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KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**School of Education**

**Master of Education**

**ASSESSMENT METHODS USED BY GRADE FOUR TEACHERS IN TEACHING  
ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE**

**BY**

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**202001352**

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## DECLARATION

I, Gladys Phumzile Mngomezulu declare that:

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## Statement by Supervisor

As a candidate's supervisor I approve this dissertation for submission.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my eldest son Simphiwe Nhlakanipho Mkhwanazi for all his effort, unconditional support and dedication to make it happen. I thank God for the precious gift He granted me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lord has been my strength and soul throughout this incredible journey. Without God I would not have made it.

Without much sacrifice and assistance from my pillars of strength, it would not have been possible to complete this work. The following people played a very significant role in the research and writing of this dissertation. I am humbled by your support.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Assessment is an integral component of recent curriculum changes in South Africa (Jansen & Christie, 1999). Each new curriculum introduced since 1994 included fresh assessment methods that teachers were expected to use in the teaching and learning process. However, the number of assessment tasks in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum poses a challenge to grade four English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers. The CAPS states that EFAL should be assessed using formative and summative assessment methods and that language skills should be assessed every day using different formative methods. This study explored the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in teaching and assessing learners. The three research questions were:

- What assessment methods are used by grade four teachers in teaching English First Additional Language?
- How do grade four English First Additional Language teachers use assessment methods?
- What influences grade four English First Additional Language teachers to use these assessment methods?

This case study, which is located in the interpretive paradigm and employed a qualitative research method, was conducted in three primary schools in rural areas in the uMkhanyakude district in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Data was elicited through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Purposeful sampling was used to select one grade four EFAL teacher from each of the three schools with deep knowledge of the phenomenon. Thematic analysis and document analysis were used to analyse the data and Activity theory was employed to describe and interpret the findings in response to the research questions. The findings revealed that the grade four EFAL teachers selected very limited, traditional assessment methods rather than innovative ones that could enhance learners' English language proficiency. The findings revealed various factors influencing the selection of assessment methods by grade four EFAL teachers. These factors included considering: the transition of grade four learners from Home Language to EFAL; poor background knowledge of the English language, a lack of vocabulary by grade four learners, as well as the time allocated to assessment tasks and the problem of teaching and learning in overcrowded classrooms. Based on these findings, it is recommended that EFAL

teachers, especially those assigned to grade four, should take into cognisance the significance of formative assessment methods in developing English language skills such as discussions, presentations, peer/self-assessment, practical demonstrations and projects. Policy makers need to consider learners' different levels of ability when prescribing the number of tasks to be completed in the EFAL CAPS curriculum. It is also recommended that the Department of Basic Education provide more in-service training, pre-service and support to develop skills and strategies for effective use of assessment methods in grade four EFAL. Finally, further studies should be conducted to close the identified research gap on the impact of the transition from Home Language to First Additional Language since grade four is regarded as the entry point to the Intermediate phase.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CAPS - Curriculum and Assessment

Policy Statement

DoE- Department of Education

EFAL- English First Additional Language

EFL- English First Language

NCS-National Curriculum Statement

OBE- Outcome Based Education

RNCS- Revised National Curriculum Statement

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Post-apartheid curriculum changes in the South African education system introduced new teaching and assessment methods in schools (Chisholm, 2003). Each new curriculum contained fresh assessment methods that teachers were expected to use in teaching and learning. However, the number of assessment tasks in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum poses a challenge to teachers, especially those teaching grade four English First Additional Language (EFAL). This chapter presents a brief background to the study. It includes the justification and rationale for the study, its significance and location, the research objectives and questions and an outline of the study.

#### **1.2 Background to the study**

Assessment is a prominent component of curriculum changes in South Africa since the eradication of apartheid education (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). Chisholm (2003) notes that education policy changes aimed to address the imbalances in the system and to offer quality education. This section highlights the changes in assessment methods that accompanied curriculum change in South Africa from 1994, including Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and Outcome Based Education (OBE), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS); Revised National Curriculum Statement (ENCS) and CAPS.

##### **1.2.1 Assessment methods in C2005 and OBE**

Curriculum 2005 that was introduced in 1997 embraced OBE that is directed by the results learners show by the end of the learning process (Harden, Davis, & Crosby, 1997). This learner-centred approach emphasises what learners should know, understand and demonstrate in order to become critical thinkers (Botha, 2002). The new assessment approach was referred to as ‘continuous assessment’, where learners were assessed in all aspects on an on-going basis over a

period of time (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998). Continuous assessment was criterion-referenced, with teachers using certain criteria to conduct the assessment (Lok, McNaught, & Young, 2016). Assessment criteria were explained to learners before they undertook a task and teachers were expected to assess learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (Department of Basic Education, 2000). The overall objective was to produce critical, thinking citizens who would be able to participate in developing the country's economy (Chisholm, 2005).

The shift from traditional assessment to continuous assessment had a negative impact on both teachers and learners' performance (Kanjee, 2009) because teachers struggled to adapt and understand the demands of the new assessment approaches (Jansen, 1998). This was caused by lack of guidelines on how to follow the basic principles of OBE (Nkosi, 2014). Mabusela, Ngidi, and Imenda (2016) also note that teachers received insufficient training in OBE and that a lack of funds led to failure to successfully implement OBE assessment approaches. This resulted in the adoption of the NCS.

### **1.2.2 Assessment methods in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)**

In response to the challenges confronting the adoption of OBE, the Department of Basic Education introduced the NCS in 2002. This was followed by the RNCS in 2007 (Msila, 2007). In the RNCS, assessment was a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning in order to promote learner achievement (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). There was a shift from the criterion-referenced assessment approach of C2005 to a standard-referenced one (Lok, McNaught, & Young, 2016). The latter sets learning outcomes that describe what learners are anticipated to achieve in each learning area (subject). A set of assessment standards defined the level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that each learner should demonstrate by integrating and applying them in everyday life (DoE, 2002, p. 14). Learning outcomes were set for each phase, with assessment standards differing from grade to grade (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003).

The assessment principles set out in the RNCS offered more clarity than OBE on how assessment should be conducted in schools as well as a workable standards framework (DoE, 2002). However, teachers received no guidelines on the essential principles of sound assessment. Vandeyar and Killen (2003) conclude that the new assessment approach created confusion and stress among teachers and also had a negative impact on learners' performance.

### **1.2.3 Assessment methods in CAPS**

The CAPS curriculum policy was introduced in 2012 to fill the gaps in previous systems and clarify certain issues (Maharaj, Nkosi, & Mkhize, 2016). New language policies were formulated and OBE was adopted as a framework for curriculum design and teaching practices (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Changes also occurred in assessment methods. New teaching approaches were introduced and the time learners should spend in Grades R-12 was adjusted (Maharaj, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016). In terms of CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2010), learning areas became subjects and the number of subjects was reduced from eight to six. Each subject has its own policy document which sets rigid guidelines and provides detailed information on what (content) and when to teach and what and when to assess in all grades (Moodley, 2013; Du Plessis & Marias, 2015).

The grade four EFAL CAPS policy states that skills like listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting; and language and conventions should be assessed informally throughout the process of teaching and learning. In the formal tasks, these skills should be assessed at the stipulated time for progression purposes. Teachers are required to use rubrics to rate learners' performance and record learners' work on record sheets.

This discussion shows that there have been many curriculum changes in the South African education system since 1994. This resulted in new assessment methods that aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as learners' performance. Teachers' functions thus changed, especially in the way they assess learners (Maharajh, Nkosi, & Mkhize, 2016). Teachers should thus be well equipped with the necessary skills, support, and guidelines to implement the new assessment methods (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2004). It is against this background that this study explored the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers when teaching and assessing learners.

### **1.3 Rationale for the study**

The rationale for this study emanated from the researcher's personal experiences, and contextual

and academic issues. These are discussed below.

### **1.3.1 Personal**

With 18 years' experience of teaching EFAL in grade four, the researcher noted that when the curriculum changes, assessment methods also change. As noted previously, each new curriculum introduced after 1994 was accompanied by fresh assessment methods to be used in the teaching and learning process. The assessment policy in CAPS states that, in order to support the growth and development of learners, both formative (informal) and summative (formal) assessment methods should be used to assess EFAL in grade four (DoE, 2011). The CAPS assessment methods for EFAL in grade four form the basis of this study.

The curriculum requires that skills like listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and presenting; and language use and conventions be assessed almost every day through informal tasks. The researcher has observed that, given the work this requires, there is a tendency to teach what will be assessed for progression purposes rather than focusing on assessment that will enhance learners' performance. This has a negative impact on learners, especially in grade four as this grade is regarded as an entry point to the Intermediate phase (Ngcobo, 2015). In this grade, learners are moving from their mother tongue (IsiZulu) as the language of instruction to English as the language of teaching and learning. This is not an easy transition because it requires full development of English language (communication) skills through formal and informal tasks (Ifeanyi, 2012). In grade four, learners are still acquiring new language skills assisted by their mother tongue background to gradually transfer vocabulary into English (Owu-Ewie, 2006). This situation motivated the researcher to explore the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in teaching and assessing learners.

The researcher also attended workshops and cluster meetings where she discussed the assessment methods used to teach EFAL in grade four with colleagues. She observed that teachers felt that the CAPS assessment methods are burdensome when teaching EFAL. Teachers are reluctant to use both formative and summative assessment in teaching and assessing grade four learners in EFAL. Most focus on the formal tasks that determine progression. Some teachers are also of the view that informal tasks are time-consuming and not important. The views expressed by the researcher's colleagues on assessment methods further motivated this study on which assessment

methods grade four EFAL teachers are using, how they use them and what influences these teachers to use assessment methods in the way they do. It is anticipated that the findings will assist grade four EFAL teachers as well as add to the body of knowledge. They will also inform and benefit the Department of Education, subject advisors, and school management teams.

### **1.3.2 Contextual**

The CAPS policy regards language as a communication tool (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This means that grade four EFAL teachers should develop communication skills among learners through the effective use of assessment methods. Effective learning of EFAL empowers learners to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Thinking and reasoning are emphasised through language which enables learners to develop cognitive academic skills (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The National Protocol for Assessment states that, in teaching and assessing EFAL in grade four, teachers must ensure that they gather sufficient evidence of achievement using several forms of assessment (DoE, 2011). It adds that assessment should demonstrate learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner (DoE, 2011). The CAPS curriculum requires that formative and summative assessment be used to identify, gather and interpret information about learners' performance. This motivated the researcher to explore what assessment methods grade four EFAL teachers use and how they use them.

The researcher was also interested in exploring how grade four EFAL teachers assess learners using formal and informal tasks in classrooms guided by the CAPS assessment policy. The findings could assist in bridging the gap between how formative and summative assessment methods are used in teaching and assessing EFAL in grade four. Furthermore, the researcher aimed to investigate how grade four teachers cope with assessment policy expectations when assessing learners; for instance, the number of tasks, marking, recording, diagnostic analyses, improvement plans, etc., as well as time management to manage the workload.

