

**ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT THROUGH COMMON TASKS FOR ASSESSMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*The decision to issue the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) after nine years of compulsory schooling or an equivalent level of Adult Basic Education and Training, is a significant introduction in the Education and Training System in South Africa. The assessment leading to the issue of this certificate will in the main be dominated by site-based assessment, which demands rigorous quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the credibility of the certificate issued. The challenge of quality assuring the assessment is further exacerbated by the new outcomes-based approach to assessment which curriculum planners, assessment facilitators and educators are still grappling with.*

*In preparation for the issue of the GETC, the Department of Education has embarked on the development of common tasks for assessment (CTAs) which are administered in all eight learning areas and across all schools in the country. This paper traces the philosophy underpinning the use of CTAs, its development and implementation in the South African context with particular reference to the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that present themselves.*

## **1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

South Africa's democratic government that was installed in 1994 inherited a divided and unequal system of education. There were nineteen education departments that were separated by race, geography and ideology. Therefore one of the main goals of the new government was to ensure that all children irrespective of race, class, gender, religion and other characteristics, had access to basic education that was of good quality. To ensure that this is achieved a number of policies focussing on redress of the past inequities were developed.

The South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995) provides for the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and for the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The NQF establishes an integrated national framework for learning achievements. The main aim is to enhance access and mobility as well as quality in education and training.

South Africa has also adopted an Outcomes Based Approach to Education (OBE) and training to ensure that learners have access to quality lifelong education and training at all levels of the education system. This approach is learner centred and oriented towards results and outcomes, thus enabling learners to productively contribute to the country's socio-economic development. The new pedagogy associated with OBE has been developed into a curriculum framework for learning at school level referred to as "Curriculum 2005". Curriculum 2005 is based on twelve critical outcomes, which indicate the range of knowledge skills, and values required of the South African citizen. The new curriculum clearly specifies the outcomes for each learning area and the criteria against which the learners will be assessed.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) also makes provision for a three band framework comprising of eight levels. The General Education and Training (GET) band which encompasses ten years of compulsory schooling, beginning with Grade R - the reception year to Grade 9, and four years of adult education, coincides with level 1 on the NQF. The end of the GET band also signifies a certification point at which learners may exit the system or continue with further education and training. The Further

Education and Training band which follows the GET band, incorporates levels 2, 3 and 4, and this includes a range of providers i.e. schools, colleges, and industry that offer a more specialised approach to education and training and prepares learners for higher education and the world of work. The final band is the Higher Education band which includes levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 and focuses on university and technikon education and training.

## **2. THE PROPOSED GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE (GETC).**

The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) which is to be issued after nine years of general education in schools or four years of adult education, is a new introduction to the education and training system. The main purpose for the introduction of the General Education and Training Certificate as described in the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) policy document of the South African Qualifications Authority, is " to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and values that will enable meaningful participation in society as well as continuing learning in further education and training, and provide a firm foundation for the assumption of a productive and responsible role in the workplace" (SAQA October 2001)

The GETC for schooling and ABET serves to ensure that the learner exiting the system has the minimum competence required for NQF level 1. The kind of learner envisaged at the end of Grade 9 is based on the critical and developmental outcomes prescribed by the National Qualifications Framework. In order to achieve future personal fulfilment and meaningful participation in society, to continue learning in Further Education and Training, and to gain a firm foundation for a future career, the learner will need to:

- be equipped with the linguistic skills and the aesthetic and cultural awareness to function effectively and sensitively in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society
- display a developed spirit of curiosity to enable creative and scientific discovery and display an awareness of health promotion
- adapt to an ever-changing environment, recognizing that human understanding is constantly challenged and hence changes and grows
- use effectively a variety of problem-solving techniques that reflect different ways of thinking, recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation
- use effectively a variety of ways to gather, analyse organize and evaluate numerical and non-numerical information, and then communicate it effectively to a variety of audiences and models
- make informed decisions and accept accountability as a responsible citizen in an increasingly complex and technological society
- display the skills necessary to work effectively with others and organise and manage oneself, one's own activities and one's leisure time responsibly and effectively
- understand and show respect for the basic principles of human rights, recognizing the inter-dependence of members of society and the environment
- be equipped to deal with spiritual, emotional, material and intellectual demands in society
- have an understanding of, and be equipped to deal with the social, political and economic demands made of a South African as a member of a democratic society, in the local and global context.

