lourie, 2008; Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018). Similarly, Adam and Nel (2015) posited that the effective use of assessment data to plan, judge and modify teaching is a fundamental competency for good teaching. Some of the teachers said that their level of exposure to assessment data was a determinant of the manner in which they interpreted and analysed the SE data. They conceded that they underused the data they received as they did not use it across the phase, but only on the grade which had written the systemic evaluation. Kellaghan, Greaney and Murray (2009) noted the underuse of the data as a shortcoming, not only in South Africa but in many countries where national assessments are conducted. This finding also supports the NEEDU (2013) report which claims that few schools have school improvement plans that use information provided by assessment analysis results.

Many scholars suggest that assessment data is a potential tool for school improvement (Gibbons, 2010; Serafini, 2010; Tierney, 1998; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 2012). These authors suggest that when used appropriately, assessment data yields useful information that educational stakeholders may use to make decisions about teaching and learning (Gibbons, 2010; Serafini, 2010; Tierney, 1998; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 2012). However, consistent with NEEDU (2013; 2016), this study found that although the teachers claimed that the data from the SE was user friendly, the data was not fully exploited by teachers to assess the literacy needs of learners in the Intermediate Phase and at school level in general. This finding is consistent with Kanjee and Moloi's (2014) finding that teachers do not know how to use results to improve learning and that no plans are in place in schools for the use of assessment data.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that teachers are not adequately equipped to use assessment results effectively for the purpose of improving their teaching or instruction (Kellaghan, Greaney & Murray 2009; Shirley & Hargreaves 2006). Similarly, Kellaghan et

al. (2009) noted the underuse of the data as not a uniquely South African shortcoming but rather a common challenge in many countries where national assessments are conducted.

Underuse of assessment data goes contrary to the notion that testing interventions would provide relevant information to teachers for use in developing appropriate interventions for improving teaching and learning (RSA DBE 2012; Atwell, 2016; Schafer 2014, 2016).

This study also found that a lack of training was not the only inhibiting factor for improved data handling, but that many other factors contributed to the underutilisation of literacy assessment data. Consistent with the constraints identified by Park (2012) and Kellaghan et al. (2009), the triangulated data shows that the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluation data was made available at a time when teachers did not need it, as the cohort that was tested would be in the next phase and grade.

It became apparent that teachers did not use all of the data received, although they might use some, depending on the quality of the new cohort of learners. Also, the level of exposure to assessment data seemed to determine the manner in which teachers interpreted and analysed the SE data. Consistent with the findings of Kanjee (2017), it was found that teachers are not equipped to make data-based decisions in their classrooms. According to the systems theory, components of each system are structured in a hierarchical order, and components are interdependent with one another to the extent that one component cannot function without the support of other components. In this instance, the meso system has the responsibility to provide support to the micro level by ensuring that data management training and workshops opportunities are provided to the teachers.



### 5.2.4 Barriers to effective Systemic Evaluation implementation

The barriers to effective Systemic Evaluation implementation were (i) Poor curriculum coverage (ii) Limited understanding of Bloom's taxonomy (iii) Impact of Systemic Evaluations on teachers' affective domains (iv) Inequalities in the education System (v) The impact of learners' low socio-economic backgrounds (vi) Unfamiliar texts given to learners (vii) Top-down approach with regard to the implementation of Systemic Evaluations.

#### *5.2.4.1 Poor curriculum coverage*

It emerged that teachers do not cover the whole curriculum, resulting in learners being confronted with unfamiliar texts when they write the SE. This is despite Taylor's (2011) assertion that curriculum coverage is an important contributory improvement factor in South Africa as it provides learners with better opportunities to learn (Taylor, 2011). Similarly, De Clercq, Shalem and Nkambule (2017) found that when teachers cover all curriculum concepts, learners' work improves. Moreover, Mngomezulu (2015) suggests that the involvement of learners in teaching and learning activities plays a vital role in learner success. It seems that a proper focus on curriculum coverage through monitoring of teachers and the creation of a teaching and learning culture by the school management team might go a long way to ensuring that learners develop the requisite knowledge for their grade.

Under-teaching the curriculum could be related to the teachers' lack of pedagogical knowledge or content knowledge, or an incapacity of those tasked with curriculum implementation to monitor the school. This view is supported by . Clercq, Shalem & Nkambule (2014) who posit that HODs are often not trained to identify weak teaching practices or to provide the kind of development needed to improve teachers' practices. Other factors which might affect curriculum coverage include Education Departmental meetings which are often announced at the last minute – and union meetings.

#### **5.2.4.2 Teachers' limited understanding of Bloom's taxonomy**

Edwards (2013) states that assessment is the process by which educators make judgments on how well learning has occurred. The results of this study indicate that teachers lack the capacity to design quality assessment instruments. Teachers' lack of capacity could be attributed to lack of or insufficient training on how to use Bloom's taxonomy when designing assessment instruments. The teachers' lack of capacity to design quality assessment instrument disadvantaged learners when they were confronted with quality assessment instruments like the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluation's assessment instrument. The data collected in this study show that learners struggle with the level of questions asked in the Systemic Evaluations. The teachers acknowledged that they lack the capacity to set an assessment instrument which covers all the domains of Bloom's taxonomy. This in turn negatively affects the school results.

Teachers said that as a result of their lack of training on how to work with Bloom's taxonomy, they did not cater for all the levels of the learners, i.e. they were unable to vary

their questions from lower-order to higher-order questions. One teacher observed that most of his assessment questions catered for lower-order thinking, although they want their learners to do well on their assessment activities. This shows that teachers were aware of their limited understanding of Bloom's taxonomy, and that this failue to build higher-order thinking into their own assessments affected learners when it came to the SEs. Teachers acknowledged that their school basedassessments were at a lower level; hence learners struggled with higher-order questions and consequently performed poorly in the SEs.

This finding is consistent with Whittingon and Newcomb's (1993) view that teachers most frequently conduct classroom instruction at lower levels of cognition. Available scholarship shows that when instruction is pitched at the lower level, any assessment aimed at measuring student learning across the higher levels of cognition becomes difficult for some learners to comprehend (Airasian & Miranda, 2002; Wiggins, 1990). Research indicates that if students are not given an opportunity to learn at higher levels of cognition, questions based on this level not make sense to them and to test them at this level becomes pointless.

This finding confirms the findings of previous studies that show that educators are ill-equipped to develop tasks of high quality and appropriate assessment tools in English First Additional Language (Matshidiso, 2007; Reyneke, 2008). The study also confirmed the findings of Govender (2005), the DoE (2004) and Brommbacher (2004), all of whom found that educators are not well equipped to design assessment tasks of high quality, appropriate to the target group and the purpose.



**5.2.4.3 Impact of Systemic Evaluations on teachers' affective domains**

It emerged from this study that the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations have an adverse impact on teachers' affective domains. Teachers claimed that the schools viewed results as a reflection on the exit grade teachers' pedagogical ability rather than on the phase, school or quality of learners. The resultant behaviour is 'deification' (of those whose learners pass) and 'demonisation' (of those whose learners fail).

It also emerged from the data that teachers were pressurised to work longer hours and even on weekends to improve the SE results, as poor results often result in schools being labelled 'red' or underperforming by the education districts and the provincial education authority. The anxiety was so real for teachers that one even likened SE-related tension to 'waiting for a bomb to explode'.

According to Stomff (2013), the perceived threatening atmosphere generates frustration and high anxiety amongst teachers. The anxiety has a significant effect on teaching and learning. According to Brady (2008), assessment pressure has an adverse effect on teachers' relationships with their students and thus makes them less open with their students. It makes them vulnerable and more inclined to be short with them.

The literature indicates that pressure results in teachers' time and energy being consumed by anxiety and anger and causes them to become somewhat alienated from their students (Berliner & Biddle, 1991; Borko, Davinroy, Bliem & Cumbo, 2000). Brady (2008) contends that such a level of anxiety in some teachers impeded the development of rich relationships between teachers and students. Teacher-student relationships are essential for teachers' personal and professional satisfaction (Brady, 2008). Research shows that student motivation is sustained and enhanced by teachers and their interactions with their students (Atkinson, 2000; Frederickson, 2001; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon & Barch, 2004; Wentzel, 1997). Where teacher-student interactions do not exist, the chances of learner abseintism are increased (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004).

#### 5.2.4.4 Inequalities in the education system

One of the challenges raised by teachers was the issue of inequality amongst schools and how the SEs do not factor in the socio-economic contexts of schools, resulting in unfair comparisons. In addressing the issue of inequality, Rogan and Grayson (2003) draw attention to a prevailing tendency in South Africa of not taking into consideration the existing diversity of schools and that complex and comprehensive changes in the educational system may not sufficiently consider disadvantaged schools, which are often unable to cope with the demands placed on them. Most schools in South Africa are still suffering inequalities when it comes to the provision of resources (Tshiredo, 2013). Tshiredo (2013) argues that the needs of previously disadvantaged schools are not the same as previously advantaged schools. Similarly, Dean (1998) states that schools in previously disadvantaged areas still face an acute shortage of resources, overcrowded classrooms and demoralised and under-trained teachers.

Education inequalities are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Fleisch (2008), who found that learners from disadvantaged schools do not do well in external assessments. Similarly, Spaull (2012:36) posited that when looking at assessment

performance, South Africa shows almost two education systems, evident in what what he called 'bimodal distribution'. Spaull (2012) argues that the bimodality of South African student performance is quite independent of the grade or subject under assessment or the dataset under analysis, and can be seen as early as Grade 3, remaining present until the national school leaving exam (Spaull, 2012).

#### 5.2.4.5 Impact of learners' low socio-economic backgrounds

Respondents argued that the socio-economic background of learners had a bearing on how the learners fared in the SEs. The social issues pointed out by teachers included (i) absent parents (ii) drug use (iii) poverty and (iv) dysfunctional homes. According to the respondents, the aforementioned issues constitute the reality of life in communities served by schools in the lower quintiles. Teachers felt that the fact that learners in all schools in the Western Cape write the same paper is unfair because such a practice neglects the fact that schools do not operate in the same environment. Although deemed unfair, the SE is simply a measuring tool, and that the opposite would also be dangerous. To have one set of tests for poor schools and another for rich schools would be highly unethical and would suggest that poor learners cannot do as well as rich learners. The unfairness comes in not with the tool itself, but with how results may be interpreted and perceieved by outsiders who do not understand the context. But to complain that the test itself is unfair is disingenuous – how else is one to gain an undertanding of relative abilities?