### **1.3.3 Academic**

Scholars such as Black and William (2009); Cauley and McMillan (2010); Memela (2011); Ntuli (2010); Taras (2005) and Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) have examined the different methods of assessment teachers use when teaching and assessing learners in various contexts, including the

merits of formative and summative assessment (Stiggins, 2002).

Cauley and McMillan (2010) describe formative assessment as one of the most powerful methods to develop learners' motivation and achievement. They observe that the content and skills of formative assessment ensure that goals are achieved at the end of the learning process. Classroom practices are included in formative assessment, providing the information required for both learners and teachers to adjust teaching and learning strategies (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2010). Black and William (2009) found strong evidence that quality formative assessment improves the standard of achievement. However, Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) noted that teachers tend to focus on teaching what is required for tasks rather than genuine learning. It seems that many teachers adopt a teaching to assess approach due to pressure from the authorities to be accountable for learners' performance (William & Marshall, 2006). Nonetheless, Taras (2005) states that both types of assessment methods (formative and summative) are significant in the teaching and learning process.

Taras (2005) describes summative assessment as the end point of judgment according to goals, criteria, and standards. Stiggins (2002) notes that EFAL teachers sometimes fail to strike a balance between summative and formative assessment and that both are significant in improving learners' performance. This suggests that both formative and summative assessments are significant in teaching a language. The researcher chose to focus on the development of grade four learners' EFAL skills because, while children attend school for the purpose of gaining knowledge and skills which will be of use to them in the future, it seems that learners are simply learning to pass. Irwin and Elley (2013) argue that parents send their children to school in the hopes that they will perform well academically (Goldenberg, Gallimore and Reese, 2001). Thus, grade four learners should develop the EFAL skills required to enhance their academic performance in the future.

Teachers confront numerous challenges in implementing the new assessment approaches introduced by the curriculum in EFAL classrooms (Ntuli, 2010). Ntuli (2010) maintained that even though the DoE claims that teachers are well trained to implement new OBE-specific assessment policies, there is no consistency in implementation. Indeed, Ntuli found that teachers were not ready to implement alternative assessment approaches in EFAL classrooms.

Memela (2011) concurred with Ntuli (2010) and found that teachers are still unclear on how to implement continuous assessment methods in grade four mathematics classrooms because they lack information. He found that teachers do not have access to DoE assessment policies and do not fully understand such policies. These studies highlight the challenges faced by teachers in implementing assessment methods when the curriculum changes. It is against this background that the current study explored which assessment methods teachers are using in teaching grade four EFAL in the CAPS curriculum. While studies have been conducted on the assessment methods teachers are using in EFAL classrooms, and in the teaching of mathematics in rural areas, none have focused on grade four EFAL in the CAPS curriculum in uMkhanyakude district.

#### **1.4 Focus and Purpose of the study**

EFAL grade four teachers are experiencing challenges in effectively implementing the assessment methods required by CAPS. The CAPS curriculum requires that teachers use a variety of assessment methods in teaching and assessing EFAL, especially in grade four. These include a number of formal and informal tasks that need to be completed within a particular time frame. The focus of the study is thus to explore and understand the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in three primary schools at uMkhanyakude district in KwaZulu-Natal province.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

This study will assist grade four EFAL teachers as well as contribute to the body of knowledge. It could also assist the DoE, subject advisors and school management teams to understand the assessment methods grade four EFAL teachers are using and the reasons for such.

#### **1.6 Location of the study**

The three schools selected for the study, are situated in rural areas in uMkhanyakude district in KwaZulu-Natal province. In the Foundation phase, these schools offer isiZulu as the language of teaching and learning and English is offered as a subject. English First Additional Language is introduced in grade four as the language of teaching and learning, meaning that all subjects

except isiZulu as a subject are taught in English from grade four. Moreover, while learners take four subjects in the Foundation phase, they take six from grade four.

### **1.7 Objectives**

- To explore the assessment methods used by grade four English First Additional Language teachers.
- To explore how grade four English First Additional Language teachers use these assessment methods.
- To explore the reasons why grade four English First Additional Language teachers use these assessment methods.

### **1.8 Research questions**

1. What assessment methods are used by grade four English First Additional Language teachers?
2. How do grade four English First Additional Language teachers use these assessment methods?
3. What influences grade four English First Additional Language teachers to use these assessment methods?

### **1.9 Research design and methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative approach and was guided by the interpretive paradigm which relies on human experiences and interpretation of their world (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The interpretive paradigm was appropriate because the study aimed to gain a deep understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon. The study took the form of a case study which enabled in-depth exploration of participants' experiences of using assessment methods in teaching and assessing EFAL in grade four (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants with in-depth information on the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In-depth, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The trustworthiness of the study was measured by four criteria, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The methodology is discussed in further detail in chapter 3.

### **1.10 Outline of the study**

This study consists of five chapters which are arranged as follows:

Chapter 1 provided a brief background to the study; the rationale for conducting it, its focus and purpose, and the research objectives and questions.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on assessment methods used by teachers in teaching and assessing learners in the classroom. The Activity theory adopted for this study is also discussed.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and method, and the instruments used to gather data for the study. It discusses the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative case study, sampling, in-depth semi-structured interviews, data analysis, trustworthiness, the ethical considerations taken into account and the study's limitations.

Chapter 4 analyses, interprets, and evaluates the data collected through the use of the instruments presented in chapter 3.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings, recommendations arising from these findings and suggestions for further research.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the background to the study, the rationale for conducting it, its significance and the study's objectives and research questions. It concluded by outlining the structure of the study. The following chapter reviews the literature relating to the phenomenon under study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the background to study and highlighted its objectives and research questions. This chapter reviews local, national and international literature on the different types of assessment practices used by EFAL teachers to teach and assess learners in schools. While numerous studies have focused on teachers' assessment practices, none have explored the effectiveness of those employed in teaching EFAL in grade four in rural areas in uMkhanyakude district.

The first section of this chapter covers conceptualisations of assessment; assessment practices used by teachers in teaching grade four EFAL; the factors that influence teachers' selection of assessment practices; challenges confronting teachers in implementing new assessment practices in EFAL; and traditional and alternate assessment practices. The second section discusses the theoretical framework, which is Activity theory developed by Marx, Engels, Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria in 1920, that is used to explore the assessment methods teachers use when teaching and assessing EFAL in grade four.

#### **2.2 Conceptualising assessment**

There is no universally accepted definition of the concept of assessment. Bachman (2004) and Cheng et al. (2004) viewed assessment as the process whereby teachers bring together information on learners' performance using different tools, methods and sources in order to evaluate the learning process after learning has taken place. This perspective emphasises information gathering on a learner's achievement. Stears and Gopal (2010) described assessment as a combination of formative and summative assessment which is the process of collecting and discussing information from different and diverse sources in order to develop a profound understanding of learners' knowledge and the application of that knowledge as a result of their educational experiences. This suggests that EFAL teachers should not depend on one form of assessment because this will limit learners'

knowledge construction. Assessment is not only conducted by teachers; learners are able to assess themselves or one another and it is believed that this assists them to understand what they know and are able to do using learnt experiences (Falchikov, 2013). It encourages learners to adopt learning plans and acquire skills that will enable them to apply knowledge productively (Gijbels & Dochy, 2006). When learners assess themselves or one another, they are able to revise their performance, become aware of learning goals and apply themselves to achieve such goals (Chen, Andrade, Hefferen, & Palma, 2015).

Harlen (2005) states that assessment plays a vital role in ascertaining learners' level of performance and summarising and communicating their achievement to relevant stakeholders, i.e., school principals, parents and departmental officials.

The following sub-section discusses the different assessment practices used by grade four EFAL teachers in teaching and assessing learners in the classroom.

### **2.3 Assessment methods used by teachers in teaching grade four EFAL**

Assessment is regarded as a crucial element of the teaching and learning process which helps to identify, gather and interpret learners' performance using different methods (Cheng et al., 2014). Different forms of assessment, including formative assessment, summative, traditional and alternate assessment methods are used in teaching and assessing grade four EFAL in the CAPS curriculum. This suggests that both formative and summative methods are crucial in order to continuously monitor and assess learners as learning progresses (Harlen, 2006).

#### **2.3.1 Summative assessment methods used in EFAL teaching**

Summative assessment is described as a summary of what learners have learnt. It is normally conducted at the end of the learning process to check for complete understanding of the learner's standard or knowledge (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Wilson, 2018). In EFAL in the CAPS curriculum, it takes the form of formal tasks, i.e. tests, examinations, projects, written tasks, and presentations. This method is also known as "assessment of learning". The Department of Basic Education prescribes the number of tests, in the form of formal tasks, to be written each term and the examination at the end of the year (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Ketabi and Ketabi (2014) argue that summative assessment does not provide the opportunity for teachers to give feedback to learners with the purpose of improving their performance. Feedback is important so that teachers can adapt their teaching activities to meet learners' needs. Thus, summative assessment does not help to develop or increase learners' performance. It is for this reason that Medina (2015) advocates for the use of both formative and summative assessment methods. This enables learners to be involved in the learning process and reflect on their own practices and achievement, especially in an additional language. Chandio and Jafferi (2015) observed that the fact that a learner performs badly in summative assessment does not mean that he/she is not learning. They argue that teachers should use other, non-quantitative measures to obtain a more complete picture of the learner's performance. This suggests that EFAL teachers should understand the relationship between summative and formative assessment which forms an integral part of the learning process. Black and William (2009) note that formative assessment is a powerful tool to improve a learner's performance.

Harlen (2005) describes summative assessment as an evaluation of learners' achievement in order to record progress and measure the school's performance. It assesses competency rather than knowledge or intelligence. Tsilo (2006) states that summative assessment offers the information required for selection and placement of the learner in the next grade. Thus, summative assessment enables teachers to grade learners, keep records of learner achievement, inform parents as well as learners of progress, account to departmental officials and evaluate the effectiveness of a programme (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2007). This suggests that it is useful for administrative purposes rather than the learning process.

Mkholo's (2010) quantitative study on assessment methods in Further Education and Training in Life Sciences in Mpumalanga province examined whether summative assessment assesses the different cognitive levels and learning outcomes required by the Subject Assessment Guidelines of 2008. The findings showed that the practical tasks constructed by teachers did not fully nurture the cognitive activity intended by the Guidelines. This suggests that summative assessment does not assess different learners' cognitive levels; therefore, grade four EFAL teachers should use different assessment methods when teaching and assessing learners.

### **2.3.2 Formative assessment methods used in EFAL teaching**

While summative assessment is performed at the end of the learning process and does not allow for learner development, formative assessment is conducted formally and informally while learning is taking place and is also known as ‘assessment for learning’ (Hargreaves, Gipps, & Pickering, 2014). The CAPS curriculum sets informal tasks that teachers should consider in teaching and assessing learners in grade four EFAL; these include observation, discussions, projects, presentations, practical demonstrations, etc. (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The following sub-section discusses conceptualisations of formative assessment, its significance and the skills developed by formative assessment.