The qualification can also be either unit standards based or non-unit standard based. Currently, the qualification translates into certification as follows:

- GETC for schools comprises: A final mark made up of 75% of Site Based Assessment (SBA) and 25% of External Exit Assessment. The external exit assessment in this context is mainly in the form of written examination for eight learning areas, although practicals and summative demonstrations may also be included.
- NQF Level 1 credits towards a GETC for ABET learners: final mark made up of 50% SBA and 50% External Exit Assessment. (This is an incremental model, which will move towards the same ratio as that in schooling). The external exit assessment in this context is mainly in the form of written examinations for learning areas, although practicals and summative demonstrations may also be included.

The GETC is a natural outflow of Curriculum 2005 and cannot be separated from the overall implementation of C2005. Thus readiness of the education system to award a credible GETC is dependent on the extent to which Curriculum 2005 has been effectively implemented. It has therefore been decided that the implementation of the GETC will be delayed until there is a fair degree of confidence in the implementation of the new curriculum and more specifically the assessment processes. Currently energies in the system are devoted to building teacher capacity in the implementation of the new curriculum and in outcomes based assessment.

### **3. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPERATIVE**

Given the importance of the GETC and its contribution towards addressing the imbalances of the past education system, it is critical to ensure that the proposed qualification meets its required goals. Public confidence in the qualification can only be built by demonstrating that the qualification meets its intended purpose. This can be attained by ensuring that all learning, teaching and assessment, is directed at developing the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to meet its stated purpose.

Presently, site-based assessment constitutes a major part of the exit assessment (75%) leading to the attainment of the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). With outcomes-based assessment being relatively new in South Africa, assessment standards and teacher competence in the area of outcome-based assessment, varies from province to province as well as within regions/districts/learning sites in a province. This translates into a certain degree of doubt regarding the reliability of these assessment outcomes.

In order to build the credibility of the General Education and Training Certificate, the National Department of Education and the Provincial Education Departments have engaged in a wide range of initiatives to support the implementation of the new curriculum. These initiatives include:

- The development of National Curriculum Statements for Grade R - 9 (schools) which deal in clear and simple language with what the curriculum requirements are at various levels and phases. The National Curriculum Statement also gives consideration to how overload in the curriculum could be reduced and presents a plan for its implementation.
- Development and mediation of guidelines for assessment.
- Teacher training in the implementation of the new curriculum.
- Standardising assessment across all provinces.
- Providing a clear and common framework for recording and reporting learner performance.

- The development of an IT system for recording and tracking learner performance across the system.
- Ongoing focus on the overall implementation of C2005 in the Senior phase.
- The administration of refined and modified common tasks for assessment in all public schools for all Grade 9 learners as the external assessment component counting 25% of the final result.
- Enhanced monitoring and support systems that will ensure adequate quality assurance of results.

In tandem with the above support initiatives, the Council for Quality Assurance in General Further Education and Training, UMALUSI, will engage in rigorous quality assurance measures with regard to both site-based and exit assessments. UMALUSI will conduct an audit of the assessment systems of the provincial education departments against agreed criteria. The outcome of this audit will highlight the shortcomings and provide the provincial education departments with information for the development of improvement plans which can then be monitored by UMALUSI. UMALUSI will also monitor the process of assessment at a sample of learning sites and verify the outcomes of the assessment systems by evaluating samples of portfolios.

Assessment if properly undertaken and rigorously quality assured will assist in enhancing the public confidence of the GETC qualification. UMALUSI has the responsibility of ensuring the credibility of the results before issuing the GETC. UMALUSI therefore has to monitor the developments and improvements in the assessment systems of the provincial education departments so as to advise the Minister of Education on the appropriate time for the implementation of the GETC.