The respondents were of the opinion that the learners in the lower quintiles are at a disadvantage when writing Systemic Evaluations compared to their counterparts in the higher quintiles (quintiles 4 and 5). Likewise, Navsaria, Pascoe and Kathard (2011) posit that challenges faced by educators when teaching these learners included learners' academic and socio-emotional difficulties, and a lack of parental involvement.

Lastly, the teachers raised the challenge of learners who were not at the requisite reading levels. With the SEs being a reading test, a lack of ability in reading greatly affects the performance of the school in the SE. Teaching needy students without support is one of the major sources of stress for teachers (Hanover Research, 2015). Hanover Research is a research firm which provides high-quality, custom research and analytics to the corporate, higher education, K-12 education, and healthcare sectors.

It emerged that in a bid to master the Systemic Evaluations, the learners with barriers were left behind as the teachers were not trained in differentiation of tasks for different levels of

learners. This is contrary to the spirit of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which states that teaching and assessment of languages should make provision for all learners (DBE 2011:5). According to the CAPS, inclusivity can only happen if all teachers know and have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning and how to plan for diversity (DBE 2011:5)

#### 5.2.4.6 Unfamiliar text types used in Systemic Evaluations

This study found that learners were exposed to unfamiliar texts types in SEs and that this created anxiety and prevented effective assessment performance. This finding is supported by Kodero, Misigo, Owino and Simiyu (2011) who concluded that the use of unfamiliar texts and unfamiliar language in texts creates anxiety and stalls effective classroom participation. These observations corroborate those of Ngwaru (2010) in a study conducted in Zimbabwe which showed that using texts written in unfamiliar language is a major impediment to learning. Anyiendah (2013) postulates that the use of unfamiliar texts is a typical example of disregard of learners' socio-cultural experience, and often inhibits learning.

Ebe (2010) observed that when students had difficulty connecting with the text, they also seemed to be less proficient at their reading. Furthermore, Ebe (2010) postulates that the students often struggle with reading unfamiliar texts, not only because they are not proficient in English, but also because they lack the background knowledge to understand what they are asked to read. It is therefore imperative that teachers source texts that are culturally relevant and related to the context of the learner.



#### 5.2.4.7 Top-down approach in the implementation of Systemic Evaluations

Oyelola (2015) asserts that for policies to be successful, they should involve target groups and foster a participatory system, whereby policy makers plan with the people rather than for the people in meeting their felt needs. Likewise, Makinde (2005) argues that participation gives the target group a sense of belonging and fosters a sense of committment to the successful implementation of the policy. Oyelola (2015) posits that teachers are one of the major stakeholders in the education field and the chief implementers of education policy. He states that teachers are the ones who translate education policy document into practice and ensure the realisation of policy objectives.

Contrary to the recommendations of these authors, this study found that teachers were not consulted or considered during the design of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations. As a result, there seemed to be uncertainty and distrust amongst teachers regarding the SEs. Consistently, the teachers claimed that they were never consulted or informed about what the Systemic Evaluations were about. They claimed not to know what systemic testing was and what they knew was based on pure speculation.

This finding is consistent with the literature which suggests that teachers are negotiating macro policies that were developed outside of their context without their input (Menken & Garcia, 2016; Wright & Ricento, 2016). This finding is contrary to the view that policy grounding and teacher buy-in are important for a successful assessment regimen, and for teaching and learning in general. Moreover, this finding is contrary to Smith and Benavot's (2019) assertion that consultation increases trust in the system and improves policy ownership. Hence the resultant attitude of teachers was one of uncertainty and distrust regarding the SEs.

### 5.2.5 Collaborative and reflective teaching strengthens teacher competence

Despite the many negative perceptions that teachers held of SEs, they conceded some positive aspects of the evaluations. Teachers stated that they were exposed to opportunities such as collaboration amongst teachers, skill set sharing, continuous professional teacher development and exposure to new pedagogies and teaching material or platforms. Collaboration opportunities exist for teachers in the same school and in neighboring schools to get together to discuss areas of weakness in the SE results. Some teachers spoke of sharing skill sets and getting involved in continuing professional development in an effort to boost the results. It also emerged that the curriculum advisors played an important role in exposing teachers to new pedagogies and teaching material. This finding is consistent with the systems thinking proposition that in an organisation there ought to be channels of communication. These communication channels ensure that there is both input and output into the system. Secondly, in line with the systems theory, the colloboration among teachers demonstrates the awareness of their interrelatedness.

One of the key findings of the Hanover Research (2015) was that the ability to communicate with colleagues is important for teachers who face heightened stress and challenges. The researchers posit that teacher collaboration reduces the sense of isolation, increases morale

and job satisfaction, and can reduce the workload that teachers shoulder by enabling them to compile common resources (Hanover Research, 2015). Teacher collaboration in the form of teaching teams or professional learning communities is encouraged by the 2015 Hanover Research. Similarly, other studies support collaboration amongst teachers, since it has been identified as essential in developing teacher competence (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Wang, 2015; Olsson, 2019).

The literature supports collaboration amongst teachers, which has been identified as essential in developing teacher competence (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Olsson, 2019; Wang, 2015). Olsson (2019) asserts that teacher competence is a key factor in students' learning potential. Likewise, Horn (2008) asserts that every teacher in a school has an effect on every other teacher's success. She makes a compelling argument that teachers are inherently dependent on one another, since learners' education is mediated by various teachers. She further brings forward the argument that learners move from teacher to teacher and teachers have to make such movement coherent; hence the need for collaboration.

Teachers said that collaboration goes beyond school boundaries and that they worked with teachers from other schools to receive and impart best practice. A professional learning community (PLC) is defined as a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students (Reichstetter (n.d.). Botha (2012) asserts that PLCs are necessary to encourage collaborative teamwork on essential intervention activities in learning.



In a PLC, teachers discuss and reflect on their instructional pedagogies, lesson designs and assessment practices (Hord, 1997). Most PLCs operate within a school building or across districts (Serviss, 2019). PLCs allow teachers to directly improve teaching and learning (Botha, 2012; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). Secondly, they build stronger relationships between teachers (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Robert, 2006). Thirdly, they help teachers to stay on top of new research and emerging technology tools for the classroom. Lastly, PLCs help teachers reflect on ideas. Teachers who work together in PLCs perform better than teachers who work in isolation (Botha, 2012). The latter become vulnerable and often fail to meet the requirements of effective teaching.

## 5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study was to bring teachers' voices into the arena of Systemic Evaluations. Accordingly the first major practical contribution of this study is that it provides the much needed teachers' voice on Systemic Evaluations. This study has succeeded in making known teachers' experiences of Systemic Evaluations. What was known previously was only the teachers' resistance to the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations, particularly the boycott which took place with regard to the October 2015 Systemic Evaluation. Through this study we now know that the way in which Systemic Evaluations are implemented has a negative impact on teacher identity, resulting in compromised teaching and learning. However, the findings of this study have further implications for policy, practice and research, which are discussed in the following subheadings.

### 5.3.1 Implications for policy

The policy implications of this study are that the Western Cape Education Department might devise some way of addressing the gap created by the non-involvement of teachers in the Western Cape Systemic Evaluation Policy design and implementation. This could be done by getting curriculum advisors to correct current misconceptions about the SEs. Alternatively, it could be a policy provision to involve teachers by re-orientating them, so that they understand the rationale behind the WCSE, which might put them at ease. On the basis of this study, the Western Cape Education Department could also consider evaluating their Systemic Evaluations. The literature reviewed in this study showed that teachers are a key input in the education system and that teachers could provide in-the-field feedback which could assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations. The findings of this study show that there is a need to involve primary stakeholders early in the policy design.

### 5.3.2 Implications for practice

The findings of this study show that teachers are inadequately trained on the use of Bloom's taxonomy. Training teachers on how to navigate and utilise the taxonomy in their pedagogical approach would help teachers to nurture and develop learners' critical thinking and comprehension skills. Providers of pre-service and in-service teacher training could be informed through this study of a need to strengthen training on the utilisation of Bloom's taxonomy, both in teaching practice and in assessment design.

The findings of this study could inform those tasked with teacher training and development, such as General Education and Training coordinators in the district offices of the Education Department, to design relevant courses. Such courses could be used to equip teachers with the skills they need for assessment design, incorporating Bloom's taxonomy. A course on assessment design would help strengthen the quality of school basedassessments. Moreover, training teachers to incorporate Bloom's taxonomy in their pedagogical practices would help teachers expose their learners to higher-order thinking skills.

### 5.3.3 Implications for further research

While I believe that a qualitative case study design was the right choice for this study, case study results are not meant to be generalised. I have tried to build credibility into this study by employing triangulation. However, a study similar to this one with targeted demographics, based on a larger sample of English First Additional Language (FAL) teachers, school management teams (SMTs) and curriculum advisors (CAs) could be undertaken to examine the support offered to FAL teachers.

Further studies could be useful in examining the correlation between socio-economic factors and learner attainment in Systemic Evaluations. Moreover, more credibility might be afforded this study if it were augmented by quantitative research. A survey designed for quantitative research and subsequent statistical analysis may offer more evidence to strengthen the data uncovered using qualitative research tools.

Another qualitative study that would help complement this study's findings would be a study using a larger and more diverse population, potentially comparing the perspectives of teachers and their managers in English FAL assessment across the Western Cape.

I believe that the challenges related to performance experienced by lower quintile schools in the Western Cape Systemic Literacy Evaluations are closely related to the quality of the support offered by curriculum advisors, hence further research could be done on the nature of support offered by curriculum advisors and the school management teams to English First Additional Language teachers .

## 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations that could be considered to improve the teachers' experiences of the Western Cape (EFAL) Literacy Systemic Evaluations, especially in Grade 6.

In view of the above findings, the following recommendations are made as a means of enhancing teachers' experiences of the Western Cape English First Additional Language Literacy Systemic Evaluations.

### 5.4.1 Re-orientation of teachers to Systemic Evaluations

Without teachers' orientation to Systematic Evaluations, uncertainties will persist. Teachers clearly feel that there is a need for reorientation to Systemic Evaluations as such a process would put them at ease and build a better understanding of the SEs. However, the onus is also on the educators to empower themselves with a thorough knowledge of all departmental policies which directly affect them, which includes documentation pertaining to assessment and Systemic Evaluations. This could be done in workshops organised by the curriculum advisors for school management teams or school development teams, that in turn should be tasked with organising internal school workshops to orientate teachers with regard to Systemic Evaluations.



### 5.4.2 Continuous professional development of teachers

The design of quality assessment instruments using Bloom's taxonomy is necessary for effective assessment. Continuous professional development in this regard would enhance the teachers' skills in quality assessment design so that they may be able to design quality assessment instruments. In collaboration with other stakeholders, the Western Cape Education Department should design and develop pre- and in-service courses on designing quality assessments, e.g., a course entitled 'Conducting Assessments'.