#### **2.3.2.1 Conceptualising formative assessment**

Formative assessment is described as a continuous process of gathering evidence of learners’ achievement or level of understanding in order to provide feedback and use it to modify instructions (Heritage, 2007; Cauley & McMillan 2010; Wilson, 2018). Black and William (2009) recommend this method as the feedback produced is interpreted and used by teachers for proper planning of the subject, while learners use it for decision making on steps to be taken to make learning easier.

Formative assessment promotes interaction between the teacher and learners which is based on effective teaching and learning. It enables learners to become lifelong and reflective learners that acquire the skills required in the teaching and learning of EFAL in grade four (Wood, 2017). Tsilo (2006) notes that formative assessment is less concerned with the allocation of marks; unlike summative assessment, it develops constructive learning and motivates both learners and teachers due to the relaxed learning environment.

#### **2.3.2.2 What is the significance of formative assessment to EFAL teaching?**

Formative assessment is significant in the teaching and learning process because it facilitates teaching with the aim of developing learning and assists learners with subject content (Majola, 2014). Sadler (1989) and Garrison and Ehringhaus (2010) demonstrated that formative assessment enables teachers to self-evaluate and adjust teaching and learning activities to accommodate learners’ needs.

Formative assessment offers a bigger picture of that which needs to be learnt and enables teachers to identify learners' different levels of ability (Gibbs & Simpson, 2005). This is crucial as all learners' needs should be accommodated. Dwyer (2017) notes that formative assessment enables teachers to collect real information about learners' level of understanding. Their needs can then be accommodated using a variety of assessment methods like observation; discussions; practical demonstrations; projects; reading and presentations. Such methods enhance learners' active participation in their own learning process and they quickly develop the communication skills required in grade four EFAL in the CAPS curriculum. Fisher and Frey (2015) note that when learners are engaged in discussion, it is easier for the teacher to assess understanding as he/she listens while learners are interacting and is able to identify what they are thinking.

The purpose of formative assessment is to provide regular feedback that helps learners to improve the quality of their learning experience and teachers to plan their future teaching (Tharinger, Finn, Wilkinson, Christopher, & Tran, 2008). Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) and Grant and Garies (2015) highlight that feedback should not be judgmental but should diagnose a learner's needs. However, Black and William (2009) argue that feedback is formative if it is used by the learner to improve his/her performance. Thus, teachers that use formative assessment will gain a sound understanding of how to recognise barriers to learning and plan for diversity.

Given that learners are in the process of acquiring additional language in grade four, formative assessment is significant because teachers will be able to identify gaps as learning progresses and adjust their teaching strategies to achieve the targeted learning goals (Heritage, 2007; William, 2007). This would enable them to craft appropriate interventions to prevent learners that are struggling from being left behind (Wilson, 2018). It requires teachers to diagnose learners' difficulties in order to cater for their diverse needs. The multiple criteria provided by formative assessment are used to make judgments and crucial decisions about learners' achievement (Sadler, 1989; Stiggins, 2002).

### **2.3.2.3 Skills developed in EFAL through formative assessment**

In the CAPS curriculum, grade four EFAL teachers are expected to develop learners' listening and speaking skills; reading and viewing skills; writing and presenting skills and language structure and conventions skills. Adopting discussions; practical demonstrations, observation and projects as forms of assessment assists in developing these skills and monitoring each learner's progress. Harlen (2005) argues that the effectiveness of assessment methods is captured by the learner's knowledge and skills. Skills like listening and speaking are easily developed when learners engage in discussions, presentations, practical demonstrations and informal classroom interaction. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, fluency in English is required for entry to university (Nalliveetil, 2014). This encourages all citizens to develop their English language skills. Discussions are employed to improve English communication skills among undergraduate students and many library resources enrich the knowledge and skills required in the English language.

As noted previously, learners as well as teachers benefit from formative assessment as they gain skills in self-evaluation, appreciate their work and feel proud of their achievements (Sadler, 1989; Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2010). Active participation in their own assessment improves learning, develops self-regulation strategies and changes their approach to learning (Heritage, 2007; Gijbel & Doch, 2006). Chappius and Stiggins (2002) add that such involvement enables learners to understand how they learn best and take the next steps in their learning.

Some scholars argue that teachers should not only use assessment to gauge learners' progress on a continuous basis, but to gain useful information which will inform their practice (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016). This suggests that teachers should incorporate formative assessment into teaching and learning instead of dwelling too much on summative assessment. Garrison and Erhinghaus are of the view that reliance on one form of assessment limits the likelihood of tracking a learner's achievement and progress in the classroom.

Maja's (2015) study concluded that classroom interaction is one of the best strategies to assist learners to participate in their own practical learning. Such interaction includes discussions; story-telling; role-play; debates and reading aloud. These activities that help learners to develop communication skills

and actively participate in the classroom facilitate EFAL in primary schools. Learners are able to explore their learning without fear and develop their own thoughts (Wilson, 2018). Maja (2015) also found that learners enjoy interacting with others and helping one another; this suggests that teachers should give them opportunities to share their ideas through interaction.

Lee's (2015) study in South Korea found that Diagnostic Language Assessment is used to identify the source of learners' problems in language learning and provide a means of dealing with the problem successfully. In Hong Kong, the government launched numerous assessment initiatives to supporting learners' learning (Berry, 2011), but many challenges arose when it came to implementation.

## **2.4 Factors influencing teachers' selection of assessment methods**

This section discusses the factors that influence teachers in selecting assessment methods, including teachers' beliefs; knowledge of assessment and time factors (Kim, 2014; Masole, 2013; Acer-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018).

Assessment has become the centre of all teaching and learning processes (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016). Muijs and Reynolds (2017) noted that it aims to reveal the effectiveness of teaching activities during and after the teaching process. Teachers select assessment practices that they believe are best suited to effective teaching and learning in their classrooms.

### **2.4.1 Teachers' beliefs**

Teachers' beliefs are one of the factors that influence the selection of assessment methods. Kim, Kim, Lee, Spector, and DeMeester (2013) examined how English First Language (EFL) teachers' beliefs influenced the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching in Colombia. The findings show that teachers apply their beliefs to select teaching and assessment methods. Crusan, Plakans and Gebril (2016) concluded that teachers' experiences accounted for differences in their beliefs regarding assessment practices. The study found that more experienced teachers have different beliefs from their less experienced counterparts.

Some teachers still prefer traditional assessment methods. Acar-Erdol and Yildizli (2018) found that

Turkish teachers commonly use observations, multiple choice questions, true or false questions and short answer questions. This finding is supported by Tsilo (2006) who concluded that, while different assessment methods should be used in the teaching process, many teachers continue to relying on traditional assessment practices in the form of tests and examinations. The focus is thus the end product of learning rather than the learning process (Acer-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018). Teachers should create an environment which enables learners to construct knowledge on their own through critical thinking (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016).

#### **2.4.2 Knowledge of assessment methods**

Teacher's knowledge of assessment methods and their skills and attitude play a significant role in determining the assessment methods used in the classroom (Acar-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018). Masole and Howie (2013) explored the factors that influence teachers' selection of assessment methods in Botswana. The study found that teachers teaching agriculture chose assessment methods that suited them although they were required to perform holistic assessment. This was due to a lack of training. It suggests that teachers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to perform assessment. Large classes were identified as a further reason for the lack of sound performance assessment. This resulted in each school designing its own assessment criteria based on the syllabus statements and the local context. Crusan, Plakans and Gebril (2016) reached a similar conclusion and added that lack of knowledge of assessment results in a lack of confidence in teachers' assessment abilities.

#### **2.4.2 Time allocation**

Time is a major constraint that influences the selection of assessment methods in teaching EFAL in grade four. Kim, Kim, Lee, Spector, and DeMeester (2013) noted that teachers do not have sufficient time to conduct the high-quality assessment expected by the DoE. Furthermore, teachers feel that the number of assessment practices is onerous. For instance, the CAPS curriculum calls for formative and summative assessment in EFAL.

The following section discusses teachers' challenges and successes with regard to implementing assessment methods.

## **2.5 Challenges and successes in implementing assessment methods**

New curriculum approaches led to many changes in assessment methods, especially in grade four EFAL (Maharaj, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016). Studies conducted by Nhlengethwa (2016), Tsilo (2006), Ngwenya (2006), Ramsaroop (2003) and Ntuli (2007) highlight the assessment challenges facing EFAL teachers that arose from curriculum changes from C2005 in 1997 to the NCS in 2002, the RNCS in 2007 and the current CAPS curriculum which was introduced in 2012 (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998; Msila, 2007; Vandeyar & Killen, 2007; Maharaj, Nkosi, Mkhize, 2017). These include the language of teaching and learning, changes in teaching styles, lack of support from department officials and overcrowded classrooms.

Ngcobo (2015) notes that the shift from mother tongue as the language of teaching and learning in the Foundation phase, to the first additional language impacts on how teachers implement assessment practices in grade four. EFAL teachers find it difficult to adopt formative assessment because it requires a substantial shift in teaching styles (Black, 2015). For example the CAPS curriculum for grade four EFAL calls for formal and informal tasks to be assessed. Thus, all language skills such as listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting; and language structure and use should be assessed.

Ngwenya (2006) found that, not all EFAL teachers resist change; however, lack of assistance from departmental officials results in the new assessment methods being poorly implemented. While some teachers are aware of new forms of assessment, traditional strategies such as testing content knowledge are still dominant (Tsilo, 2006; Ntuli, 2007). Testing simply measures content knowledge for promotion purposes and does not help to improve learners' performances as learning progresses.

Ramsaroop (2013) found evidence that some teachers' find it difficult to conduct various forms of assessment due to the language policy and overcrowded classrooms. Cele (2009) investigated the implementation of formative assessment in grade seven natural sciences in primary schools in Umlazi district in KwaZulu-Natal. The study sought to determine whether formative assessment was implemented in line with the national DoE's recommendations. The researcher concluded that the teachers lack understanding of the value of formative assessment and have not adopted clear assessment programmes (Cele, 2009). This suggests that in order to successfully implement formative

assessment, grade four EFAL teachers should have a clear understanding of its importance. They also need to be equipped with skills such as the ability to interpret learners' ideas. Therefore, the current study explores which assessment methods grade four EFAL teachers are using when teaching and assessing students in the CAPS curriculum.

However, some studies have shown that teachers have a positive attitude and are open to effective implementation of assessment methods. Nkosi's (2014) study on teachers' experiences of the implementation of the CAPS curriculum found that some regard curriculum changes as positive. Pohl's (2010) comparative study on an integrated curriculum as a teaching approach in South Africa and the Philippines found that teachers in both countries felt that integration is an effective teaching method as it enables learners' personalities and potential skills to develop. Pohl (2005) concluded that teachers understood the significance of integration and believed that it would empower learners with the knowledge and skills demanded in the modern era.