#### **4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COMMON TASKS FOR ASSESSMENT.**

##### **4.1. Rationale for the introduction of the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA)**

In 2001, the Department of Education decided to pilot the use of Common Tasks for Assessment (CTAs) in each of the eight learning areas, focussing on the Grade 9 level. These tasks were developed centrally and administered amongst a sample of learners at the Grade 9 level.

Common Tasks for Assessment (CTAs) are a series of tasks intended to obtain information about a learner's demonstrated achievement. These tasks must cover a range of assessment activities e.g. practical, project, classroom, homework, oral, presentations, paper and pencil tests, etc.

In theoretical terms the function of the CTA is to strengthen the capacity for school based continuous assessment. It is designed as a developmental instrument to ensure that the in-school assessments are in fact testing the competencies and achievements that they claim to, and that they are doing so across an appropriately wide range of class activities.

The purpose of CTAs as implemented in the South African system is as follows:

- It is used as an external summative assessment instrument.
- It provides information on the validity, the reliability, and the fairness of continuous assessment (CASS).
- It contributes to credibility and public confidence in the GETC.

The other benefits of the CTAs are as follows:

- The CTA will show teachers how to set tasks and activities according to OBA principles, using rubrics to assess outcomes, and linking marks to descriptors
- The CTA will provide benchmarking and standardisation across provinces, regions/districts, and schools
- The CTAs can be used by teachers in their school based assessment in subsequent years
- The CTA will contribute to the strengthening of CASS

#### 4.2. The Development and Implementation of the CTA

The Common Tasks for Assessment consists of two parts (i. e. Section A and Section B). Section A consists of performance based assessment while section B is based on assessing skills that could be easily assessed through the paper and pencil test.

The performance- based assessment provides a systemic way of evaluating those reasoning skills and outcomes that cannot be assessed or adequately measured by a paper and pencil test (e.g. laboratory work for Natural Sciences, practical problem solving skills for Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences, communication skills, working effectively in group etc). Performance- based assessment permit learners to show what they can do in real life situation i.e. this is a type of assessment that emphasises the learners' ability to use or translate their knowledge, understanding and skills into action. This includes presentations, research papers, investigations, demonstrations, exhibitions, singing, athletics, speeches, musical presentations etc. In the performance based assessment both process and product could be assessed. A process is a procedure that learners use to complete a task. A product is a tangible outcome that is a result of completing a process. For example, the way in which a learner uses woodwork tools to build a piece of furniture would be a process, but the piece of furniture resulting from working with the tools would be a product.

For the purpose of development of the CTA instrument a task will be understood as consisting of one or more activities - this means that a specific outcome or a cluster of outcomes can be assessed using one task (e.g. creative tasks, data handling, problem solving etc) and this task could include one or more activities. The tasks in the CTA assess the attainment of specific outcomes for each learning area i.e. mastery of knowledge, reasoning, skills, ability to create products etc.

Assessment tasks would assess the following:

- cognitive (i.e. problem solving, critical thinking, formulation of questions, searching for relevant information, investigation, inventing and creating new things, analysing data, presenting data communicatively, oral and written expression, etc);
- meta-cognitive competencies (i.e. self- reflection and self - evaluation);
- social competencies (i.e. leading discussions and conversations, persuading, cooperating, working in groups); and
- affective dispositions (i.e. perseverance, internal motivation, initiative, responsibility, self-efficacy, independence, flexibility, coping with frustrating instructions etc). Please note that affective behaviour are generally assessed informally

When designing these assessment tasks the following principles were adhered to:

- A task could assess a variety of specific outcomes.

- The tasks should be grounded on real-life context while using processes appropriate to the learning Area
- The main question to be answered could be formulated as a problem
- Explicitly stated scoring criteria should be included as part of the task
- The task should allow for multiple solutions
- The instructions should be clear
- The task should be challenging and stimulating to the learner
- The tasks should be structured so that you can help students succeed

The development of CTAs based on an outcomes based approach was a first for South Africa in 2001 when it was first initiated. The CTAs were developed by teams of learning area experts drawn from the provincial education departments. These teams met nationally during designated writing sessions and the designing of these tasks was co-ordinated by the GETC Curriculum Directorate of the Department of Education and supported by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) that has had some experience in the writing of common tasks for assessment. In 2002, CTAs were intended to be administered amongst all learners at all schools, but due to logistical difficulties it was made optional. For 2003, the CTA's have been developed and moderated and it is mandatory for all schools to administer the CTAs in November 2003.