### 5.4.3 Data analysis short course

To ensure that data is not underutilised, I recommend that a data analysis short course geared towards the interpretation, analysis and use of assessment data be offered to teachers to enable them make data-based decisions when assessing learners' literacy needs and to develop school improvement plans. This could be done through collaboration with institutions of higher learning (universities), as they have the human resource and infrastructure to run such courses. I suggest such courses be run online with opportunities for face-to-face contact on weekends. I further suggest that the Western Cape Education Department subsidise such courses and work with the Education Development and Training Sector Authority in raising funds for an assessment data handling and analysis short course for teachers.

### 5.4.4 Strengthening collaboration

Teachers need to collaborate more in order to derive maximum benefit from assessments instruments and their results. I recommend that teachers devise a mechanism for sharing best practices of literacy development and assessment practices with each other. Regular cluster meetings could be a good platform for teachers to share ideas and improve on how to use different tools for teaching certain language aspects. This need not be always in person, but could be facilitated through digital platforms like Whats App , Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. as greater use of technology will empower teachers with 21st Century skills.

### 5.4.5 Capacitating schools

The WCED should provide programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of the schools that are struggling and also ensure that such support is visible and is data based. The support could be provided by curriculum advisors. Through corporate partners like Partners for Possibility the schools should ensure that such partnerships translate to programmes that will capacitate teachers in Literacy teaching. If possible I would suggest that the corporate partners should devise mechanisms to make schools account for resources and training received through such collaborations. Both the Provincial Department of Education and other

service providers should design interventions which will equip the School Management Teams with knowledge, skills and instruments to monitor curriculum coverage.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

The overarching aim of this qualitative case study was to examine Grade 6 teachers' lived experiences of the implementation of the Western Cape Literacy Systemic Evaluations as a provincial intervention strategy in English First Additional Language Literacy. While recognising the limitations of a qualitative case study, I believe I have largely achieved the purpose of this study. This study has succeeded in bringing teachers' voices into the arena of Systemic Evaluations. What was known previously was simply that teachers' had some antipathy to the SEs, revealed partly through the boycott of the October 2015 Systemic Evaluation. Through this study we now know that the way in which the Systemic Evaluations are implemented has a negative effect on teachers' emotional state, resulting in compromised teaching and learning. The study has also revealed many other related findings.

As discussed earlier, this study confirmed the findings of the previous studies (Matshidiso, 2007; Reyneke, 2008) that many educators are ill-equipped to develop tasks of high quality and appropriate assessment tools. The study also confirmed the findings of Govender (2005), DoE (2004) and Brommbacher (2004), both of whom found that educators were not well equipped to design assessment tasks of high quality which are appropriate to the target group as well as the purpose. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and William (2004) indicated that assessment for learning is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. An assessment task serves the purpose of accountability if it informs learning by providing information that educators and their learners can use as feedback to assess themselves and one another and to improve their teaching and learning activities.

The study further indicated that there is a need to capacitate educators. It appears that there is a connection between teachers' level of exposure to assessment data and their ability to analyse the data effectively. It is necessary to ensure that such capacity is built amongst teachers.

While the findings of case studies cannot be generalised, it can be deduced from this study that literacy assessments are a challenge with regard to their use, design, implementation and use of the data derived from them. The challenge is associated with teachers' lack of training in assessment design and data analysis. The study has shown that a focussed professional development programme, particularly in the matter of assessment design and analysis, is a much-needed skill in the education profession. The findings of this study echo other research findings that high-stakes assessments have unintended consequences and that teachers are ill equipped in assessment design. Through this study, we now know that although there is no malice intended by the implementation of the Western Cape Systemic Evaluations, the way in which they are implemented has compromised learning and teaching, with teachers teaching for testing rather than learning. This study further reveals that teachers are negatively affected emotionally by the Systemic Evaluations to the detriment of sound teaching and classroom relationships. This study concludes by suggesting that the Western Cape Education Department consider reorientation teachers to Systemic Evaluations.

# REFERENCES


Adam, A., & Nel, C. (2015). ANA as part of a comprehensive reading literacy school assessment system. *Journal for Language Teaching*, *48*(2), 11–35. https://doi.org/10.4314/jlt.v48i2.1

African Union. (2006, June). Second decade of education for africa *(2006-2015)* plan of action. Author. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Dakar/pdf/AU%20SECOND%20DECADE%20ON%20EDUCTAION%202006-2015.pdf

Akinyeye, C., & Plüddemann, P. (2016). The story of a narrative: Teaching and assessing English writing in a township school. *Reading & Writing*, *7*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v7i1.88

Albury, N. J. (2016). National language policy theory: exploring Spolsky's model in the case of Iceland. *Language Policy*, *15*(4), 355–372. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-015-9357-z

Ally, N. & McLaren, D. 2016. Fees are an issue in school too, not just university. *Project Rise*, 12 November. https://projectrise.news24.com/fees-issue-school-not-just-university/ [Date of access: 6 August 2017].

Arnove, R. F. & Graff, H. J. (1987). National literacy campaigns: Historical and comparative lessons. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *69*(3), 202-206

Amrein, A. L. & Berliner, D. C. (2002). An analysis of some unintended and negative consequences of high-stakes testing. *Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU)*, (480).

Anyiendah, M. S. (2017). Challenges faced by teachers when teaching English in public primary schools in Kenya.Language and Education 21(1) 1–3. https://doi.org/10.2167/le684.0

Arya, D. J., McClung, N. A., Katznelson, N. & Scott, L. (2016). Language ideologies and literacy achievement: Six multilingual countries and two international assessments. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *13*(1), 40-60.

Atwell, P. (Head of Communication for the WCED) 2016, *Effective systemic tests aid quality*

*education*, Business Day Newspaper 18 October, Available: https://www.groundup.org.za/article/effective-systemic-tests-aid-quality-education/ [Date of access: 15 April 20.]

Babbie, E. R. (1995). The practice of social research. (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). The practice of social science research. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Bailey, R.E. (1970). An Application of General Systems Theory to the Determination of the Nature of Accounting. Louisiana State University . Historical Dissertations and Theses. 1819. https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/1819

Bailey, C. R. (1995). *A Guide to Field Research (The Pine Forge Press Series in Research Methods and Statistics)*. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press.

Baird, J. A. (2009). Macro and micro influences on assessment practice. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, *16*(2), 127–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/09695940903075883 Accessed on 26 September 2020.

Banathy, B. H., & Jenlink, P. M. (2004). Systems inquiry and its application in education. In D. H. E. Jonassen (Ed.), Handbook of research for educational communications and technology (2nd ed., pp. 37-58). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Bandura, A. (1995). Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing societies. In A. Bandura (Eds.), Self-efficacy in changing societies (pp. 1-45). New York: Cambridge University Press

Barber, M. & Mourshed,M. (2020, August 7). How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top. Retrieved September 12, 2020, from https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/how-the-worlds-best-performing-school-systems-come-out-on-top#

Barnard, J. (2017, December). Grade 6 english first additional language teachers' perceived preparedness for pedagogical content knowledge in writing education (Master's Thesis.University of Stellenbosch.Stellenbosch.South Africa). Sun Scholar Research Repository. Retrieved from https://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/102663

Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and

implementation for novice researchers. *The qualitative report*, *13*(4), 544-559.

Bennett, R. E. (2011). Formative assessment: a critical review. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *18*(1), 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594x.2010.513678

Bertalanffy, L. (1969). *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications (Revised Edition) (Penguin University Books)* (Revised ed.). New York, United States of America: George Braziller Inc.

Bhola, H. S. (1984). *Campaigning for Literacy: Eight National Experiences of the Twentieth Century, with a Memorandum to Decision-Makers*. UNIPUB, 4611-F Assembly Drive, Lanham, MD 20703.

Birch, S. H., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). The teacher-child relationship and children's early school adjustment. *Journal of School Psychology*, *35*(1), 61–79. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022-4405(96)00029-5

Black,M.(Ed.).(2019).The importance of language.Cornell University Press. London

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *5*(1), 7–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. & Wiliam, D. (2004). Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *86*(1), 8-21.

Blanche, M. T., Durrheim, K., & Painter, D. (1999). *Research in practice : applied methods for the social sciences* (1st ed.). Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press.

Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Sithole, S. l. 2013. *Fundamentals of social research methods: an African perspective.* 5th edition. Juta & Co. South Africa.

Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method. *Quality & Quantity*, *36*, 391–409. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1023/A:1020909529486.pdf on 10 June 2019

Boeren, E. (2019). Understanding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on 'quality education' from micro, meso and macro perspectives. *International Review of*

*Education*, *65*(2), 277–294. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-019-09772-7

Borko, H., Davinroy, K. H., Bliem, C. L. & Cumbo, K. B. (2000). Exploring and supporting teacher change: Two third-grade teachers' experiences in a Mathematics and Literacy staff development project. *The Elementary School Journal*, *100*(4), 273-306.

Botha, R. (Nico). (2018). School effectiveness: conceptualising divergent assessment approaches. *South African Journal of Education*, *30*(4), 605–620. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v30n4a391

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *9*(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/qrj0902027

Bowen, G. A. (2010). Preparing a Qualitative Research-Based Dissertation: Lessons Learned. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *10*(2), 20–35. https://doi.org/10.3316/qrj1002020

Braun, H. & Kanjee, A. (2006). Using assessment to improve education in developing nations. In *Improving education through assessment, innovation and education*. Retrieved from https://www.amacad.org/publications/braun.pdf

Briggs, A. P. & Coleman, M. D. (n.d.). *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.za/books/about/Research_Methods_in_Educational_Leadersh.html?id=MJVc3m4P4j8C&redir_esc=y

Brink, C. S. (2012). A historical perspective of testing and assessment including the impact of summative and formative assessment on student achievement. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *73*(4-A), 1383. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2012-99190-530&site=ehost-live

Brink, H., Van der Walt, C. & Van Rensburg, G. H. (2012). Fundamentals of research methodology for health care professionals. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.za/books?id=OfqauAAACAAJ&dq=(Brink,+Van+der+Walt,+%26+Van+Ransburg,+2014)&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjeneSruanhAhUtxIUKHc0dDjwQ6AEIKjAA

Brock-utne, B., Desai, Z., & Qorro, M. (2007). Focus on fresh data on the language of

instruction debate in Tanzania and South Africa. *The Qualitative Report*, *53*(5/6), 509–530. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-007-9065-9

Brock-Utne, B. & Holmarsdottir, H. B. (2004). Language policies and practices in Tanzania and South Africa: Problems and challenges. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *24*(1), 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2003.10.002

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, *32*(7), 513–531. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.32.7.513

Brookhart, S. M. (2004). Classroom Assessment: Tensions and Intersections in Theory and Practice. *Teachers College Record*, *106*(3), 429–458. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2004.00346.x

Brown *, G. T. L. (2004). Teachers' conceptions of assessment: implications for policy and professional development. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *11*(3), 301–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594042000304609

Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *204*(8), 429–432. https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2008.292

Burton, N., Brundrett, M., & Jones, M. (2008). *Doing Your Education Research Project*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Chen, J. Q., Salahuddin, R., Horsch, P. & Wagner, S. L. (2000). Turning standardised test scores into a tool for improving teaching and learning: An assessment-based approach. *Urban Education*, *35*(3), 356-384.