## **2.5 Traditional assessment methods**

Stears and Gopal (2010) describe traditional assessment as a method that focuses on measuring a learner's content knowledge. The learner's ability to recall memorised facts is assessed in order to determine whether he/she should be promoted to the next grade (Memela, 2011). Anderson (1998) argued that memorising facts promotes passive learning. Furthermore, it encourages comparisons between successful learners and poorly performing ones (Chappius & Stiggins, 2002). Traditional assessment methods limit the chances of a learner demonstrating his/her own knowledge and being part of the learning process (Mkholo, 2010). Anderson (1998) and Vandeyar and Killen (2003) observe that it does not promote meaningful learning to enable deep understanding and develop skills like creative thinking; problem solving and communication. Instead, learners recall memorised facts. Similarly, Sharif, Soleimani and Jafari Gohar (2017) noted that traditional assessment does not help learners to learn new vocabulary, especially in a language. Their study found that an e-portfolio group performed better than a traditional assessment group as learners benefited from the integration of educational activities and technology (Sharifi, Soleimani, & Jafarigohar, 2017)

Butcher et al.(2017) add that the language of assessment is a barrier to traditional assessment practice. Failure to consider this issue leads to learners withdrawing as they are unable to engage in

discussions. Butcher et al. (2017) thus suggested that inclusive language of assessment should be adopted.

Woods (2018) investigated the relationship between digital technology and traditional evaluative practice. He argues that for digital technology to impact both assessment practices and evaluative practice, the assessment method should be flexible, reliable and valid.

Traditional assessment methods include multiple choice questions; formal tests or examinations; short answers and fill-in assessment (Kilickaya, 2016). These are easy to administer because they involve scoring marks. Summative assessment is regarded as a traditional assessment practice since it is undertaken at the end of the teaching and learning process. The focus is thus on the product rather than the process (Acar-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018).

## **2.6 Alternate assessment methods**

Alternate assessment is also referred to authentic assessment and performance-based assessment (Torrance, 1995; Lubisi, 1999; Chinda, 2014; Petre, 2017). Performance-based assessment is described by Ernst, Glennie and Li (2017) as assessment which involves learners in certain activities to demonstrate their academic knowledge and capabilities. Unlike traditional assessment, alternative assessment methods actively involve learners in the learning process which is integrated with teaching and learning (Chinda, 2014; Petre, 2017). They embrace tasks that are more practical, challenging and realistic rather than memorising content knowledge (Buhagiar, 2007). Such tasks demonstrate meaningful application of knowledge and skills and focus directly on a learner's performance (Ntuli, 2007). Learners apply knowledge in an analytic and thoughtful way; they also use learnt knowledge to solve problems. Petre (2017) noted that in alternate assessment, learners are stimulated to give their own answers, express their thoughts and feelings and be innovative thinkers. Chandio and Jafferri (2015) highlighted that alternate assessment enables learners to choose the learning style that suits them. Learning and assessment processes are integrated as they consider learners' needs. Formative assessment is regarded as an alternate assessment method that promotes learner development (Yilmazer & Ozkan, 2017). Moreover, alternative assessment offers continuous feedback from and to the learner which they can use to self-regulate (Petre, 2017). It is thus crucial

for EFAL teachers to have adequate knowledge of formative assessment.

Cetin (2011) investigated the implementation of alternative assessment methods in young learners' classrooms. The findings show that teachers use different assessment strategies that they believe inspire learners' active participation, which promotes their cognitive and emotional development. This suggests that teachers should use alternative assessment methods in order to motivate learners to participate in the learning process as well as develop intellectually.

Portfolios; observations; investigations; self-evaluations and peer assessment are all alternate assessment methods (Kilickaya, 2016). The following sub-sections discuss each in detail.

### **2.7.1 Portfolios**

In portfolio assessment, learners organise, combine and describe what they have learnt by providing proof of the tasks they have completed (Chandio & Jaffer, 2015; Nosratinia & Abdi, 2017). This provides a learning structure that persists for a long time and the learning concept is transferred to the learner. Nosratinia and Abdi (2017) note that portfolio assessment plays a crucial role in facilitating language learning, developing EFL writing skills and decreasing anxiety among learners.

Safari and Koosha (2016) found that speaking portfolios enhanced English proficiency among Iranian EFL students. The students that participated in the study were of the view that speaking portfolios were more effective in helping learners to learn English than video portfolios. They noted that such portfolios made it easier to rectify errors and monitor their progress. Therefore, grade four EFAL teachers should use portfolios as one of their assessment strategies to develop English proficiency among learners.

### **2.7.2 Observation**

Observation enables learners to acquire comprehensive first-hand information that is not easily accessible and to understand a phenomenon (Chandio & Jaffer, 2015). The person involved is part of different activities on different occasions. Peker, Peker, Regalla, and Cox (2018) examined how observation contribute to mastering French vocabulary among prekindergarten foreign language

learners. The study found that learners of all abilities were able to learn French through observation. Observation enables learners to learn through repetition, engagement and the use of language in context. The authors concluded that observation is significant, especially with regard to additional language vocabulary acquisition. This is pertinent to grade four EFAL in South Africa as English is introduced as the language of teaching and learning in this grade.

### **2.7.3 Self-evaluation**

Self-evaluation or self-assessment makes learners responsible for their own learning. Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, and Vigayanti's (2018) study revealed that self-assessment encourages learners to be responsible for their own work. They learn to understand what is expected of them in terms of their performance and are able to assess their work based on the task requirements, monitor it and find ways to improve it. This enhances learners' self-esteem and they are willing to continue learning and take full responsibility for their actions and judgments. Chandio and Jeffer (2015) also noted that self-assessment decreases teachers' workloads as learners become more responsible for their work. This implies that EFAL teachers should maximize self-assessment activities to motivate learners to be responsible and improve their self-esteem.

A study by Hung, Samuelson and Chen (2016) revealed that self-assessment has a positive effect on students' achievement. It enables them to recognise what they have learnt; for instance, they can differentiate concepts they understand from those they are less familiar with (Park & Williams, 2016). Furthermore, self-assessment practices enable teachers to have a deeper understanding of students' learning and use it to adjust the content (Hung, Samuelson, & Chen, 2016).

### **2.7.4 Peer assessment**

Peer assessment actively involves learners, who work in groups to discuss matters in class and present conclusions (Black, 2015). Bostock (2000) noted that it enables learners to learn from and reflect on their own performance, while Ndoye (2017) observe that it enables them to engage in the learning process.

Peer and self-assessment enable learners to develop the capacity to make judgments, develop evaluation skills and justify and direct their own learning (Chappius & Stiggins, 2002). On the other hand, these assessment practices develop collaborative learning skills and promote a positive and supportive learning environment (Ndoye, 2017).

Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and William (2004) state that peer assessment enables learners to accept criticism of their work from their peers; learners take on the role of teachers and examiners of other learners. For example, when learners assess each other they identify other learners' weaknesses and strengths.

Zhao, Bhalla, Halliday, Travaglia and Kennedy (2017) found that peer assessment methods are the best way to develop the critical thinking required in the Massive Open Online Courses in Australia. They add that peer assessment is helpful in medical, paramedical, dental or other teaching contexts which involve performance-based assessment. Engaging learners in peer assessment tasks develops the ability to integrate many perspectives in decision-making. Lai's (2016) study found that an online video peer assessment system was effective in enhancing communication skills among student nurses as they gained a range of feedback that positively influenced their learning and improved their performance. This suggests that employing peer assessment in EFAL would enable learners to exchange ideas using the language and thus develop their communication skills.

When learners are active in the learning process, they own their learning and develop meta-cognition, motivation, attentiveness and attribution (Black & William, 2009). They are able to share ideas and express themselves in ways that develop deeper understanding (Wilson, 2018). Peer assessment assists in assessing groups as well as individual learners (Chen, 2010). This suggests that EFAL teachers could enhance learners' communication skills by introducing peer assessment.

## **2.8 Theoretical framework**

In order to understand human behaviour, one should understand the framework within which people interpret their thoughts, feelings and action (Atieno, 2009). This study adopted the Activity theory to understand how teachers interpret their thoughts, feelings and action with regard to the assessment methods used to teach EFAL to grade four learners. Activity theory is based on the foundations of

Marx, Engels, Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria's philosophies in the 1920s (Engestrom, Miettinen & Punamaki, 1999). Crawford and Hasan (2006) maintain that it is rooted in the work of Vygotsky and Cole (1978). Vygotsky (1978) posited that human action involves a dialectic relationship between subject and object. According to Vygotsky, this means that there is an interrelationship between subject and object; the subject interprets the object while the activity is taking place at the same time as the subject learns and grows. Leont'ev (1981) defines activity as a system that has structure, internal transition and transformation and its own development.

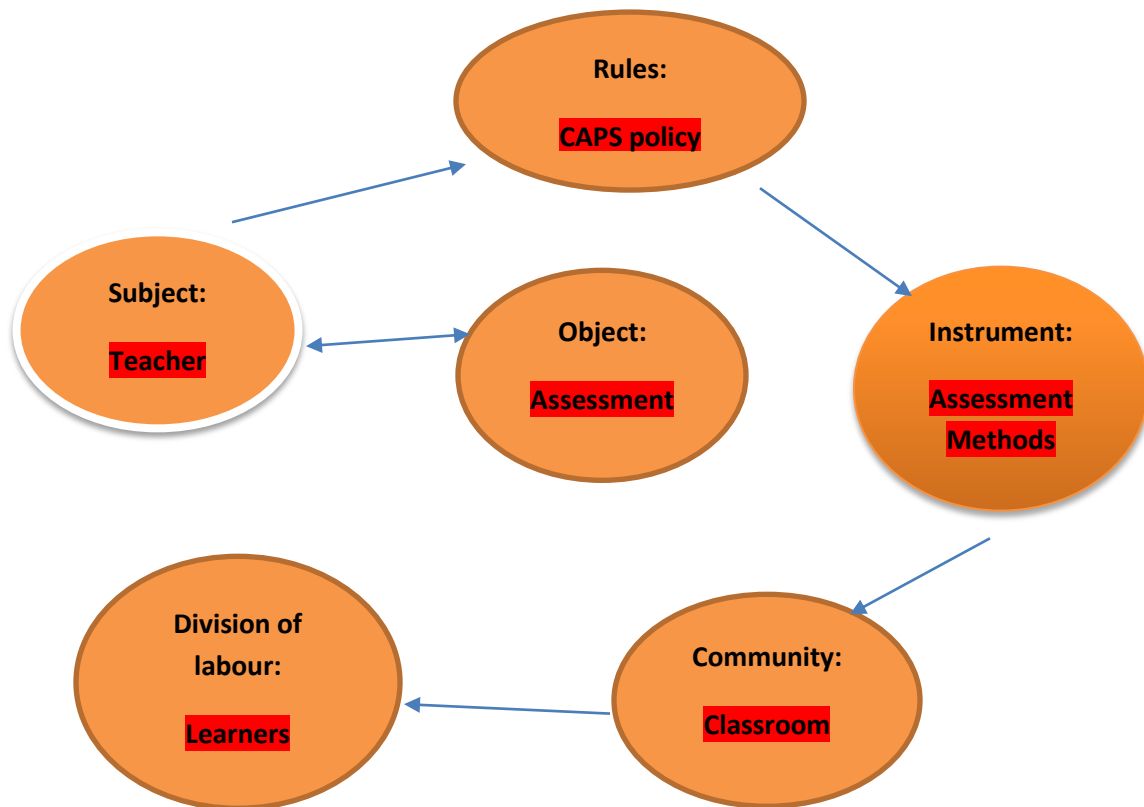
Jonassen (1999) describes Activity theory as a philosophical framework that studies various forms of human practices and offers an alternative way of viewing human thinking and activity. It is a powerful tool that can be used to analyse various human activities (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Activity theory was appropriate for this study as the researcher aimed to explore the diverse assessment methods used by grade four teachers when teaching EFAL (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999).

