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The use of grade three external assessment results in two Gauteng public schools to improve teaching and learning.

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2012-02-28
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/11372

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ABSTRACT

Based on evidence of the success of data informed interventions in the literature, we undertook a qualitative case study investigation of how two public primary schools used the results of the two external assessments, the Gauteng Provincial Assessment (GPA) and the Annual National Assessment (ANA) in 2008, to improve teaching and learning. At the time of the study the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has not yet guided the schools officially how to use the results and the district participating in the study used innovative measures to assist the schools.

During semi-structured interviews, the district coordinator and principal, head of department and Grade 3 Literacy and Numeracy teachers at each of the two schools helped us understand how they interacted with the results. Several reasons were given why neither of the two schools used the GPA results. The ANA results were more useful for the classroom and the district and both schools considered them in part for planning their intervention strategies for the following year.

Both exercises were new to the schools and at the time of the study the DBE had not yet provided teachers with guidance on how to use the test results to improve teaching and learning. As a result the two schools studied made very little use of the ANA scores, while the GPA results were found by the teachers to be of no assistance. Instead both schools relied on their internal assessment practices. The DBE have started to address the lack of guidance on how to use the results in 2011.

Key words: External assessment, assessment for learning, assessment of learning

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

Signature: Hettie Cornelia Viljoen

29th day of September in the year 2011

DEDICATION

It is a distinct pleasure to think of my lovely daughter, Corli Viljoen, when submitting this research report. It is a reminder of her dedication to music and the hours she spent mastering the technique in playing the flute.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A debt of gratitude to Dr Nick Taylor, because of him I could call myself a scholar. I applaud Dr Taylor for the professional manner in which he guided this research report to its present form. He used his gift in writing and expertise in education, in particular assessment, to lead and to teach. I have gained much in professional development. The last five weeks were humbling, but a real “Oxford experience”. It was a privilege to be part of his team.

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr Rusti Nel at the Quality Assurance Directorate, for availing information on external assessments, that assisted in this investigation.

To my friend and colleague Marieta Millar, who assisted diligently in the process of interacting with the schools. She obtained permission from the schools to participate, organised the interviews at the schools and collected the questionnaires and artifactual evidence from the two participating schools.

To the principal, HOD and Grade 4 teachers of School A and School B, thank you for your willingness to participate.

To the DBE for the bursary that was granted for my studies, because of which I could call myself a scholar.

To the best sister one can hope for, Lindie Bunton, for her encouragement and love.

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ACROMYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	**Annual National Assessment**
AS	**Assessment Standard**
CDS	**Curriculum Development and Support**
DBE	**Department of Basic Education**
DIP	**District Improvement Plan**
DMT	**District Management Team**
FFL	**Foundations for Learning**
GDE	**Gauteng Department of Education**
GPA	**Gauteng Provincial Assessment**
HL	**Home Language**
HOD	**Head of Department**
HSRC	**Human Science Research Council**
LO	**Learning Outcome**
LoLT	**Language of Learning and Teaching**
LTSM	**Learning and Teaching Support Materials**
NCS	**National Curriculum Statement**
QIDS-UP	**Quality Initiative Development and Support Upliftment Programme**
SACMEC	**Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education**
SAP	**School Assessment Plan**
SAT	**School Assessment Team**
SBA	**School- Based Assessment**
SBST	**School-based Support Team**
SGB	**School Governing Body**
SMT	**School Management Team**
TAP	**Teacher Assessment Plan**
T (L)	**Literacy Teacher**
T (N)	**Numeracy Teacher**
TIMMS	**Trends in Mathematics and Science study**