Chisholm, L., Wildeman, R., Chisholm, L. & Wildeman, R. (2013). The politics of testing in South Africa. *0272*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2012.755710

Clercq, F. De, Shalem, Y., & Nkambule, T. (2014). *Teachers ' and HoDs ' accountability on curriculum coverage : PILO ' s contribution to the theory of change in education*. 1–22.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2017). Research Methods in Education (8th ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539

Cohen, L. Manion, L. (1986). *Research methods in education.* Croom Helm, London.

Cohen, D. and Crabtree, B. (2006). Sem-istructured intervies Qualitative Research Guidelines

Project. Retrieved from http://www.qualres.org/HomeEval-3664.htm

Cohen, D. K. (2007). What is the system in systemic reform? *Educational Researcher*, *24*(9), 11–31. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x024009011

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London and New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Connole, H., Smith, R. J. & Wiseman, R. (1995). *Research methodology 1: Issues and methods in research. Study guide*. Geelong, Vic: Deakin University.

.Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). Strategies for qualitative data analysis. *Basics of qualitative research (3rd ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781452230153

Cots, J. M., Llurda, E. & Garrett, P. (2014). Language policies and practices in the internationalisation of higher education on the European margins: an introduction. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *35*(4), 311–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.874430

Cox, K. M. & Desforges, M. (2018). The role of the school. *Divorce and the School*, (November), 90–115. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315411897-6

Creswell, J. W. (n.d.). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Google Books. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.za/books?id=DetLkgQeTJgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Creswell,+2007).&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi19JfxuanhAhVsxYUKHVZnASAQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=Creswell%2C 2007).&f=false

Creswell, J. W. (1994). Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, *39*(3), 124–130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Five qualitative approaches to inquiry. In *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (2nd ed., pp. 53–80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches*.

London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Crotty, Michael. 1998. The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Dane, F. C. (2011). *Evaluating Research: Methodology for People Who Need to Read Research* (1st ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Dantas-Whitney, M., Mize, K. & Waldschmidt, E. D. (2009). Integrating macro- and micro-level issues in esol/bilingual teacher education. In *Critical Pedagogy and Teacher Education in the Neoliberal Era* (pp. 113-125). Springer, Dordrecht.

Da Rocha, T. (2009). *What are the factors influencing the relationship between school language policy and the literacy proficiency of learners at Grade 7 level?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town). https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/12422

Dawson, P., Bearman, M., Boud, D. J., Hall, M., Molloy, E. K., Bennett, S. & Joughin, G. (2013). Assessment might dictate the curriculum, but what dictates assessment? *Teaching & Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal*, *1*(1), 107–111. https://doi.org/10.2979/teachlearninqu.1.1.107

Death, C. & Gabay, C. (2015). Doing biopolitics differently? Radical potential in the post-2015 MDG and SDG debates. *Globalizations*, *12*(4), 597-612.

Delandshere, G. & Jones, J. H. (1999). Elementary teachers' beliefs about assessment in Mathematics: A case of assessment paralysis. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, *14*(3), 216.

Denzin, N. K. (2009). The elephant in the living room: or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence. Qualitative Research, 9(2), 139–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794108098034

Denzin, N.K. (2015). Triangulation. In The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, G. Ritzer (Ed.). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeost050.pub2

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Methods of collecting and analyzing empirical

materials. *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 2nd edition. Sage. Thousand Oaks,CA

DoE (Department of Education). 1997. Language in education policy. Pretoria: Department of Education. http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/LanguageEducationPolicy1997_1.pdf

Department of Basic Education: Republic of South Africa. (2011). *Report on the Annual National Assessments of 2011*. Author. Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/report-annual-assessments0.pdf

Department of Basic Education. (2008). Plan and conduct assessment A module of the Advanced Certificate: Education (School Management and Leadership). In *Advanced Certificate: Education (School Management and Leadership)* (pp. 1–159). Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Plan%20and%20conduct%20assessment.pdf?ver=2009-10-14-124958-510

Department of Education. (2008, February). *National Reading Strategy*. Author. Retrieved from https://edulibpretoria.files.wordpress.com/2008/04/national_reading-strategy-2008.pdf

Department of Education. (2010). *Education for All ( EFA ) 2009 Country Report: South Africa*.

Department of Education. (2012). *National policy prtaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the national curriculum statement Grades R - 12*. Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Education.Retrieved from https://www.thutong.doe.gov.za/Home/PolicyDocuments/tabid/1952/Default.aspx?PolicyTypeid=1

Department of Basic Education. (2013, October). *General education system quality assessment: country report south africa*. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/South%20African%20Country%20Report-%20General%20Education%20System%20Quality%20Assessment%20October%202013.pdf?ver=2013-11-08-155609-140

Department: Basic Education. (2014). *the Annual National Assessment of 2014*.

Dochy, F. J. & McDowell, L. (1997). Introduction: Assessment as a tool for learning. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 23*(4), 279-98.

De Varennes, F., & Kuzborska, E. (2016). Language, Rights and Opportunities: The Role of Language in the Inclusion and Exclusion of Indigenous Peoples. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, *23*(3), 281–305. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02303004

Dorgu,E. T. (2015). Different Teaching Methods: A Panacea for Effective Curriculum Implementation in the Classroom. *International Journal of Secondary Education*, *3*(6), 77–87. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijsedu.s.2015030601.13

Eckstein, M. & Noah, H. (1993). *Secondary school examinations: International perspectives on policies and practice*. New Haven.

Edwards, F. (2013). Quality assessment by science teachers: Five focus areas. *Science Education International*, *24*(2), 212–226. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1015826.pdf

Elmore, R. F., Abelmann, C. H. & Fuhrman, S. H. (1996). The new accountability in state education reform: From process to performance. *Holding Schools Accountable: Performance-based Reform in Education*, 65-98.

Ettekal, A. V. & Mahoney, J. L. (2017). Ecological Systems Theory. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Out-of-School Learning. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.*

Fleisch, B. & Woolman, S. (2007). On the constitutionality of single-medium public schools. *South African Journal on Human Rights*, *23*(1), 34-67.

Fleisch, B. (2008). *Primary education in crisis: Why South African schoolchildren underachieve in reading and Mathematics*. Juta and Company Ltd.

Fleisch, B. & Schöer, V. (2014). Large-scale instructional reform in the global south: Insights from the mid-point evaluation of the Gauteng primary language and Mathematics strategy. *South African Journal of Education*, *34*(3), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.15700/201409161040

Flick, U. & Coffey, A. (2014). Analysing documents. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 367–379. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n25

Flick, U., Kowal, S. & O'Connell, D. C. (2014). Transcription as a crucial step of data analysis. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 64–78. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n5

Flick, U., Maxwell, J. A. & Chmiel, M. (2014). Notes toward a theory of qualitative data analysis. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 21–34. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n2

Flick, U. & Rapley, T. (2014). Sampling strategies in qualitative research. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 49–63. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n4

Flick, U. & Roulston, K. (2014). Analysing interviews. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 297–312. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n20

Flynn, N., Pim, C. & Coles, S. (2015). Teaching English as an additional language. *MESH Guides*. May: 1–20. Retrieved from http://www.meshguides.org/guides/node/112

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *12*(2), 219–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363

Fulmer, G. W., Lee, I. C. H. & Tan, K. H. K. (2015). Multi-level model of contextual factors and teachers' assessment practices: An integrative review of research. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, *22*(4), 475–494. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2015.1017445

Fuhrman, S. & Elmore, R. F. (Eds.). (2004). *Redesigning Accountability Systems for Education* (Vol. 38). Teachers College Press.

Gabay, C. (2015). Special Forum on the Millennium Development Goals: Introduction. *Globalizations*, *12*(4), 576–580. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2015.1033173

García, G. E. & Lang, M. G. (2018). The link between standards and dual language teachers' Spanish literacy instruction and use of formative assessments. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *41*(2), 167–186. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2018.1445049

Germain, T. A. (2015, July). *Applying Systems Theory as a Lens on Teacher and Student Perceptions of Assessment and Feedback in an Intensive English Program* (Masters Thesis). MATESOL. Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection

Gipps, C. (1994). *Beyond testing*. London: The Falmer Press.

Giraldo, F. (2018). *Language Assessment Literacy: Implications for Language Teachers.Issues Teach.Prof.Dev., 20*(1), 179–195.Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v20n1.62089

Gorter, D. & Cenoz, J. (2017). Language education policy and multilingual assessment. *Language and Education, 31*(3), 231–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1261892

Gove, A. & Wetterberg, A. (2011). The early grade reading assessment: Applications and interventions to improve basic literacy. https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2011.bk.0007.1109

Graven, M. & Venkat, H. (2014a). Primary teachers' experiences relating to the administration processes of high-stakes testing: The case of Mathematics annual national assessments. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 18*(3), 299–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/10288457.2014.965406



Graven, M. & Venkat, H. (2014b). Primary teachers ' experiences relating to the administration processes of high-stakes testing: The case of Mathematics annual national assessments. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 0*(0), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/10288457.2014.965406

Guba, E. G. (1990). *The alternative paradigm dialog.* In E. G. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* (p. 17–27). Thousand Oaks. California.Sage Publications, Inc

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2*(163-194), 105.

Gunnulfsen, A. E. (2018, January). *Micro policy making in schools. Use of national test results in a Norwegian context.* (PHD Dissertation). University of Oslo. Retrieved from https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/61908/PhD-Gunnulfsen-2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Guskey, T. R. (2003). How classroom assessments improve learning . *Educational Leadership, 60*(5), 6–11. Retrieved from http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uwc.ac.za/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=78268328-bd5c-469c-aff1-4e217e6814ea%40sdc-v-sessmgr03

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). The process of analysis. *Ethnography: Principles in practice*, 158-190.

Harlen, W., Gipps, C., Broadfoot, P. & Nuttall, D. (1992). Assessment and the improvement of education. *The Curriculum Journal*, *3*(3), 215-230.