Activity theory holds that the people's everyday activities are the product of their interaction with others and their environment (Ncheke, 2008). It assists in explain individual actions in different contexts. Ncheke (2008) noted that unity of consciousness and activity are the major principles of activity theory. Consciousness involves a person's mind, while activity is interaction with the objective truth. This theory helped to explore the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers and to analyse how these teachers interact with learners and the environment. It enabled the researcher to understand the factors that influence the assessment methods teachers' use and offered alternative ways of viewing what teachers think about assessment methods. Engeström et al. (1999) state that this theory help the researcher to focus on the factors that affect subjective interpretations; the purpose and sense making of individual action. Activity theory provided a framework to generate and analyse data about grade four EFAL teachers' activities in assessment (Crowford & Hasan, 2006) as well as to interpret the data by formulating appropriate themes and categories (Crowford & Hasan, 2006).

Diagram on page 26 illustrates the components of Activity theory, namely, instrument, subject, object, rule, community and division of labour (Engestrom, 2000). According to Crawford and Hasan (2006), any human activity needs instruments/tools to use in the process of action. People in action

are referred to as the subject because they are engaged in the activity. The object signifies the purpose that influences the activity. Crowford and Hasan's (2006) study revealed that there is a connection between the subject and an object since they work together. They add that Activity theory offers a clear understanding of how people do things supported by instruments in a complicated dynamic situation. To analyse any activity, one needs to appreciate the context in which it takes place, the intentions or goals, the rules that govern the activity and the community in which it occurs (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999).

In this study the Activity theory was used to explore the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in teaching and assessing learners. The components of the theory shown in the above diagram are interpreted as follows: Every action/ activity has its rules; in this study assessment policy is regarded as the rules because it provides the framework for how assessment should be conducted in EFAL (Department of Basic Education,2011). The assessment policy prescribes informal and formal tasks to be completed within a stipulated time. These assessment policies guide the teacher (subject) on how to do assessment (object), using assessment methods (instrument), in this case formative and summative assessment. Assessment methods are performed in the classroom (community) and learners are regarded as the division of labour because this is where assessment informs how it should be conducted.



**Diagram 2.1: Components of the Activity theory used to analyse the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers (Adapted from Engestrom, 2000).**

In this study, the CAPS curriculum policy is regarded as a rule because every assessment practice is governed by the policy. It is the policy which states how to assess, what to assess and when to assess. The teacher is viewed as a subject because it is his/her responsibility to assess students using the methods of assessment required by the policy. Methods of assessment, i.e., formative and summative assessment are considered as the instrument because teachers use them as a tool in assessing students. Assessment is regarded as the object because it is done; the classroom is viewed as the community because it is where assessment methods are exercised. Finally, learners are considered as the division of labour because assessment uses them to distribute how it should be done (methods of assessment).

Scholars like Naidoo (2013), Ncheke (2008) and Mhlongo (2012) used Activity theory to understand different forms of human actions in different contexts and to analyse data around their phenomenon. For instance, Mhlongo (2012) conducted a study on teaching methods used by grade one educators to develop reading skills at a school in Durban. Activity theory assisted Mhlongo (2012) to understand learners' development of reading skills while they were taught reading. She also gained insightful knowledge on methods of teaching reading in grade one. The teachers that participated in the study

claimed that insufficient resources and overcrowding make it impossible for them to cater for each learner's needs.

Naidoo (2013) used Activity theory to understand the activities, actions and operations performed by participants on teaching resources used by university tutors teaching the Post Graduate Certificate in Education. The researcher also used Activity theory to analyse data generated from the participants. It was evident that the participants used various tools in the teaching and learning environment.

Ncheke (2008) employed Activity theory to understand the hierarchical structure of activities that learners engaged in to develop and transform their way of learning as a result of educational video usage in the lesson. The researcher found that integrating educational videos in teaching and learning was useful in the learning process.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter presented an extensive review of the literature relevant to this study. It began with a discussion on conceptualising assessment, and the assessment practices (summative and formative) used by teachers in teaching grade four EFAL. The factors that influence teachers' selection of assessment practices were highlighted, as well as the challenges teachers face in implementing assessment practices. Traditional and alternate assessment practices were also reviewed. The second section of this chapter discussed the theoretical framework adopted for this study, Activity theory, which was used as a lens to explore the assessment methods grade four teachers are using in teaching EFAL learners.

The following chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed for this study, the sampling method, data collection instrument; the issue of trustworthiness of the data collected; and data analysis as well as ethical considerations and the study's limitations and delimitations.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter reviewed the literature relevant to this study and discussed Activity theory that was employed as the theoretical framework to answer the research questions. This chapter presents an in-depth discussion on the research methodology employed to respond to the following research questions:

- What assessment methods are used by grade four EFAL teachers?
- How do grade four EFAL teachers use these assessment methods?
- What influences grade four EFAL teachers to use these assessment methods?

It provides the justification for adopting a qualitative case study design and discusses the data sources, and data collection and analysis. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations as well as the study's limitations and delimitations are also highlighted.

#### **3.2 Interpretive Paradigm**

The study is located in the interpretive paradigm that relies on human experiences and interpretations of their world (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). A paradigm refers to different ways of viewing the world; various expectations about the world and how we can comprehend it (Cohen et al., 2018). Denzin and Lincoln (2002) and Maree (2007) note that a paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

This study fits within the interpretive paradigm because the focus was on gaining deeper understanding (epistemology) and interpretation of the phenomenon which is the assessment methods used by EFAL grade four teachers (Cohen et al., 2018). In the interpretive paradigm, reality (ontology) is socially constructed and has many realities (Mertens, 2014; Atieno, 2009). This view is supported by Atieno (2009) who asserts that people's behaviour is influenced by the setting in which actions occur.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

Maree (2007) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) define a research design as the strategies the researcher uses to collect and analyse data that helps to respond to the questions investigated. The research design addresses the applicable argument and links the collected data to the argument as well as provides the criteria for interpreting the findings (Baskarada, 2014).

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach which was appropriate since the researcher explored teachers' behaviour in using assessment methods when teaching EFAL. Qualitative research enables a researcher to gather as much information as possible about a phenomenon, in this case, 'assessment methods' and understand the nature of the research problem (Baskarada, 2014). While interviews are time-consuming, qualitative research allows the researcher to explore different perspectives of the phenomenon (Choy, 2014).

#### **3.3.1 Case study research design**

Authors such as Choy (2014); De Massis and Kotlar (2014); Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Hodgkinson (2001) conceptualise a case study in different ways. Choy (2014) defines such a study as a collection of methods, such as interviews and observation, which are used to collect data from a small group of people.

A case study was appropriate to obtain in-depth information on the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers and explore how teachers use assessment methods when teaching EFAL in this grade (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). A case study was selected as it facilitates thorough investigation of a phenomenon by asking penetrating questions to obtain rich data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Choy, 2014; Hodgkinson, 2001). This feature of a case study was relevant in investigating which assessment methods grade four EFAL teachers are using in teaching and assessing learners. Cohen et al. (2018) stated that in a case study, the context is recognised as a dominant cause and effect and thorough understanding is necessary to justify the case. The case study provided an understanding of what influences grade four EFAL teachers to use assessment methods

in the way they do. Hodkinson (2001) shows that a case study strongly relates to participants' experiences; however, Choy (2014) argue that the findings cannot be generalised because they are specific to a particular organisation. The intention of this study was not to generalise the results but to generate in-depth information on the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers.

### **3.4 Location of the study**

The study was conducted at three primary schools at uMkhanyakude district, KwaZulu-Natal. School A opened in 2000 and is classified as disadvantaged in terms of insufficient resources and the community where it is situated. The community lives in Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses built by the government. Many parents are unemployed and depend on social grants and self-employment such as selling goods in town. The school caters for grades R-7. The language of teaching and learning in grades R-3 is isiZulu and in grades 4-7 EFAL is the language of teaching and learning.

School B opened in 1970. It is located in a semi-rural area and is classified as disadvantaged because of inadequate resources and the community where it is situated. The school offers grades R-7, with isiZulu as the language of learning and teaching from grades R-3 and EFAL in grades 4-7. Some community members are employed, but most are unemployed, including those with qualifications from different tertiary institutions.

School C was established in 1980 and is also categorised as underprivileged in terms of scarce resources and the community it serves. It is located in a rural area with a high rate of unemployment. Most parents depend on social grants or work in low-paid jobs. It caters for grades R-7, with isiZulu as the language of teaching and learning from grades R-3 and EFAL in grades 4-7.

While all three schools suffer from scarce resources, school A's buildings were in better condition than schools B and C. These schools were selected because they offer EFAL from grade four and were thus suitable to answer the research questions.

### 3.5 Selection of the participants

The sources of data were one teacher from each of the three schools. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. This type of sampling involves the researcher selecting certain participants from the total population that are best able to provide information on the phenomenon under study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Maree, 2007). Tongco (2007) asserts that purposeful sampling ensures that genuine information is gathered that can be tested at any time; it is thus reliable. Purposeful sampling was employed because only teachers teaching EFAL to grade four learners were able to provide the relevant and in-depth information required (Cohen et al., 2007). The theoretical framework employed was Activity theory that examines human activity in different contexts; in this case, assessment methods (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000).

The researcher chose three participants (teachers) from three different schools in order to obtain reliable data that can be generalised and transferable to another context with different participants (Anney, 2014). The following criteria were used to select the participants:

- Grade four EFAL teachers, irrespective of gender.
- Experience of teaching EFAL in grade four at different times of curriculum changes for example CAPS RNCS and OBE.
- Minimum teaching experience of eight years.
- Minimum of a four-year teaching qualification.

This sample size provided the researcher with quality data (Curtis & Lawson, 2001). Participants were selected based on the fact that they are teaching EFAL; this assisted in checking how far the data can be generalised (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Participants that were knowledgeable and had experience of the phenomenon and were willing to communicate their experiences and opinions were selected (Palinkas et al., 2015). The researcher first visited the schools and asked the principals' permission to conduct research. She then made contact with grade four EFAL teachers and exchanged numbers. The researcher phoned the participants to make appointments for face-to-face interviews at a suitable time and convenient venue.