### 4.3. Moderation of the CTA

In its capacity as the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, UMALUSI engaged in the moderation of the (CTAs). The purpose of moderating the CTA's was to:

- approve the CTA with regard to the quality, standard and suitability of the CTA.
- provide constructive feedback to the Department of Education regarding the improvement of the CTA.
- provide recommendations for consideration in the future development of CTA's.

A five-day session was arranged, where moderators appointed by UMALUSI, were brought together. The moderators were appointed based on their qualifications and experience in the GETC. Moderators (subject specialists) were appointed for each of the following learning areas: Human and Social Sciences, MLMMS, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, Economic and Management Sciences, Natural Sciences, Technology and Language Literacy and Communication.

The first day focused on familiarizing moderators with issues pertaining to the GETC policy issues, curriculum related issues, implementation plans for GETC, etc. The rest of the five-day period was dedicated to the moderation of the CTA'S. A clear set of criteria for the moderation of the CTA's was decided on jointly, by all the moderators. The following key criteria were concentrated on during the moderation process:

- Content: accuracy, relevant appropriate and interesting?
- Standard: appropriate for Grade 9 learners?
- Use of language: easily accessible and free of bias?
- Variety as regards forms of assessment?
- Appropriateness of forms of assessment to the task/activity?
- Diagrams, pictures, graphics, etc, clearly marked and easily readable?

UMALUSI also engaged the services of a group of Grade 9 teachers for a day. Their brief was to provide UMALUSI with overall comment in the form of a report on the

instrument, focusing very much on the criteria developed for the external moderation process.

## **5. A CRITIQUE OF THE CTA**

### **5.1. STRENGTHS**

- The CTA is a significant tool in providing teachers with exemplars of the assessment tasks and activities that are appropriate for outcome based assessment. Teachers have been accustomed to assessing content according to norm-referenced assessment, and these CTAs have provided teachers with examples of criterion referenced assessment, where rubrics are used to assess outcomes and marks are awarded based on descriptors. The CTA will contribute to moving assessment practices from the traditional form of assessment to an outcomes based approach.
- The CTAs will provide a benchmark that reflects the standard of assessment appropriate to Grade 9 and the GETC. This will ensure standardisation of assessment within the provinces and across the provincial education departments.
- Section A of the CTA which includes performance-based assessment focuses on the assessment of skills that cannot be assessed through pencil and paper assessment. This provides teachers with exemplars of tasks that could be used in the normal classroom assessment. This will improve CASS implementation in the province.
- The assessment in the CTA could be used to statistically moderate CASS. CTAs are nationally set and are assessed according to nationally agreed rubrics and this provides a reliable anchor which could be used to statistically moderate CASS marks.

### **5.2. WEAKNESSES**

- There is the risk that the CTA could be viewed as an external examination component of the GETC, and thus become a high stakes assessment. Its current form of administration i.e. nationally developed, written at the same time across the whole country, high cost of administration, etc is moving the process in the direction of entrenching this assessment as a high stakes examination.
- There is an immense pre-occupation with the CTA which is coupled with the utilisation of the bulk of the resources at provincial level. In certain circles the CTA is misconstrued as the GETC. This notion needs to be rapidly addressed and the role and function of the CTA must be clarified.
- The CTA constitutes 25% of the final assessment, while CASS constitutes 75% of the assessment. There seems to be a disproportionate allocation of resources to this component of assessment at the expense of CASS.
- The central development of CTAs could stifle local creativity and create a dependence and a culture of assessment tasks being handed down from the experts.
- The CTAs have been accorded a high degree of attention in this sector and hence teachers receiving these instruments will view them as the "ideal" instrument and attempt to duplicate them in their classroom assessment practices. This may be dangerous given that the instrument has not been extensively trialled, tested and internationally benchmarked to attest to its validity, reliability and standard.