Hart, J. E. & Lee, O. (2003). Teacher professional development to improve the science and literacy achievement of english language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *27*(3), 475–501. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2003.10162604

Heick, T. (2020, May 4). What's A Feedback Loop In Learning? A Definition For Teachers. Retrieved October 27, 2020, from https://www.teachthought.com/learning/what-is-a-feedback-loop-for-learning/

Helman, L. A. (2015). Using literacy assessment results to improve teaching for English-language learners. *The Reading Teacher*, *58*(7), 668–677. https://doi.org/10.1598/rt.58.7.7

Henderson, W. (1993). *Economics And Language*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W. & Smit, B. (2004). Finding your way in qualitative research. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Heugh, K., Prinsloo, C., Makgamatha, M., Diedericks, G. & Winnaar, L. (2017). Multilingualism(s) and system-wide assessment: a southern perspective. *Language and Education*, *31*(3), 197–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1261894

Hill, A. M.,Alexander,J. & Joubert,M. (2009). An investigation into reasons for underperformance in Literacy in Grades 3 and 6 in selected national quintiles 1, 2 & 3 schools in the Western Cape Education Department. *Education Papers and Reports*, 4.

Hoadley, U., & Muller, J. (2014). Testing, testing: Investigating the epistemic potential of systemic tests. *Mimeograph. Cape Town: University of Cape Town*.

Holloway, I. (1997). *Basic concepts for qualitative research*. Oxford.Wiley-Blackwell

Hord, S. M. (1997). PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES. Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement. *Leadership*, *40*(1), 58–59. Retrieved from https://sedl.org/pubs/change34/plc-cha34.pdf

Horn, I. S. (2008). Turnaround students in high school Mathematics: Constructing identities of competence through mathematical worlds. *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, *10*(3), 201-239.

Howie, S. J., Venter, E., Van Staden, S., Zimmerman, L., Long, C., Du Toit, C. M. & Archer, E. (2007). *PIRLS 2006 summary report: South African children's reading achievement*. Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA).

Howie, S. (2012a). High-stakes testing in South Africa: Friend or foe? *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *19*(1), 81–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2011.613369

Howie, S. (2016a, August). *Assessment for political accountability or towards educational quality*. Paper presentation presented at the The 42nd IAEA Conference, Cape Town, South Africa.

Howie, S. (2016, September). *An educational interpretation of systemic testing*. Presentation presented at the SAOU conference, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Howie, S., Combrinck, C., Roux, K., Tshele, M.G. & Mishack, P. N. (2016). *PIRLS Literacy 2016*.

Huba, M. E. & Freed, J. E. (2000). *Learner-centered assessment on college campuses: Shifting the focus from teaching to learning*. MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hycner, R. H. (1999). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. In A. Bryman & R. .G. Burgess (Eds.), Qualitative research (Vol. 3, pp. 143-164). London: Sage.

Invernizzi, M., Meier, J., Swank, L. & Juel, C. (2001). *Phonological awareness literacy screening* (PALS-K). Charlottesville, VA.

James, M. & Pedder, D. (2006). Beyond method: Assessment and learning practices and

values. *The Curriculum Journal*, *17*(2), 109-138.

Johnson, D. (1998a). Teacher assessments and literacy profiles of primary school children in South Africa. *International Journal of Phytoremediation* (Vol. 21). https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050305

Johnson, D. C. & Johnson, D. C. (2018). Teachers ' language policy engagement : European perspectives and challenges perspectives and challenges. *Language and Education*, *32*(5), 462–469. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1485694

Johnson, D. & Johnson, D. (2006). *Teacher assessments and literacy profiles of primary school children in South Africa*. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050305

Jones, P. W. (1990). Unesco and the Politics of Global Literacy. *Comparative Education Review*, *34*(1), 41–60. https://doi.org/10.1086/446902

Joppe, G. (2000). Testing reliability and validity of research instruments. *Journal of American Academy of Business Cambridge*, *4*(1/2), 49-54.

Kamens, D. H. & McNeely, C. L. (2010). Globalization and the growth of international educational testing and national assessment. *Comparative Education Review*, *54*(1), 5-25.

Kaminski, R.A., Cummings, K.D., Powell-Smith, K.A., & Good, R.H. (2008). Best practices in using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS®) for formative assessment and evaluation. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.). Best Practices in School Psychology (5th ed.). (pp. 1181-1204). Bethesda, MD: NASP.

Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2000). A new language policy, old language practices: Status planning for African languages in a multilingual South Africa. *South African Journal of African Languages*, *20*(1), 50-60.

Kanjee, A., Patterson, A., Prinsloo, C., Kivulu, K. & Pheiffer, C. (2001). *Improving learning in South African schools: The quality learning project baseline evaluati*on. Pretoria: JET/HSRC.

.Kanjee, A. (2008, March 17). Assessment and Education Quality in South Africa [Slides]. Retrieved from http://repository.hsrc.ac.za/bitstream/handle/20.500.11910/5557/5126_Kanjee_Assessm

entandeducationquality.pdf?sequence=1

Kanjee, A. (2015). *Enhancing teacher assessment practices in South African schools : Evaluation of the assessment resource banks.* Centre for Education. September. https://doi.org/10.1080/16823200902940599

.Kanjee, A., & Moloi, Q. (2013). A standards-based approach for reporting assessment results in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education*, *34*(4), 29–51. https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593x/pie.v34i4.3

Kanjee, A. & Moloi, Q. (2016). South African teachers' use of national assessment data. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *4*(2), 24. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v4i2.206

Kanjee, A. & Sayed, Y. (2013). Assessment policy in post-apartheid South Africa: Challenges for improving education quality and learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *20*(4), 442-469.

Kanjee, A. (2005, May). *Assessment systems and practices: Assessment systems and practices: Implications for education policy Implications for education policy*. Presented at the Global Conference on Education Research, Prague, Czech Republic. Retrieved from http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-outputs/ktree-doc/1011+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=za

Kanungo, S., & Jain, V. (2007, January). *General Systems Theory: A Guiding Framework for IS Research*. Presented at the Reaching New Heights. 13th Americas Conference on Information Systems, Keystone, Colorado,USA. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220889617_General_Systems_Theory_A_Guiding_Framework_for_IS_Research

Kapur, K. (2008, September). *Assessment for improving learning in schools in India: A perspective.* Presented at the 34th Annual Conference, Cambridge, United Kingdom. Retrieved from https://iaea.info/documents/assessment-for-improving-learning-in-schools-in-india-a-perspective/

Kellaghan, T. (2004). Public examinations, national and international assessments and educational policy. *Educational Research Centre, Dublin*, (May), 1–16.

Kellaghan, T. & Greaney, V. (2003). Association for the development of education in Africa monitoring performance: Assessment and examinations in Africa. *ADEA Biennial Meeting*.

Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships Matter: Linking Teacher Support to Student Engagement and Achievement. *Journal of School Health*, *74*(7), 262–273. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2004.tb08283.x

*Kuhn, T. S. (1962). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1st ed., Vol. 1). Chicago, United States of America: The University of Chicago Press LTD.*

Le Cordeur, M. (2014). Constantly weighing the pig will not make it grow: do teachers teach assessment tests or the curriculum? *Perspectives in Education*, *32*(1), 142-157.

Le Cordeur, M. 2014. Mother Tongue Education Provides Essential Basis for Sound Education. [Online]. Available: http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=1289 [Accessed: 24 September 2019].

Lee, N. and Lings, I. (2008) Doing Business Research: A Guide to Theory and Practice. Sage Publishers, London..

Leedy, P. D. St Ormond, j. E.(2001). Practical research: Planning and design . Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Le Grange, L. (2014). Curriculum research in South Africa. *International handbook of curriculum research*, 466-475.

Lenyai, E. (2016). First additional language teaching in the foundation phase of schools in disadvantaged areas. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *1*(1), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v1i1.76

Li, D. L. (2016). *Economy, Emotion and Ethics in Chinese Cinema: Globalization on Speed*. Routledge. Taylor & Francis Croup. London and New York.

Limage, L. (1993). Literacy strategies: a view from the International Literacy Year Secretariat of UNESCO. *Knowledge, culture and power: international perspectives on literacy as policy and practice*.

Limage, L. J. (1999). Literacy practices and literacy policies: where has UNESCO been and where might it be going?. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *19*(1), 75-89.

*Limage,L,J. (2006) Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006: Education for All Global Literacy for Life (Education on the Move)*. Paris, France: United Nations Educational.

Limage, L. J. (2006). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for life.* UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141639

Limage, L. J. (2007). Organizational challenges to international cooperation for literacy in UNESCO. *Comparative Education*, *43*(3), 451–468. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060701556471

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1999). Naturalistic and rationalistic enquiry. *JP Keeves & Gabriele Lakomski, Issues in educational research*, 141-150.

Inbar-Lourie, O. (2008). Constructing a language assessment knowledge base: A focus on language assessment courses. *Language Testing*, *25*(3), 385-402.

Lunenburg, F. C. (2010). Schools as open systems. *Schooling*, *1*(1), 1–5. Retrieved from http://www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%20Journal%20Volumes/Lununburg,%20Fred%20C.%20Schools%20as%20Open%20Systems%20Schooling%20V1%20N1%202010.pdf

MacMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (2001). Descriptive statistics. *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*, *11*(3), 204-236.

MacMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (2006). Research in education–Evidence-based Inquiry . International Edition.

Mahomet, R. P. (2013). *Language assessment : an exploration of whether critical language testing influences the testing of language in the FET phase of a selected high school.* (Masters Thesis). University of KwaZulu Natal. Retrieved from https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/9664/Mahomet_Robin_P_2013

.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Makalela, L. (2016). Ubuntu translanguaging: An alternative framework for complex multilingual encounters. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, *34*(3), 187-196.

Maphalala, M. C. & Mncube, D. W. (2017). Standardised testing in South Africa: the annual national assessments under the microscope. *Gender and Behaviour, 15*(4), 10321-10332.

Maphalala, M. C. & Dhlamini, J. J. (2017). Standardised testing: a case of annual national assessments in South African primary schools. *Gender and Behaviour*, *15*(4), 10334-10346

Martin, J., Blanche, T., Durrheim, K., & Painter, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Juta Limited.

Meyer, S. & Abel, L. (2015). Hastening slowly: insights about teacher development from an evaluation of courses at the WCED's Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute. *Journal of Education*, (61), 115–145.

Marchant, G. J. (2004). What is at Stake with High Stakes Testing? A Discussion of Issues and Research. *The Ohio Journal of Science*, *104*(2), 2–7. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/1811/25124

Maree, K. (2016). *First steps in research* (2nd ed.). Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik.