### **3.6 Data collection methods**

Qualitative data collection methods include observation, textual or visual analysis and interviews (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). This study employed semi-structured in-depth interviews and document analysis to gather data.

#### **3.6.1 Semi structured in-depth interviews**

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected as they enable participants to share their beliefs and perceptions of a topic and help the researcher to understand a social phenomenon (Cohen et al, 2007). Lewis and Ritchie (2003) and Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) state that interviews enable detailed investigation of participant's personal perspectives, views, experiences and understanding of a phenomenon. However, the disadvantage of semi-structured in-depth interviews is that it is time consuming for the participant to answer questions and likely to be bias (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Nevertheless, this study used semi-structured in-depth interviews with individual participants to dig deep into their social and personal experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were appropriate as the researcher sought to explore the phenomenon in great depth. These interviews also enabled new areas of inquiry to emerge and facilitated a social and interpersonal encounter with the participant (Gill et al., 2008; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). While semi-structured in-depth interviews are flexible, they do guide participants through the process.

Open-ended and follow up questions were used to probe deeper (Britten, 1995). Gill et al. (2008) and Baskarada (2014) noted that this enables further information to be solicited on important issues. In order to prevent misinterpretation of the responses and assumptions based on previous responses, the interviews were recorded and the data was checked with the interviewees (Baskarada, 2014). The tapes were transcribed verbatim in order to reduce bias and to have a permanent record of what was said (Gill et al., 2008). However, a disadvantage is that transcribing audio records is time consuming. The researcher also made notes during and immediately after the interviews which were useful in data analysis.

### **3.6.2 Document analysis**

Document analysis was also used in this study as a means of collecting data. Documents are significant sources of information (Cohen et al., 2007). Document analysis involves analysing the information in a document in order to identify issues that will assist in understanding and interpreting the raw data (Maree, 2007). The reason for analysing the EFAL Grade four CAPS policy document in this study was to determine whether participants were using the assessment methods as prescribed by the CAPS document. policy required.

The EFAL CAPS policy document was easily accessible from all participants and were analysed in order to establish whether grade four EFAL teachers are using assessment methods in line with the policy. The document sets out guidelines and methods that should be used in teaching and assessing English language in grade four (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The guidelines are based on teaching language skills such as listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting and language structure and use. The EFAL CAPS document clarifies the different assessment methods that should be used to assess these language skills. Teaching plans and an assessment programme set out the content that should be taught and when learners should be assessed. The time per day allocated to teaching each skill is stated. The researcher used the EFAL CAPS document to analyse and verify what should be done in regard to assessment methods in teaching and assessing grade four learners.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Maree (2007) and Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen and Kyngas (2014) state that content analysis enables the data to be condensed to concepts that define the phenomenon under study. According to Elo et al. (2014), there are three main phases of data analysis, namely, preparation; organisation and reporting of results. During the preparation phase, the researcher collects appropriate data and selects unit for analysis. In the organisation phase, the researcher reviews the content of the collected data, assigns codes and creates categories (Pilot and Beck, 2012). This study employed thematic analysis to classify and organise the data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Braun and Clarke (2006, p.6) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying and reporting pattern (themes) within the data". Thematic analysis driven by

the theoretical framework (Activity theory) was used to describe data in detail, report experiences, meanings and the reality of participants and interpret various aspects of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It enabled the researcher to scrutinise the participants' underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations, and ideologies to explore the assessment methods grade four teachers are using in teaching EFAL (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

**Table 3.7.1: Steps followed in analysing data**

Step 1	The researcher transcribed the audio recorded data and checked the transcription against the audio recording (Maree, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Step 2	The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts and searched for meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Step 3	The researcher coded the data by writing notes on the texts (Maree, 2007).
Step 4	The researcher matched the coded data with data extracts and gathered it together within each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Step 5	The researcher sorted the different codes into probable themes (Maree, 2007).
Step 6	The researcher reviewed and refined the identified themes (Schreier, 2012).
Step 7	The researcher described and reported the results (Schreier, 2012).

### 3.8 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify four criteria that should be considered by the researcher in pursuit of the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, namely, credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability. The following sub-sections discuss how each was addressed to enhance the study's trustworthiness.

### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility involves checking that the instruments used in a study measured what they were planned to measure (Maree, 2007; Shenton, 2004; Krefting, 1991). In this study, a carefully formulated interview schedule was used to interview participants in order to answer the research questions. The researcher adopted the following strategies to ensure credibility: prolonged engagement, triangulation, honesty, and probing questions (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). She visited the schools prior to data collection to familiarise herself with the participants and establish a relationship of trust. This enabled the participants to talk freely and offer more information without fear. Through these visits, the researcher gained sufficient understanding of the participants' experiences. According to Shenton (2004), triangulation involves the use of different sources of data and the use of different instruments for data collection. In this study, face-to-face, individual, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and triangulation was ensured by using multiple participants.

Purposeful sampling of participants from three different primary schools enabled the researcher to collect data which provided a variety of perspectives. Individual standpoints and experiences were then verified against others. Rich understanding of a participant's attitudes or behaviour could be obtained based on the input of other participants. The researcher enhanced triangulation by checking the transcripts with the participants to ensure that the data was transcribed accurately. To promote honesty, the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study with no explanation. The participants were encouraged to be truthful and were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. In order to obtain more personal perspectives and detailed data, the researcher reframed, repeated or expanded questions. This also enabled her to establish if the participant was truthful in their response (Shenton, 2004; Krefting, 1991).

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability relates to the transfer of results from one context to the other, it occurs when the results of a study can be generalised to the reader's context and fit into other contexts determined by the degree of resemblance (Anney, 2014; Krefting, 1991; Morrow, 2005; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). While the study sample was very small the findings could be transferable to other

primary schools that offer EFAL in grade four in rural areas (Shenton, 2004). This study enhanced transferability by thick description and sufficient information of the research context; rich description of the context is done to enable the reader considering applying the results in his/her context of the same nature (Anney, 2015). The participants offer detailed information on the assessment methods grade four EFAL teachers are using in teaching and assessing learners, that will enable the reader to better understand the phenomenon and transfer the findings to his/her situation. The methodology was described in detail so that the reader is able to ascertain the extent to which the findings can be accepted (Shenton, 2004).

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Golafshani (2003); Bertram and Christiansen (2014) state that dependability occurs when there is consistency in measuring raw data, verifying and comparing it with other studies. According to Elo et al. (2014), dependability refers to the firmness of the findings over time even if they are used under different conditions. The researcher promoted the honesty of findings through data collection from numerous participants through semi-structured interviews and transcribing these interviews, as well as document analysis. Morrow (2005) recommends that the process of data collection and analysis should be very clear and repeated as much as possible. Therefore, during the analysis phase of the study, the researcher coded the collected data by writing notes on the texts (Krefting, 1991). For triangulation in this criterion, the researcher matched the coded data extracts, gathered them together within each code and sorted the different codes into probable themes (Morrow, 2005). She also reviewed and refined all the identified themes (Schreier, 2012).

### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Shenton (2004) states that confirmability means that the findings reflect the participants' experiences and opinions rather than the researcher's attributes and preferences. This means that a researcher should not use his/her imagination to interpret and analyse data and that the findings should be confirmed by other experts in the field (Anney, 2015).

Anney (2015) refers to confirmability as confirmation by other researchers that data and interpretations do not derive from the imagination of the researcher. In this study, triangulation was

achieved by conducting individual interviews with multiple participants (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Selecting participants from three different primary schools meant that the data reflected diverse perspectives and thus a view of reality (Shenton, 2004). The transcribed interviews were also checked by the participants (Maree, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) note that ethics is about people's good or poor behaviour. Given that research involves people, all researchers must take heed of the ethical codes governing their practices (Cohen et al., 2007).

The researcher received ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and permission was obtained to conduct the study from the DoE, the circuit manager, principals of schools and the grade four EFAL teachers that were interviewed (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Silverman (2015) noted that participants have the right to be fully informed about what will happen in the project and to withdraw at any time. Informed consent includes voluntary participation; full information; competence and comprehension (Cohen et al., 2007). In other words, the participant must have a clear understanding of the nature of the research project, be fully informed about what will happen, be responsible for decision making and participate voluntarily. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and ensured that no harm was done to the participants.

Two 45-minute face-to-face interviews were conducted (the first for an interview and the second for verification of the transcribed data) at a time convenient to the participants. The researcher ensured that the functioning of the school was not disrupted in any way. The participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable (Cohen et al., 2007).

The researcher explained to the participants that their anonymity and confidentiality and that of the school would be protected at all times by using pseudonyms (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Maree, 2007). All participants signed the informed consent form after its contents were clearly explained. The collected data will be stored in a safe and secure place for five years and will not be revealed to anyone at any stage (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). The researcher also explained to the participants that the data would only be used for academic purposes and would not be used against the school.

### **3.10 Limitations and delimitations of the study**

It was anticipated that principals might not want their staff members to participate in the study due to disruption of the school schedule or because offer of being found wanting in terms of assessment methods. To overcome this limitation, the researcher explained that the school programme would not be disrupted and that the data would only be used for academic purposes and would remain confidential and anonymous (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

When participants withdraw during the course of a study, this has a negative impact. In order to avoid such a situation, the researcher ensured that the participants were well-informed about the study, that they felt comfortable and were not offended, and that they suffered no harm (Cohen et al., 2007).

Participants sometimes offer responses that they think will please the researcher rather than what they really think (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The researcher encouraged the participants to speak freely and provide honest responses. Time constraints and the participants' availability could also have adversely affected the research project as the data was collected towards the end of a term. This was overcome by arranging a time that was convenient to the participants. Finally, the researcher had to travel long distances to conduct interviews and weather conditions could have negatively impacted the study as the schools are located in rural areas where roads are in poor condition. The researcher thus ensured that she travelled in favourable weather conditions.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the research methodology employed to conduct this study. It discussed the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative case study approach, the location of the study, and data collection and sampling methods and the steps followed in data analysis. This was followed by a discussion on trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the study's limitations and delimitations. The following chapter presents and discusses the results.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology used in the study. This chapter presents and discusses the study's findings on the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in assessing learners in three primary schools in uMkhanyakude district, KwaZulu-Natal.

The study aimed to answer the following three research questions:

- What assessment methods are used by grade four English First Additional Language teachers?
- How do grade four English First Additional Language teachers use these assessment methods?
- What influences grade four English First Additional Language teachers to use these assessment methods?

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to generate data, guided by interview questions. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and themes were identified, including grade four EFAL teachers' experiences in using assessment methods; choosing assessment methods selectively; bridging policy and practice: creating a balance between formative and summative assessment; too much to do in limited time; teaching in order to assess; the complexities of the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers and the challenges of adapting to innovative assessment methods.

The themes responding to the research questions were grouped together and analysed using thematic analysis and document analysis (the grade four EFAL CAPS document). The discussion on the findings is linked to the literature review and the Activity theory.