- The focus demanded by the CTAs may wrongly allow assessment to dictate teaching and learning in the classroom. If the CTA becomes the focus of teaching and learning, then the curriculum transformation goals could be missed.

## **6. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE STATE OF VICTORIA (AUSTRALIA) WITH COMMON ASSESSMENT TASKS.**

### **6.1. THE INTRODUCTION OF COMMON ASSESSMENT TASKS AND THE SUBSEQUENT REVIEW.**

Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) were introduced by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB) as part of the assessment leading to the Victorian Certificate of Education, which is equivalent to our Senior Certificate. In most of their subjects, there would be two school assessed CATs and one examination CAT. CATs typically included extended essays, a report of an investigation or a piece of research, an analysis task, a set of structured questions, a portfolio of writing or graphic work, a performance, or the creation of a design, product or model. Learners were given 20 hours to complete the school-assessed CATs. The CATs were used to validate the school based assessment which contributed to between 50 - 75 of the student's final assessment.

The rationale for the inclusion of CATs was as follows:

- to accommodate the full range of student backgrounds and aptitudes, providing access and intrinsic motivation to low-achieving students while continuing to challenge the high achievers;
- places less emphasis on ranking and comparing students and yet provides for fair and efficient selection in a context of declining work and further study opportunities;
- to place greater value on the involvement of students and on the professional judgement of teachers in making assessment decisions while maintaining state-wide standards and ensuring comparability of assessments across schools and providers;
- provide more detailed information about students' achievement but in ways which reduce or at least hold constant, administrative costs and teacher workloads;
- relieve students of some of the more acute pressure engendered by the current end of the year examination and yet avoid placing students under constant pressure throughout the year; and
- accommodate a wider range of learning goals but within a common assessment and reporting framework.

Within the first year of implementation, the Minister of Education in the state of Victoria called for an evaluation of the use of CATs. The findings of this report were rather disappointing in terms of the wider range of educational and learning goals that CATs were supposed to measure. The main findings included:

- There is evidence of possible bias in the grades of some schools and in the grades provided by some verification panels;
- A minority of teachers are involved in unfair practices regarding their assessment;
- Some of the CATs provide a bias in favour of students from affluent backgrounds;
- The open-ended nature of some CATs was seen to create pressure on students to continually polish and perfect work that may already be of an excellent standard. It was reported that some students were spending more than 100 hours on tasks that were meant to be completed in 20 hours.

- Evidence of the inability of many teachers to assess their own students reliably and fairly; and
- Students handing in CATs that were not entirely their own work and hence authentication of student's work was a problem.

In response to the above report, CATs were replaced with course work and the contribution of external assessment was increased in a large number of subjects. School assessed coursework comprised assessments tasks which were a part of the regular teaching and learning program, tasks did not unduly add to the workload associated with the program and were completed mainly in class and within a limited time frame.

## 6.2. LESSONS FROM THE VICTORIAN EXPERIENCE

The experience of the State of Victoria with CATs cannot be used to make direct inferences to the South African experience with CTAs, since the CATs in Victoria were part of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), which is a high stakes assessment that is used for selection to higher education and specific courses. However, there are a few important lessons that could be extracted from this experience and these include:

- (a) The use of CTAs as part of the GET assessment programme should be encouraged since CTAs promote the principles of outcomes based assessment such as:
  - Relieves students of the some of the pressures of an external examination.
  - The assessment targets a wide range of learning goals.
  - Provides more detailed information of the learner's achievement.
  - Allows teachers to be involved in the judgement of their learners.
- (b) The element of bias in the administration of CTAs cannot be overlooked. Despite the fact that the instrument is developed nationally, the administration of the assessment takes place under uncontrolled conditions determined by the school and the teacher, and the tests are assessed by individual teachers. Although CTAs are not high stakes, yet the principles of fair and accurate assessment still apply. Hence CTAs, specifically the Section A, are also subjected to the following biases:
  - Teacher's relationship with learners can affect the assessment negatively or positively;
  - Learners from affluent environments will present work of a better and more impressive quality.
  - Teacher's inability or lack of confidence in assessing tasks that are criterion referenced, affects the reliability of the assessment.
  - The work presented by learners may not be the learner's own work.
- (c) There should be more than one CTA administered in a year and further a distinction should be made between a school assessed CTA and an examination CTA. The school assessed CTA would be centrally set but administered and assessed by the teacher. This is currently the case with the Section A of the CTA, except that the scores for Section A and Section B are combined to produce one final score, which is then regarded as the external summative assessment. This is unsound assessment practice since Section A is more performance based and Section B is a pen and paper test. The skills measured in Section A and Section B are different and combing the test scores reduces the validity of the test result. The introduction of more than one school assessed CTA will be appropriate in our context, given the larger weighting of school based assessment (75%) and a second CTA will increase the reliability of the final CTA score.

- (d) They may be a need to introduce some form of standardisation, especially to the school assessed CTAs. This was the case in Victoria, where the school's internally assessed CAT scores were expected to fall within a certain tolerance range in order to be confirmed.

## 7. PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

The use of CTAs as part of the GET assessment regime is supported. CTAs have a specific role to play in the GET assessment process provided the purpose of the CTA is clearly defined within the context of current developments in the GETC. The purpose of CTAs are currently defined as follows:

- It is used as an external summative assessment instrument.
- It provides information on the validity, the reliability, and the fairness of continuous assessment (CASS).
- It contributes to the credibility and public confidence in the GETC.

The developmental nature of the CTA makes its use as an external summative instrument problematic. Is it fair to use an instrument that is being developed and piloted, as part of the summative assessment, especially in its first few years of development. Further the current CTA comprises of a section, A which focuses on performance based assessment and is more classroom based. This component of the CTA should not be included as part of the external summative assessment. Section A is conducted by the teacher, extends over 10 - 12 hours, allows for group interaction and is uncontrolled in its administration. The only external aspect of this assessment is that it is designed externally. It would therefore be more appropriate to include this component of the CTA with the CASS.

The second purpose of the CTA relates to the CTA providing information on the validity, reliability and fairness of CASS. This purpose could be achieved if the Section A on its own, is compared to the CASS and not if the combined score (i.e. Section A and Section B) is compared to the CASS score. The Section B of the assessment is a pencil and paper test, carried out under controlled conditions and the skills that are measured do not correlate with the skills measured in CASS. The comparison between the Section B and the CASS scores could at most provide an index of the reliability of the CASS scores that are provided by schools.

It is therefore proposed that in its first few years of development, the CTAs be used in the main as a tool to develop teacher capacity. It would be acceptable if the Section A is added to the CASS scores of the school, and also used to moderate the CASS scores of the school, provided the number of school assessed CTAs is increased to at least two. Two school assessed CTAs would increase the reliability of the CTA scores. The Section B could be used as part of the external summative assessment, but not as the sole determinant of the external summative assessment. The CTA being used as a developmental tool will imply that the skill of developing CTAs needs to be mastered and transferred to educators in the classroom, who could use this skill to design classroom based assessment tasks. The current trend has been to retain developers that have been utilised in the previous year. This practice is understandable in view of the need for consistency and retaining expertise that has been developed, but this must be balanced with the need to extend the pool of expertise. Therefore, a core of developers should be retained but a percentage of novice developers need to be brought into the process each year. A critical component of this process would be for developers to go back and build capacity in their provinces, through conducting similar writing sessions in their provincial departments. To expect that capacity would

be developed amongst teachers by mere exposure to the final instrument is undermining the complexities involved in the development of CTAs.

In principle it is accepted that assessment in the GET band must be localised and hence the greater weighting of CASS (75%). It is therefore anticipated that all initiatives relating to the development of assessment capacity should have a localised focus. The role played by the CTA in setting the ball rolling in the area of assessment is appropriate, but it is essential to ensure that this process is transferred to the level where it matters, on a gradual basis.