Marope, M. (2017). Reconceptualizing and Repositioning Curriculum in the 21st Century: A Global Paradigm Shift. *Retrieved 22 April 2018 from http://www. ibe. unesco. org/en/news/documentreconceptualizing-and-repositioning-curriculum-21st-century*.

Maruatona, T. (2008). Reflections on policies for mass literacy education in sub-saharan africa. *International Review of Education, 54*(5–6), 745–754. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-008-9115-y

Mason, J. (1996). Planning and designing qualitative research. *Qualitative Researching. London: Sage*.

Matshidiso, M. N. (2007). *Educators' perceptions of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) assessment.* Doctoral dissertation, North-West University.

McCallum, B., Gipps, C., McAlister, S. & Brown, M. (1995). National curriculum assessment: Emerging models of teacher assessment in the classroom. *Evaluating authentic assessment*, 88-104.

Mellati, M., & Khademi, M. (2018). Exploring teachers' assessment literacy: Impact on learners' writing achievements and implications for teacher development. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *43*(6), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n6.1

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education: Revised and Expanded from Case Study Research in Education* (2nd Revised & Expanded ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. (2009). Divergence and Mixed Methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *4*(1), 3–5. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689809358406

Mngomezulu,N.M. (2015). *Strategies of monitoring teaching and learning : A school management team perspective( Masters Thesis.*University of KwaZulu Natal.Durban. South Africa.

Modzuka, C., Long, C., & Machaba, F. (2019). Rasch Analysis of South Africa's Grade 6 Annual National Assessment. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, *23*(1), 86–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/18117295.2019.1600893

Mohajeri-nelson, N., Ph, D. & Negley, T. (2016). *Best Practices in Programme Evaluation Introduction to Programme Evaluation.*

Mohlabi-Tlaka, N., de Jager, L., & Engelbrecht, A. (2017). Policy, practice, purpose: the text-based approach in contemporary South African EFAL classrooms. *Per Linguam*, *33*(2), 22–35. https://doi.org/10.5785/33-2-713

Moloi, M. Q., & Chetty, M. (2010). *The SACMEQ III Project in South Africa: A Study of the Conditions of Schooling and the Quality of Education .South Africa • Country Report*. Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality. Educational Policy Research. Retrieved from http://www.sacmeq.org/sites/default/files/sacmeq/reports/sacmeq-iii/national-reports/s3_south_africa_final.pdf

Montoya, S. (2018, October 18). Defining literacy [Slides]. Retrieved from

http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/4.6.1_07_4.6-defining-literacy.pdf

Morris, D., Blanton, L., Blanton, W. E., Nowacek, J. & Perney, J. (1995). Teaching Low-Achieving Spellers at Their' Instructional Level'. *The Elementary School Journal, 96*(2), 163-177.

Morrison, R. B. & Lewis, D. G. (2006). Assessment in Education. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 23*(2), 238. https://doi.org/10.2307/3120512

Mouton, J. & Marais, H. C. (1990). Basic concepts in the methodology of the social sciences (Revised ed.). *Pretoria, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council*.

*Mthethwa, G. O. (2015, November). The role of inclusive intermediate phase teachers in imparting reading skills to learners in KwaDukuza circuit (Masters Dissertation). University of South Africa. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10500/19938*

Muhammad, Y. (2019). *Choosing an appropriate teaching methodology.* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Yaqub_Muhammad3/publication/332548905_Choosing_an_appropriate_teaching_methodology/links/5cbc57e8a6fdcc1d49a43261/Choosing-an-appropriate-teaching-methodology.pdf?_

Muhammad, Y. (2019). *Choosing an appropriate teaching methodology.* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Yaqub_Muhammad3/publication/332548905_Choosing_an_appropriate_teaching_methodology/links/5cbc57e8a6fdcc1d49a43261/Choosing-an-appropriate-teaching-methodology.pdf?

Mullis, I. V., Martin, M. O., Kennedy, A. M. & Foy, P. (2007). PIRLS 2006 international report. *Boston, MA: Internationa*l.

Mullis, I. V., Martin, M. O., Foy, P. & Drucker, K. T. (2012). *PIRLS 2011 International Results in Reading*. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Amsterdam.

Muskin, J. A. (2015). *Student learning assessment and the curriculum: issues and implications for policy, design and implementation*. UNESCO International Bureau of Education. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235489

National language policy. (1982). *Asian Studies Association of Australia. Review*, *6*(2), 34–

34. https://doi.org/10.1080/03147538208712231

Navsaria, I., Pascoe, M., & Kathard, H. (2011). 'It's not just the learner, it's the system!' Teachers' perspectives on written language difficulties: Implications for speech-language therapy. *South African Journal of Communication Disorders*, http://hdl.handle.net/11427/19939

National Education Evaluation And Development Unit. (2013, April). *NEEDU National Report 2012:The state of literacy in the foundation phase.* https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.12999.55204

NEEDU. (2013). *NEEDU National Report 2012: Summary*. 1–24. Retrieved from http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/papers/2013/needu.pdf

Nel, C. (2012). Classroom assessment of reading comprehension: How are preservice Foundation Phase teachers being prepared? *Per Linguam*, *27*(2), 41–66. https://doi.org/10.5785/27-2-107

Neluheni, T. S. (2011, October). *). Exploring quality and assessment models for english first additional language in grade 10: Assessment and Quality Assurance in Education and Training.* (Masters Dissertation) University of Pretoria. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2263/27630

Ngwaru, J. M. (2010). *Literacy practices at home and school for rural children in Zimbabwe: Literacy and learning practices at home and school in rural Zimbabwe: The real pedagogical dilemas*. Riga, Latvia: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

Nicolescu, B. N. (2017). *About the Systems Theory in the Field of Education Sciences Social & Behavioural Sciences. Edu World 2016. 7th International Conference* https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2017.05.02.21

Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007). Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research* (2nd ed., pp. 69–97). Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik.

Nomlomo, V. & Mbekwa, M. (2013). Voices from the classroom: Teacher and learner perceptions on the use of the learners' home language in the teaching and learning of school Mathematics and science. In *Education, dominance and identity* (pp. 133-149).

Brill Sense.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2013). Teachers for the 21st Century: Using Evaluation to Improve Teaching. In *Teachers for the 21st Century: Using Evaluation to Improve Teaching*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-36970-4

OECD (2013), "Student assessment: Putting the learner at the centre", in Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-7-en

OECD2030. (2018). *directorate for education and skills education policy committee Cancels & replaces the same document of Education and Skills 2030: Curriculum analysis Literature review on flexibility and autonomy*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/Literature_review_on_flexibility_and_autonomy.pdf

Oghenekohwo, J. E. (2017). *Literacy Education and Sustainable Development in Developing Societies*. *5*(2). https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.126

Oghenekohwo, J.E., & A. Frank-Oputu, E. (2017). Literacy Education and Sustainable Development in Developing Societies. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, *5*(2), 126–131. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.126

Ospina, S. (2004). Qualitative research. In *Encyclopedia of leadership* (pp. 1279-1284). Sage Publications,inc.

Owen-smith, M. (2010). The Language Challenge in the classroom : a serious shift in thinking and action is needed. *The Journal of the Helen Suzman Foundatiom*, *1*(56), 31–37.Retrieved from https://hsf.org.za/publications/focus/focus-56-february-2010-on-learning-and-teaching/the-language-challenge-in-the-classroom-a-serious-shift-in-thinking-and-action-is-needed

Oyebade, S. A. (2001). Applying the general systems theory to students' conflict management in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. *Lagos Journal of Educational Administration and Planning*, *1*(1), 36–49. Retrieved from http://ahero.uwc.ac.za/index.php?module=cshe&action=viewtitle&id=cshe_612

Paris, S., Calfee, R., Filby, N., Hiebert, E., Pearson, P., Valencia, S., & Wolf, K. (1992). A

Framework for Authentic Literacy Assessment. *The Reading Teacher*, *46*(2), 88-98. Retrieved October 30, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20201023

Patton, M.Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications,inc.

Patton M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research*, *34*(5 Pt 2), 1189–1208. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1089059/

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, *1*(3), 261–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325002001003636

Plüddemann, P. (2015). Unlocking the grid : language-in-education policy realisation in post-apartheid South Africa. *Language and Education*, *29*(3), 186–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.994523

Plummer, K. (2001). Getting and doing life stories. *Documents of life*, *2*, 118-148.

Popham, W. J. (2011). Assessment Literacy Overlooked: A Teacher Educator's Confession. *The Teacher Educator*, *46*(4), 265–273. https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2011.605048

Posel, D., & Casale, D. (2010, April). *English language proficiency and earnings in a developing country: the case of South Africa*. Presented at the 5th IZA/World Bank Conference: Employment and Development, Cape Town, South Africa. Retrieved from http://conference.iza.org/conference_files/worldb2010/posel_d6095.pdf

Posel, D. & Casale, D. (2011). *International Journal of Educational Development Language proficiency and language policy in South Africa : Findings from new data*. *31*, 449–457. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2010.09.003

Postlethwaite, T. N. & Kellaghan, T. (2008). National assessments of educational achievement. *Paris, France: International Institute for Educational Planning*.

Prah, K. K. (2006). Challenges to the promotion of indigenous languages in South Africa. *The Center for Advanced Studies of African Society, Cape Town*.

Pretorius, E. J., & Mampuru, D. M. (2007). Playing football without a ball: language, reading

and academic performance in a high-poverty school. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *30*(1), 38–58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2006.00333.x

Pretorius, E. J. (2014). Supporting transition or playing catch-up in Grade 4? Implications for standards in education and training. *Perspectives in Education*, *32*(1), 47–72. Retrieved from http://scholar.ufs.ac.za:8080/bitstream/handle/11660/3616/persed_v32_n1_a5.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Prinsloo, D. (2007). The right to mother tongue education: a multidisciplinary, normative perspective. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, *25*(1), 27–43. https://doi.org/10.2989/16073610709486444

Prinsloo, C. H. & Heugh, K. (2013). The role of literacy in preparing South African learners for educational success. *Pretoria: Human Science Research Council*.