#### 4.2 Research participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select one participant from three different primary schools in uMkhanyakude district. Biographical information was collected for each participant. Table 4.2 below summarises this information. The participants' profiles were compiled in order to determine whether their qualifications and experiences have any influence on the way they teach and assess EFAL in

grade four. All three participants have a B.Ed. honours degree. Buhle is a 55-year old female teacher with 27 years’ experience in teaching EFAL in grade four. Betty is 35 years old and has been teaching EFAL for nine years. Finally, Nelly is 43 and has been teaching EFAL for 12 years. The results showed that participant’s experiences influenced the way they use assessment methods. However, they did not reveal any link with qualifications.

#### 4.2.1 Participants’ biographical information (Grade four EFAL teachers)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Years of experience teaching EFAL Grade four</b>
Buhle	Female	55 years	SPTD; B.Ed. Honours degree	27 years	27 years
Betty	Female	35 years	B.Ed. Honours Degree	9 years	9 years
Nelly	Female	43 years	B.Ed. Honours Degree	12 years	12 Ears

#### 4.3 Grade four EFAL teachers’ experiences in teaching EFAL in grade four

The participants pointed to a wide range of experiences when teaching grade four EFAL in the CAPS curriculum. They noted that teaching EFAL in grade four is a challenge since Home Language is the language of instruction in the Foundation phase. Prior to the curriculum changes, learners entered grade four with a background in English language. The vocabulary gained in the Foundation phase enabled them to construct meaningful sentences, communicate using the language and comprehend readings. Nelly stated that, *“In grade three learners are taught English vocabulary to use in sentence construction and reading comprehension”*.

The following section discusses the findings in response to research question 1: What assessment

methods are used by grade four English First Additional Language teachers?

#### **4.4 Choosing assessment methods selectively**

The participants indicated that they are very selective in choosing methods to assess learners in grade four EFAL. Furthermore, they continue to use traditional methods such as question and answer, tests, classwork and comprehension. Buhle said: *“The only formative assessment methods I use is question and answer; written work and homework”*. Betty stated: *“Types of formative assessment methods I use are question and answer; comprehension; written exercises; reading aloud and homework”*, while Nelly responded: *“I use question and answer, homework, class work...”*. Thus, the participants assess learners using question and answer; written exercises; comprehension; homework and reading aloud, which are all traditional assessment practices. This is despite the fact that the CAPS curriculum requires that grade four EFAL learners be taught and assessed using all forms of assessment, including formative assessment. Formative assessment includes discussions; observation; oral presentations; projects; story-telling; debates; homework, question and answer, comprehension, classwork, etc. (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This implies that grade four teachers are very limited in the way they choose assessment methods to teach and assess learners. They are not open to exploring a wide range of innovative assessment methods but stick to traditional methods. However, Mohlabi-Tlaka, De Jager, and Engelbrecht (2018) concluded that the use of these traditional assessment methods neglects learners’ communication skills. Communication is regarded as social collaboration between people using both oral and written systems (Savignon, 2018).

The participants noted that it is challenging to use the formative assessment methods set out in the EFAL CAPS curriculum. Betty mentioned that *“...it is difficult to use other forms of assessment methods....”* They also noted that, when they tried to use methods like debates, presentations, and story-telling, learners *“... fail to express themselves”* (Nelly) because they lack vocabulary and self-esteem. Buhle also noted that: *“Presentations, debates, story-telling are difficult to do since learners do not have the vocabulary to express themselves”*. Betty commented that *“lack of communication skills makes it difficult to use other forms of assessment practices”*. The responses from the participants indicated that lack of communication through English language makes it difficult for teachers to use other forms of assessment. Hence, practical demonstrations; oral presentations;

discussions and storytelling require fluency and a rich vocabulary to construct meaningful sentences or statements (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

This finding is consistent with Savignon's (2018) study that concluded that the selection of certain assessment methods, undermines learners' chances of communicating effectively using the language. They are unable to contribute to their learning because they lack understanding and skills (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003; Mkholo, 2010; Grant & Garies, 2015).

Thus, in relation to the first research question, the findings demonstrated that the participants favour assessment methods that do not develop learners' language proficiency or meaningful learning to promote deep understanding and skills. They prefer traditional assessment methods that do not enhance learners' communication skills. It is evident from the data that none of the participants used the forms of formative assessment recommended in the EFAL CAPS curriculum. This implies that learners' assessment was compromised.

The following section responds to research question 2: How do grade four English First Additional Language teachers use assessment methods?

#### **4.4.1 Bridging curriculum policy and practice: Creating a balance between formative and summative assessment**

The results show that the grade four EFAL teachers bridge the curriculum policy because of the struggle to strike a balance between the formative and summative assessment methods required by the EFAL CAPS curriculum. Nelly mentioned that, "*according to CAPS curriculum formative and summative assessment should be balanced in order to get a complete picture of the learner*". Buhle responded: "*CAPS policy state that there should be a balance between formative and summative assessment*", while Betty noted that: "*The balance between formative and summative assessment should be done...*". This implies that it would be difficult for grade four EFAL teachers to gather information on learners' learning achievement and to accommodate each learner's needs. However formative assessment is significant in teaching and learning because it facilitates teaching with the purpose of developing learning and helps learners with subject content (Majola, 2014).

The participants acknowledged the EFAL CAPS policy expectation of assessing language skills daily using different types of formative assessment and undertaking summative assessment each term. However, it is clear that fulfilling these policy expectations is a challenge. Buhle said: “*It is impossible to use all formative assessment strategies*”, while Betty observed that: “*You cannot use all forms of formative assessment methods as the policy says...*” and Nelly was of the view that: “*What policy says is not practical to do....*” These responses reveal that it is not easy to meet the demands of the policy because theory differs from practical work.

Harlen (2006) noted that both formative and summative assessments are essential in making decisions about learners’ level of performance. The combination of formative and summative assessment should be used to collect and discuss information from diverse sources in order to develop profound understanding of learners’ knowledge and the application of such knowledge as a result of their educational experiences (Stears & Gopal, 2010). Furthermore, Chandio and Jafferri (2015) argue that teachers should use formative assessment methods in order to gain in-depth understanding of learners’ performance. This suggests that grade four EFAL teachers should consider other forms of formative assessment to increase learners’ language proficiency. This would promote effective interaction between teachers and learners and enable the latter to become life long and reflective learners who acquire all the skills required in a language (Wood, 2017).

The participants selected forms of assessment methods that are easy for their learners such as question and answer; written exercises, reading aloud and comprehension. Nelly stated that she set projects as a homework task, but “*I’m not sure whether the parents do it for their children*”. This suggests that alternate methods of assessment are unsuccessful. The CAPS policy expects teachers to use formative assessment methods such as oral presentations, discussions, demonstrations, projects, etc. in order to develop language skills. These findings confirm Mohlabi-Tlaka et al.’s (2018) conclusion that there is a gap between CAPS curriculum demands and real practice in the classroom in most public schools. Although these authors regarded CAPS’ prescriptiveness as an advantage because it sets operational standards across the board, it does not provide guidelines on how formative assessment should be done.

#### **4.4.1.1 Too much to do in limited time**

The participants felt that too many assessment practices have to be completed within the limited time frame set out in the EFAL CAPS curriculum. Betty said that: *“There is a lot of work that should be done in a short time....”*, while Buhle pointed to *“Too much work to be done in a very limited time”* and Nelly said that the *“Time frame is a challenge....”*

In the CAPS policy document, grade four EFAL teachers are guided by a programme of assessment as well as an annual teaching plan. The programme of assessment determines how and when to assess learners while the annual teaching plan contains content to teach, strategies to use and skills to assess (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Language skills such as listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting and language structure and conventions are each allocated a time (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Time is regarded as one of the major constraints that influence the selection of assessment methods as well as the development of language skills. Nelly stated that, *“Time for developing the skills is too limited”*.

These findings corroborate those of Nguse (2015) who concluded that teachers carry a heavy classroom workload. Kim, Kim, Lee, Spector, and DeMeester (2013) confirm that teachers not have enough time for the high-quality assessment expected by the DoE. Azis’ (2015) study in Indonesia showed that teachers felt that policy requirements inhibited their efforts to use assessment methods in an appropriate manner. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) found that Norwegian teachers felt that too many tasks had to be completed in too little time. Walbrugh (2016) noted that South African teachers are obliged to stick to the curriculum in order to be deemed successful to the eyes of departmental officials despite numerous constraints.

#### **4.4. 1.2 Teaching to assess**

The participants also pointed out that they teach what they are going to assess in order to comply with the DoE’s demands: *“I want to record learner’s progress because we are being evaluated with the programme of assessment”* (Nelly); *“When the subject advisor visits the school the first thing they want to see is that are we aligned with the programme of assessment or not”* (Buhle). Thus, rather than assessment being part of teaching and learning in the classroom, they adopt teaching to assess.

This has a negative impact on learners, especially in grade four because this grade is regarded as an entry point to the Intermediate phase (Ngcobo, 2015).

According to the participants, teaching for assessment arises because too many tasks need to be completed in a short period of time. Given that, “*It is their first time to learn other subjects in English*” (Buhle), assessment is challenging because learners have very limited vocabulary to participate in discussions, oral presentations, demonstrations, etc. Lack of fluency causes low self-esteem and poor language proficiency. This suggests that grade four EFAL teachers should create an environment that enables learners to construct knowledge on their own through critical thinking (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016).

The CAPS document sets out a programme of assessment which clearly states the number of formal tasks to be completed in each subject. In grade four EFAL, there are two formal assessment tasks per term except term three which has one task and the examination; all skills should be assessed in these tasks. This infers that grade four EFAL teachers are teaching what they are going to assess as they are chasing the programme of assessment rather than imparting quality knowledge to learners. Mohlabi-Tlaka et al. (2018) noted that grade four EFAL teachers tend to pay more attention to completion of tasks than the development of essential language skills.

At this point, the findings reveal that the participants are not able to effectively apply formative and summative assessment. In other words, they are not fulfilling the EFAL CAPS policy expectations. They carry a heavy workload and, combined with time constraints, this result in teaching what they are going to assess in order to be able to account to departmental officials, especially in EFAL because of the number of assessment tasks and different skills to be assessed.

The following section responds to research question 3: What influences grade four English First Additional Language teachers to use these assessment methods?

#### **4.5 Complexities in using assessment methods in grade four EFAL**

The participants identified various complexities in using formative assessment when teaching and assessing EFAL in grade four as per CAPS policy expectations. These are due to different factors that

influence the teaching, learning and assessment methods used. They range from the language of instruction to a lack of vocabulary and overcrowded classrooms. The language of instruction was described as one of the complexities in formative assessment methods. “*Language of instruction in foundation phase is a barrier in using formative assessment successfully*”, said Nelly. Grade four learners struggle to express their thoughts in discussions as they transition from mother tongue to EFAL as the language of instruction. Betty stated that this “...*is a huge challenge because they have no communication skills*”, while Nelly observed that, “...*they fail to say what they think; they don’t know how to express their thoughts*”. Buhle added: “*They do understand but hardly answer you ....*” This is surprising because grade three learners are expected to reach a high level of competence in English (Hung, Samuelson, & Chen, 2016). It implies that grade four learners enter the Intermediate phase without the expected level of competence in English.