It is therefore suggested that the Department of Education begin with the establishment of an assessment bank at a national level. Panels of learning area experts need to be identified to develop assessment tasks which spans the different forms of assessment relating to outcomes based education. These assessment tasks should be internally reviewed for content validity and reliability and then presented to the Quality Assuror for external moderation. This implies that an item is only entered into the assessment bank after it has been fully scrutinised internally and externally. This would then allow educators at provincial, district or school level to access the assessment bank and utilise the assessment tasks for their ongoing classroom assessment and the external assessment component of the GETC. This will ensure that the high stakes nature of the external assessment will be minimised and it will also allow for educators to customise assessment tasks to suit their individual contexts.

CTAs can then be strategically utilised at various levels in the system to quality assure assessment at that level. At the provincial level it could be used as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the performance of learners across the province or to standardise assessment across the province. More importantly, CTAs become a valuable tool for the Quality Assurer, UMALUSI, to moderate assessment across the nine provincial education departments. CTAs can be used in various forms to quality assure and promote assessment standards and these include:

- A complete CTA of approximately 2 hour duration administered across all provinces on a periodic basis.
- A complete CTA administered across a sample of learners from each of the provinces.
- A common task for assessment (approximately 30 minutes duration) could be included as an anchor task in the external assessment administered at provincial, district or school level.

The form of the CTA will be determined by the purpose of the assessment and the level of assessment capacity in the country amongst educators that are involved with classroom assessment. It must also be borne in mind that the CTA is one form of quality assuring assessment in the GET band. There are a range of other methods which are currently being explored by UMALUSI, the national department of Education and the provincial education departments.

UMALUSI has also embarked on the development of a Verification Instrument that focuses on the critical cross-field outcomes. This instrument is not learning area based and it is one instrument of two-hour duration that incorporates all eight learning areas. This instrument is currently being piloted and it is anticipated that the Verification Instrument will complement the CTA.

Considerable time, energy and funds are utilised in the development and administration of CTAs and this is compounded by the fact that CTAs are developed in all eight learning areas and in the case of the language CTA, we have 11 official languages with each having a primary and additional language component. Each CTA has to be translated into Afrikaans and complaints have been lodged about the accuracy of these translations. It is therefore proposed that the number of CTAs be decreased to possibly three or four and CTAs could be included on a rotational basis. This will allow for a more focussed and better managed process and this would improve the quality and standard of the CTAs. It must not be misconstrued to believe that the implementation of CTAs is the only mechanism of moving assessment in the GET to an outcomes-based approach. In the contrary it is not sound educational practice to use assessment to drive educational changes, since this could lead to assessment dictating what gets taught and learnt, a scenario of the "tail wagging the dog." There are numerous other initiatives of effecting changes in the system and these should be used in conjunction with the implementation of CTAs.

An issue that UMALUSI has agonised over in the moderation process, is the standard of the CTAs. It is not clear from the curriculum statements as to what constitutes an appropriate standard for a grade 9 learner that is awarded the GETC. The specific outcomes, together with the assessment criteria provided some indication of the required standard but there is a need to provide a more explicit description of the required standard not only to the developers of the CTA and the moderators, but more importantly to educators that are involved in curriculum delivery. It is therefore proposed that the Department of Education together with UMALUSI engage in a process of writing up clear assessment standards for the GETC, before the next round of CTAs are developed. Assessment standards need to be developed per learning area and these should be circulated as widely as possible so that a consensus standard could be derived.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The South African Education system is set on a path that presents exciting challenges and opportunities. The new curriculum for the GET band is steadily gaining a foothold and much is being done to improve the quality and standard of assessment in this band. The introduction of CTAs at the GETC level has contributed significantly to alerting policy makers and educators of the challenges that confront assessment at this level. The constant engagement and critical review of what has been developed and the commitment to improvement by all partners in the GET system can only lead us closer to achieving a fair, reliable and valid assessment system. It is therefore anticipated that over the next few years considerable progress will be made towards installing a GETC that is credible and has public currency.

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