Prinsloo, P., Slade, S. & Khalil, M. (2018). Stuck in the middle? Making sense of the impact of micro, meso and macro institutional, structural and organisational factors on implementing learning analytics. *Proceedings of the European Distance and E-Learning Network 2018 Annual Conference*, 326–335. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325870750

Prior, L. (2008). Repositioning Documents in Social Research. *Sociology*, *42*(5), 821–836. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094564

Punch, K. F. (1998). Collecting qualitative data. In *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches* (pp. 174–197). London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Punch, K. (1998). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: SAGE Publications

Ramphele, M. (2012, August 15). Time for radical change in Education. *IOL News*. Retrieved from https://www.iol.co.za

Ramrathan, L., Le Grange, L., & Shawa, L. B. (2017). Ethics in educational research. In P. Higgs, L. Le Grange, & L. Ramrathan (Eds.), *Education studies for initial teacher development* (1st ed., pp. 432–443). Cape Town, South Africa: Juta.

Rapley, T. (2008). *Doing Conversation, Discourse and Document Analysis (Qualitative Research Kit)* (1st ed.). London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208901

Republic of South Africa^ dDepartment of Basic Education. (2011). Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 4-6: English First Additional Language.

Reeve, J., Jang, H., Carrell, D., Jeon, S., & Barch, J. (2004). Enhancing Students' Engagement by Increasing Teachers' Autonomy Support. *Motivation and Emotion*, *28*(2), 147–169. https://doi.org/10.1023/b:moem.0000032312.95499.6f

Reyneke, E. M. (2008). A model for outcomes-based assessment of English first additional language in the further education and training band. Potchefstroom: North-West University. *Unpublished Thesis-PhD (Learning and Teaching)*.

Rogan, J. M., & Grayson, D. J. (2003). Towards a theory of curriculum implementation with particular reference to science education in developing countries. *International Journal of Science Education*, *25*(10), 1171–1204. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500690210145819

Roulston, K. (2012). The pedagogy of interviewing. In Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J. A., Marvasti, A. B., & McKinney, K. D. *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*(pp. 61-74). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781452218403

Sapsford, R. & Evans, J. (1984). Evaluating a research report. *Conducting small-scale investigations in educational management. London: Harper & Row*.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2012). Research Methods for Business students Pearson.England

Schäfer, D.2014. *Thousands of Learners to Write Annual Systematic Tests*. WCED.[ Press release] retrieved from : http://www.westerncape.gov.za/News and Speeches

Scheerens, J., Ehren, M., Sleegers, P. & Leeuw, R. de. (2010). OECD review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes. *Ministry of Education of Netherlands*. Retrieved from www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy

Scherman, V., Howie, S. J. & Bosker, R. J. (2011). Constructing benchmarks for monitoring purposes: Evidence from South Africa. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 17*(6),

511–525. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2011.632663

Schurink, W. J., Schurink, E. M. & Poggenpoel, M. (1998). Focus group interviewing and audio-visual methodology in qualitative research. *Research at grass roots, a primer in care professions. Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik*.

Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Scroll, P. & For, D. (2010). Assessment in South African Schools Assessment in South African Schools. *Assessment*, (April 2011). https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594022000001

Sibanda, J. (2017). Language at the Grade Three and Four interface: The theory-policy-practice nexus. *South African Journal of Education*, *37*(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v37n2a1287

Smith, W. C. & Benavot, A. (2019). Improving accountability in education : the importance of structured democratic voice Global Partnership for Education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *20*(2), 193–205. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09599-9

Spaull, N. (2015, June 22). The limitations of the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) What can and can't we say? [Slides]. Retrieved from https://www.umalusi.org.za/docs/presentations/2015/nspaull.pdf

Spaull, N & Hoadley, U. (2017) Getting Reading Right In: Jamieson L, Berry L & Lake L (eds) South African Child Gauge 2017. Cape Town, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Spaull, N. (2008). The quality of education in South Africa 1994-2011. *Mathematics Education Research Journal*, *026*(10), 65. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03217477

Spolsky, B. (2004). Language Policy. Cambridge University Press.Cambridge.United Kingdom.

Spolsky, B. (2018). A modified and enriched theory of language policy (and management). *Language Policy*, *18*(3), 323–338. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9489-z

Sultana, N. (2019). Language assessment literacy: an uncharted area for the English language teachers in Bangladesh. *Language Testing in Asia*, *9*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-019-0077-8

Pretorius, E. J. (2014). Supporting transition or playing catch-up in Grade 4? Implications for standards in education and training. *Perspectives in Education*, *32*(1), 47–72. Retrieved from http://scholar.ufs.ac.za:8080/bitstream/handle/11660/3616/persed_v32_n1_a5.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Swaffield, S. & Thomas, S. (2016). Educational Assessment in Latin America. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *23*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2016.1119519

Taras, M. (2010). Assessment for learning: Assessing the theory and evidence. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *2*(2), 3015–3022. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.457

Taylor, N., Fleisch, B., & Shindler, J. (2008). Changes in education since 1994. *Higher Education*, *32*, 3–5. Retrieved from https://www.jet.org.za/resources/Taylor%20Fleisch%20Shindler%20Changes%20in%20Education%2015%20year%20review.pdf/@@download/file/Taylor%20Fleisch%20Shindler%20Changes%20in%20Education%2015%20year%20review.pdf

Taylor, S., & von Fintel, M. (2016). Estimating the impact of language of instruction in South African primary schools: A fixed effects approach. *Economics of Education Review*, *50*, 75–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2016.01.003

Taylor, S. (2011). Uncovering indicators of effective school management in South Africa using the National School Effectiveness Study. *Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers*, 1–51.

Thornhill, C., & Le Cordeur, M. (2016). First additional language teaching in selected grade 4 – 6 classes in Western Cape urban schools: The case of Afrikaans. *Journal for Language Teaching*, *50*(1), 103–123. https://doi.org/10.4314/jlt.v50i1.5

Tollefson, J. W., & Tsui, A. B. M. (2014). Language Diversity and Language Policy in Educational Access and Equity. *Review of Research in Education*, *38*(1), 189–214. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x13506846

Tshiredo, L. L. (2013). *The impact of the curriculum change in the teaching and learning of science : a case study in under-resourced schools in Vhembe District*. Doctoral

Dissertation.University of South Africa. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10500/11893

UNESCO INSTITUTE for STATISTICS. (2015). *Literacy assessment and monitoring programme*. Author. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/literacy-assessment-and-monitoring-programme-lamp-information-brochure-en.pdf

Van der Berg, S. (2015). What the Annual National Assessments can tell us about learning deficits over the education system and the school career. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *5*(2), 28–43. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v5i2.381

Van der Berg, S.,Taylor, S., Gustafsson, M., Spaull, N. & Armstrong, P. (2011). Improving education quality in South Africa. *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, (1056), OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/5k452klfn9ls-en

Van Der Walt, C. & Klapwijk, N. (2015). Language of learning and teaching in a multilingual school Eenvironment: what do teachers think? *Language Matters*, *46*(2), 293–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2015.1050058

Vandeyar, S., & Killen, R. (2007). Educators' conceptions and practice of classroom assessment in post-apartheid South Africa. *South African Journal of education*, *27*(1), 101–115. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1150092.pdf

Vellutino, F. R. & Scanlon, D. M. (2001). Emergent literacy skills, early instruction and individual differences as determinants of difficulties in learning to read: The case for early intervention. *Handbook of early literacy research*, *1*, 295-321.

Villar R. R. (2018). The importance of language. *Journal of hip preservation surgery*, *5*(1), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1093/jhps/hny002

Wagner, A. (2015, October 14). Is literacy the key to achieving the SDGs? Retrieved October 26, 2020, from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/10/is-literacy-the-key-to-achieving-the-sdgs/

Warren, E. & Nisbet, S. (1999, July). The relationship between the purported use of assessment techniques and beliefs about the uses of assessment. In *22nd annual conference of the Mathematics Education and Research Group of Australasia* (Vol. 22,

pp. 515-521). Adelaide, SA: MERGA.

Webb, N. L. (2002). Assessment Literacy in a Standards-Based Urban Education Setting. *In Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans*, 20 p.

Welman, J. C., & Kruger, S. J. (1999). *Research Methodology for the Business and Administrative Sciences* (1st ed.). Johannesburg, South Africa: International Thomson Pub. (Southern Africa).

Wenglinsky, H. (2002). The Link Between Teacher Classroom Practices and Student Academic Performance. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*, 12. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v10n12.2002

Wentzel, K. R. (1997). Student motivation in middle school: The role of perceived pedagogical caring. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*(3), 411–419. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.89.3.411

Western Cape Education Department. (2006). *Wced literacy and numeracy strategy 2006 – 2016*. Retrieved from https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/documents/literacy_numeracy_strategy/e-LitNumStrat.pdf

Wiersma, W. (1995). Research Methods in Education: An Introduction. Boston Massachusetts, USA : Allyn Bacon Inc.

Wiliam, D. (2000). The meanings and consequences of educational assessments. *Critical Quarterly, 42*(1), 105–127. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8705.00280

Wolff, L., Schiefelbein, E. & Schiefelbein, P. (2002). Primary Education in Latin America. *The unfinished agenda. Technical Paper Series Nº EDU-120. Washington, DC: Interamerican Development Bank*. doi/10.1.1.198.7043

Wright W.E., Ricento T. (2017) Language Policy and Education in the USA. In: McCarty T., May S. (eds) Language Policy and Political Issues in Education. Encyclopedia of Language and Education (3rd ed.). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02344-1_29

Yin, R. K. (1994). Discovering the future of the case study method in evaluation research.

*Evaluation Practice*, *15*(3), 283–290. https://doi.org/10.1016/0886-1633(94)90023-x

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Applied Social Research Methods)* (3rd ed.). Carlifornia, United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (First ed.). New York, United States of America: The Guilford Press.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Zama, C. Z. (2014, March). *Teachers' experience of teaching First Additional Language Reading in the Foundation Phase: A case study of Four rural primary schools. (March).* (Masters Dissertation). University of Kwazulu Natal. Retrieved from https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10413/11872/

Zimmerman, L. (2008). *Lessons learnt : Observation of Grade 4 reading comprehension teaching in South African schools across the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study ( PIRLS ) 2006 achievement spectrum*. 1–9. https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v5i1.48

Zimmerman, L. & Smit, B. (2016b). Comprehending the macro through the lens of the micro: The use of PIRLS 2006 findings to inform comparative case studies across the South African achievement scale. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *15*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915624576

Zuniga, C. E., Henderson, K. I., Palmer, D. K., Zuniga, C. E., Henderson, K. I. & Palmer, D. K. (2018). *Language policy toward equity : how bilingual teachers use policy mandates to their own ends*. *0782*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2017.1349792

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Approval from WCED


Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20190118–525

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard



Mr Michael Sigonyela
PO Box 546
Eerste River
7100

**Dear Mr Michael Sigonyela**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: TEACHING FOR TESTING OR FOR LEARNING: INVESTIGATING GRADE 6 TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE SYSTEMIC LITERACY EVALUATIONS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **04 February 2019 till 27 September 2019**

6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services**
**Western Cape Education Department**
**Private Bag X9114**
**CAPE TOWN**
**8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
**Directorate: Research**
**DATE: 21 January 2019**

# APPENDIX B: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535
South Africa
T: +27 21 959 4111/2948
F: +27 21 959 3170
E: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za
www.uwc.ac.za

13 May 2019

Mr SM Sigonyela
**Faculty of Education**

**Ethics Reference Number:** HS19/2/9

**Project Title:** Teaching and testing or for learning? Investigating Grade 6 teachers experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic literacy evaluations in the Western Cape.