These findings demonstrated that grade four learners cannot participate in classroom activities because of a lack of vocabulary. Buhle explained that, “*The learners lack the vocabulary and they struggle to construct sentences*”; Betty stated that “...*they don’t have English vocabulary*” and Nelly observed: “*They come to grade four without vocabulary*”. Buhle added that, “*They really wish to answer in English but the huge problem is the vocabulary....*”. The vocabulary of a foreign language is the most important aspect of language learning and teaching (Alqahtani, 2015; Susanto, 2017). Lack thereof is a communication hurdle and prevents a learner from becoming competent in the additional language (Alqahtani, 2015). Indeed, fluency in EFAL is regarded as the key to access to higher education and the labour market (Taylor & von Fintel, 2016).

All the participants found the issue of the language very frustrating and felt that it influences the way formative assessment should be done. The shift from isiZulu as the language of instruction in the Foundation phase to English in the Intermediate phase causes discomfort among both teachers and learners.

Overcrowded classrooms also hinder effective implementation of formative assessment. Betty said: “*In my class, I have 65 learners. Even though I wish to use different methods of formative assessment I can’t because of overcrowding*”. Buhle noted: “*I have 60 learners in my class. I can’t move in*

*between because of space...*” Nelly responded: *“The enrolment in my class is 67, there is not enough space to move”*. These responses revealed that EFAL teachers continue to face large number of learners in the classroom, which hinders the effectiveness of their teaching and assessment practices. These findings confirm those of Nkosi (2014) who argued that overcrowded classrooms limit teachers’ endeavours to pay attention to each learner.

#### **4.5.1 Challenges of adapting to innovative assessment methods**

The participants pointed to misunderstanding of the implementation of new assessment methods among grade four EFAL teachers. When curriculum changes occur, teachers are expected to implement new assessment methods using new strategies. Betty said that misinterpretation *“confuses us as the ones who implement changes”*. Nelly noted that: *“... we become confused and not knowing what to do”*. Betty added that, *“...while you are still trying to adapt yourself the department introduces another curriculum with its own assessment methods”*, while Buhle observed that, *“...while we are still adapting to the previous changes of the curriculum there comes the new curriculum with its assessment methods”*. From the above participants’ responses it can be concluded that although EFAL teachers are trying to adapt to new assessment methods they continue to experience challenges. Challenges such as: confusion in using assessment methods brought about by the ever changing curriculum. These findings are similar to Kanjee (2009) who revealed that changes in assessment methods have a negative impact on teachers’ uptake of innovative assessment methods, especially in grade four EFAL (Kanjee, 2009).

Buhle agreed that, *“The changing of curriculum now and again has a negative effect in effective implementation of assessment methods”*. Betty stated that, *“curriculum changes have an impact on the implementation of new things”*, while Nelly said: *“Yes, curriculum changes have an impact on the effective implementation of assessment approaches”*.

The literature notes that teachers experience different challenges in implementing changes in the new curriculum, including new assessment methods. Maharajh, Nkosi, and Mkhize (2016); Nhlengethwa (2016); Tsilo (2006) and Ntuli (2010) found that teachers fail to implement new assessment methods

effectively as per policy expectations while Black (2015) noted that it is difficult for teachers to adopt new assessment practices because of the radical change required to teaching styles.

The following section discusses the study's findings on how assessment methods are used in relation to the elements of the Activity theory.

#### **4.6 The use of assessment methods in relation to the Activity Theory**

This section discusses the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in relation to the elements of the Activity theory which analyses how people do things. The Activity theory is a framework that analyses different human practices and offers ways of viewing their thinking (Jonassen, 1999). Engestrom (2000) stated that, all the components of the Activity theory such as subject; object; instrument; rule, community and the division of labour should be considered in order for the activity to have an effective outcome. This study interpreted the components of the Activity theory as follows: the CAPS curriculum policy is regarded as the rule because it provides the policy framework on how assessment should be done. The assessment policies guide the teacher (subject) on how assessment should be done (object) using assessment methods (instrument). These assessment methods are performed in the classroom (community) and learners are regarded as the division of labour because this is where assessment informs how it should be conducted.

It is evident from the findings that, the grade four EFAL teachers' (subject) selection of assessment (objects) was not properly done as the rule (EFAL CAPS curriculum policy) suggested. However, the EFAL CAPS curriculum policy is regarded as the rule which regulates how and when assessment should be conducted in assessing EFAL in grade four classrooms. Rather, the participants selected assessment methods that seemed easy to administer because of the language barrier. This does not create opportunities for learners to develop language proficiency.

Furthermore, the Activity theory demonstrates there is a gap between what the EFAL CAPS curriculum policy (rule) says about which assessment methods should be used and the actual assessment methods (instrument) used in the classroom (community). The EFAL CAPS curriculum prescribes formative and summative assessment tasks. Formative assessment involves various

methods that should be used in teaching and assessing EFAL skills every day. Language skills such as listening and speaking; reading and viewing; writing and presenting and language structure and conventions should be assessed each day using different assessment methods. The findings indicate that not all assessment methods were used to assess language skills. Therefore, the rule was not followed by the participants due to their selection of formative assessment methods.

Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) suggest that the context in which an activity takes place needs to be appreciated in order to analyse and understand it. In this study, the context in which participants are working influences the way they use formative assessment. It was demonstrated that grade four learners lack communication skills, have scant vocabulary and a poor English language foundation. Furthermore, overcrowding influences the way formative assessment is used. Grade four EFAL teachers adapt the assessment methods in the context in which they teach and consider learners' needs. The Activity theory focuses on making sense of individual actions; and the operation's purpose and interpretations (Crawford & Hasan, 2006). This study demonstrated that the participants' action in using assessment methods in the way that they do is influenced by the context in which they teach. Other formative assessment methods like discussions; oral presentations; and demonstrations requires language fluency; the data demonstrated that grade four learners are not able to communicate fluently in English. This implies that there is ineffective use of assessment methods because the Activity theory stresses that all the elements should be considered in every activity in order to ensure effective outcomes.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented and interpreted the study's findings in order to answer the research questions. It analysed the data generated through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data was analysed using thematic analysis and analysis of the EFAL CAPS policy document. Verbatim quotes were used to ensure that the voices of the participants are not lost. The findings were discussed in relation to the literature review and the components of the Activity theory. The following chapter summarises the findings, and offers recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter one presented the background to this study, its rationale and significance and the objectives and research questions. Chapter two provided an extensive review of the relevant literature and discussed the theoretical framework used as a lens to explore the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers in teaching and assessing learners. Chapter three discussed the research design and methodology employed, while chapter four reported on and interpreted the study's findings in response to the research questions.

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, recommendations and possibilities for further research. The research problem, the purpose of the study, which was to explore the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers, and the research questions, are reviewed.

#### 5.2 Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings is presented in response to the key research questions:

1. What assessment methods are used by grade four EFAL teachers?
2. How do grade four EFAL teachers use assessment methods?
3. What influences grade four EFAL teachers to use these assessment methods?

##### 5.2.1 What assessment methods are used by grade four EFAL teachers?

The overall findings revealed that the participants use traditional assessment methods to teach and assess learners in grade four EFAL. All the participants use question and answer, test, classwork and reading comprehension. These are more traditional than innovative assessment methods like story-telling, debates, presentations, peer/self-assessment, observation, demonstrations, etc. While the EFAL CAPS policy states that all forms of assessment methods should be used, the participants select those that they and their learners are comfortable with and that are easy to apply. This suggests that these teachers are not open to exploring innovative assessment methods, resulting in learners not developing the language skills required for language proficiency.

### **5.2.2 How do grade four EFAL teachers use assessment methods?**

The findings demonstrated that teachers struggle to comply with the assessment prescriptions in the EFAL CAPS policy. This policy states that all formative assessment methods should be used to assess language skills and develop learners' performance. While the participants seem to be aware of and understand different formative assessment methods, they prefer to stick to more traditional methods in teaching and assessing grade four learners.

### **5.2.3 What influences grade four EFAL teachers to use these assessment methods?**

It is evident from the findings that teachers confront numerous challenges in using the different types of assessment methods set out in the EFAL CAPS document. These include the fact that grade four learners lack experience of using English, and have scant vocabulary to use the language fluently and low levels of reading comprehension. It is clear that the language transition in grade four is a significant challenge for both learners and teachers in adopting the assessment methods required by the EFAL CAPS policy. The transition from isiZulu to English has caused much misunderstanding and discomfort, especially among grade four EFAL teachers. Learners are unable to express themselves in English, limiting the possibility of using discussions, demonstrations and oral presentations to assess them. Therefore, grade four EFAL teachers select the formative assessment methods that they think are best suited to their learners' different levels of ability.

In order for assessment to be done correctly, teachers should strike a balance between formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment provides more in-depth information on a learner's performance. While the participants are aware that they should use all forms of assessment to teach and assess EFAL in grade four, they focus on summative assessment.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the study's findings:

Teachers of other subjects should use English as the language of instruction throughout the lesson rather than code-switching as this practice does not assist in developing language skills.

The EFAL CAPS policy document should take into account that grade four learners are transitioning from home language to first additional language. It is evident from the findings that many tasks need to be completed in grade four EFAL. Learners' level of ability should thus be considered when prescribing the number of tasks. Furthermore, more time should be allocated for grade four EFAL teachers to develop learners' language skills.

It is recommended that grade four EFAL teachers should focus more on formative assessment methods that provide a more complete picture of a learner's performance rather than relying on summative assessment which is only concerned with progression. Using various assessment methods will assist in gaining an accurate picture of each learner's development and will enable teachers to meet the need of learners with different abilities. Teachers should be equipped with skills on how to manage the number of tasks and the time allocated for completion of tasks.

The Department of Basic Education should also revisit teacher-learner ratios to ensure that teachers are able to address each learner's needs. The study's findings demonstrated that overcrowding limits teachers' ability to attend to individual learners.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further research**

Further research could be conducted on the impact that the language transition has on teaching and the use of all the grade four EFAL assessment methods required by the CAPS. It would also be useful to investigate how code-switching impacts learners' assessment.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

This study explored the assessment methods used by grade four EFAL teachers. It found that grade four EFAL teachers select very limited assessment methods in teaching and assessing learners. The interviews confirmed that the participants do not use all the assessment methods set out in the EFAL CAPS policy and tend to select those that are traditional rather than innovative. The findings highlighted that learners' poor grounding in English, the many tasks required, the limited time frame

allocated for completion of tasks, and a lack of English vocabulary influence how teachers use assessment methods and have a negative impact on effective use of these methods in grade four EFAL.

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