**Approval Period:** 06 May 2019 – 06 May 2020

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

**Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.**

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias*
*Research Ethics Committee Officer*
*University of the Western Cape*

***HSSREC REGISTRATION NUMBER - 130416-049***

FROM I OPL TO AC ION IN DUD KNOWLEDGE

# Appendix C: Permission Letters

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

18/01/2019

Researcher: Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela

Cellular number: 0717148628

Email: 3877161@uwc.ac.za

## PERMISSION LETTER

**THE PRINCIPAL ASSESSMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

18/01/2019

[Address removed for anonymity purposes]

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Permission to conduct research in your School**

**Research Title: Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.**

My name is **Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela** a Masters student in the Language Education Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am conducting research on the teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape. The target group will be Grade 6 English First Additional Language class teachers

I would like to request your permission to observe Grade 6 teachers' literacy lessons. Furthermore, I request current and former Grade 6 EFAL teacher to participate in the interviews.

**Please see the attached information letter for further information on this study**

If you have any other questions regarding this research, you may also contact my supervisor Dr Cutalele at the University of the Western Cape at 0734311515 or pcutalele@uwc.ac.za or alternatively contact my co-supervisor Prof Nomlomo at 0827981797 or via email at vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za

Yours Faithfully

Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela

# Appendix D: Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

15/01/2019

Researcher: Mr Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela

Cellular number: 0717148628

Email: 3877161@uwc.ac.za

Institution: University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education, Bellville, South Africa

Institutional Association: Student

## INFORMATION SHEET

**Research Title: Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.**



This study will set out to explore the Grade 6 teachers' lived experiences of the Western Cape English First Additional Language literacy assessments. This research will also by closely examining teachers' lived experiences, shed new light on challenges and opportunities presented to teachers by the Western Cape English First Additional Language literacy assessments.

This research will be done by interviewing Grade 6 English First Additional language literacy teachers and observing the teaching and learning in the classroom. Anonymity of participants of this study is guaranteed and they will not be identified by anything in the study or publication.

Supervisor: Dr. P.Cutalele Co-supervisor: Prof V. Nomlomo

Institution: University of the Western Cape University of the Western Cape

Institutional Association: Lecturer

Faculty of Education

Department of Language Education

Bellville

Tel: 021 9592682

Email: pcutalele@uwc.ac.za

Institutional Assosciation: Dean

Faculty of Education

Department of Language Education

Bellville

Tel: 021 9592682

Email: vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za

HSSREC

Research Development

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

# APPENDIX E: Consent Letter

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

18/01/2019

Researcher: Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela

Cellular number: 0717148628

Email: 3877161@uwc.ac.za

Institution: University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education, Bellville, South Africa

**CONSENT LETTER**

**Research Title: Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.**



Dear Grade 6 English FAL Teachers:

I am Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela, a Master's in Education (Language Education) student at the University of the Western Cape under the Supervision of Dr Pumla Cutalele and the co-supervision of Prof Vuyo Nomlomo

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study **Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.** In particular, I am interested in the challenges and opportunities presented to teachers by these literacy systemic tests.

This research will require about 1-2 hours of your time. During this time, you will be interviewed about your experiences with the English First Additional Literacy Systemic tests. The interviews will be conducted at your school and will be tape-recorded. I will further need access to your classroom so that I could observe .The participants in this study are chosen according to the teacher's exposure to the English First Additional Language systemic literacy assessments

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts related to this research; however teachers will be able to withdraw from the research in its entirety if s/he deems it necessary. By participating in this research, you may also benefit others by helping people to better understand what it is like to teach and assess in the era of these tests and how that experience could influence one's teaching and assessment practices.

Several steps will be taken to protect your anonymity and identity. While the interviews will be tape recorded, the audio files will be stored in the archives of the faculty of education once they have been typed up. The typed interviews will NOT contain any mention of your name and any identifying information from the audio files will be edited and removed. The typed interviews will also be stored in the archives of the faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape and only I and the supervisors will have access to the interviews. All information will be destroyed after 5 years' time by the UWC Education faculty.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you won't be compensated for your participation. You may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If you do this, all information from you will be destroyed

The data collected in this study will help fulfil the requirements for a Master in Education at the University of the Western Cape. At no time, however, will your name be used or any identifying information revealed. If you require any information about this study, or would like to speak to me, please contact me at 0717148628 or 3877161@uwc.ac.za.

If you have any other questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research, you may also contact my supervisor Dr Cutalele at the University of the Western Cape at 0734311515 or pcutalele@uwc.ac.za or alternatively contact my co-supervisor Prof Nomlomo at 0827981797 or via email at vnomlomo@uwc.ac.za

**Please sign the declaration form attached to this letter to confirm that you understand the contents of this letter and you consent to participate in this study.**

Yours Faithfully

Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela

# APPENDIX F: Consent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

18/01/2019

Researcher: Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela

Cellular number: 0717148628

Email: 3877161@uwc.ac.za

Institution: University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education, Bellville, South Africa

## CONSENT FORM

**Research Title: Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.**



CONSENT DECLARATION

I…… (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have read and understand the contents of the consent letter detailing the nature of the above research project and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I consent / do not consent to this interview being recorded (if applicable).

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

……

# APPENDIX G: Semi Structured Interview Guide

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

**Research Topic: Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.**

**Interviewer: Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela**

**Interviewee: _____**

**Interview Date:**

**Interview Location:**

**SECTION 1.**

**BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Age** ☐

**Gender** | **Male** | **Female** |

Highest Educational Qualification ☐

Teaching Experience ☐

Experience with EFAL Systemic ☐

**SECTION 2**

**AIMS AND ROLE OF SYSTEMIC EVALUATION**

1. What is systemic evaluation and why did the Provincial Education Department embark in them?
2. In which way are they different from other assessments taking place in schools?
3. Which role do these assessments play in the school system?
4. In your own opinion, are you convinced that these assessments fulfil their intended purpose and why do you say so?

**SECTION 3**

**LITERACY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**

1. In which way(s) are your current literacy assessment practices similar or different to the Systemic Evaluations?
2. What are your primary considerations when you plan an assessment task?
3. Do you test the curriculum or do you assess what you have taught?
4. Who decides on your programme of assessment? Please explain the whole process involved in drafting, implementing and evaluating it.

**SECTION 4**

**LITERACY SYSTEMIC EVALUATION DATA**

1. When do you receive literacy systemic evaluation results?
2. In what format do you receive them (soft or hard copy)?
3. How easy or difficult it is to understand the data that is contained in the results? And why that is so?
4. Do you get an opportunity to engage with and analyse the data? If you do which form of analysis do you make?
5. Does the data received play a role in how you teach your next cohort of learners?

**SECTION 5**

**OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Describe an experience that stands out for you in terms of English FAL Literacy Systemic Evaluations
2. In your own opinion, what opportunities are presented to you as an English FAL teacher, by the Systemic Evaluations?
3. How do such opportunities enhance your teaching?
4. What aspects of your involvement in English FAL Literacy Systemic Evaluations have you found most rewarding?

**SECTION 6**

**CHALLENGES**

1. In which ways are you challenged by the English FAL Literacy systemic assessments?
2. How do you deal with such challenges?
3. In the light of your experience of the English FAL Literacy Systemic Evaluations:
4. Which aspects are working well?
5. Which aspects are in most need of improvement?
6. If you were responsible for designing and implementation of these evaluations, what would you change (if anything)?
7. What advice would you offer to someone teaching who will experience English FAL Systemic Evaluations for the first time?

# Appendix H: Classroom Observation Sheet

Teacher: _____Subject: English First Additional Language

Observer: Simphiwe Michael Sigonyela  Date and Time _____

**Research Title: Investigating Grade 6 Teachers' experiences of the English First Additional Language Systemic Literacy Evaluations in the Western Cape.**

| Review Section | Descript |
|---|---|
| 1. **Teaching Plan**<br>Request for the teaching plan would be made prior classroom observation.<br>a. What are the learning outcomes the teacher is hoping students to achieve?<br>b. What is the teacher planning to do in order to achieve the Learning Outcome (method/ technique of delivery and assessment)?<br>c. What values and skills does the teacher plan to incorporate in the lesson?<br>d. How does the lesson/ activity fit in with the topic that the class has been doing before? | |
| 2. **CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION**<br>a. Location and physical attributes of classroom<br>b. Number of students in attendance<br>c. Layout of room<br>d. Distractions if any<br>e. List any observations of how physical aspects affected content delivery | |

| Review Section | Descript |
|---|---|
| **3. PRESENTATION**<br>a. How does the teacher start the class?<br>b. Review main topic from previous lesson. Does the teacher ask review questions?<br>c. How students do answers (individual/ whole group).<br>d. How is the new topic introduced?<br>e. Relate today's topic with previous lesson.<br>f. Teaching about today's topic<br>g. What types of questions are asked as the lesson progresses (open/closed; low order/high order)<br>**h.** How does the teacher assess the lesson? | |
| 4. **RAPPORT**<br>a. How does the teacher and students interact? Does s/he holds interest of students; is respectful, fair and impartial?<br>b. Does the teacher encourage participation?<br>c. Examples of the type of questions the teacher ask students and how students respond<br>d. The questions the students ask the lecturer and the lecturer's responses.<br>e. In addition to questions, please also note the other ways in which the teacher and the students interact.<br>f. Does the teacher provide feedback?<br>g. Does the teacher show enthusiasm? | |
| 5. **Interaction among students**<br>a. Do students have an opportunity to interact with one another?<br>b. If so, how do they interact?<br>c. Do they work on a task together?<br>d. Do they provide feedback to one another? | |
| 6. **MANAGEMENT**<br>a. Teacher uses time wisely;<br>b. Teacher attends to lesson interaction;<br>c. Teacher demonstrates leadership ability;<br>d. Teacher maintains discipline and control;<br>e. Teacher maintains effective e-platform management | |
| 7. **Other observations**<br><br>What else do the teacher and students do? | |

**Strengths observed:**

**Suggestions for improvement:**

**Overall impression of assessment effectiveness:**