

How classroom assessments promote equity and students' learning.

*Interview study of teachers' assessment practices in
Norwegian schools*

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to two people who make my face glow

Eddie, my best friend

And

Doris Joybell, my lovely daughter

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I would not have been able to write this thesis without the support of kind people around me, few of whom is possible to mention here.

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Abstract

The process of assessment helps a teacher to collect, synthesize, and interpret information in order to make informed decisions and it is related to everything that takes place in the classroom. All types of assessments that take place in the classroom are premised on the notion that if a teacher understands how students are learning, he/she will be able to teach them effectively. This implies that the teacher has to know the diverse needs in the classroom in order to be able to help each student learn. In light of this, the teacher should employ assessment strategies that will take into consideration each individual and give them the opportunity to learn in a way that is appropriate to his/her learning style.

The current study explored classroom assessment practices that promote equity and student learning. Qualitative interview method was used with three (3) primary school teachers in Norway. Detailed descriptions and analysis of the teachers' variety of classroom assessment methods, use of assessment information, and the provision of diversity in classroom assessment were considered.

Findings in this study revealed that teachers use different assessment methods such as; observation, dialogue with students, providing feedback to students, use of weekly tests in the form of homework as well as tests that are done once a year, teamwork, listening to other students' complaints, and talking to parents. To cater for diversity in the classroom, teachers use different strategies whereby they engage some students to write short or lengthy responses, use computer to do the tasks, or take the task home so that they can have enough time to practice. With others, the teacher reads the questions and the student gives a response orally, and sometimes they are grouped according to their abilities and given appropriate tasks. The study also found out that the assessment information is useful in helping a teacher to find better methods of teaching which results in improving instruction. Consequently, students get motivated to learn as a result of being given tasks that they are able to do; and it enhances communication with parents.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Background

The basis of any educational reform depends on what happens in the classroom. A classroom is a place of social interrelations between the teacher and students. In a classroom teachers and students engage in various activities such as reviewing the previous lesson, listening to the teacher's exposition, discussion of ideas, practicing and summarizing work as a whole class, small groups or individually (Hino, 2006). A complete picture of an educational system is claimed to improve when teacher-made classroom based assessments are used with the view of supporting the teaching learning process (Assessment Reform Group, 2002; Heritage, 2010). In view of the above argument, assessment is viewed as important in the process of teaching and learning because it enhances a teacher to monitor the teaching-learning processes as well as to ascertain students' achievement in each area of their development (Cuevas, 1991). As a result, a teacher is able to build an understanding of the needs of the child and plan for future work accordingly, the teacher is also able to identify children with specific learning difficulties, ascertain the nature of support they need and put in place appropriate strategies and programs to enable them cope with the particular difficulties they are encountering.

Moreover, assessment includes collecting a wide range of information on aspects of learning such as the child's growth and self-esteem, interpersonal and intrapersonal behavior, and the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (Airasian, 1996). In a broader perspective, Winter seems to agree with the above argument as he asserts that assessment is about children's progress and achievement. More specifically, he defines classroom assessment as the process of collecting, recording, interpreting, using and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement during the development of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes (Winter, 1993). It therefore, involves much more than testing. It is a continuous process which includes formal and informal activities designed to monitor and improve teaching and learning in all areas of a child's learning. The purpose is to establish students' performance level and provide information to the teachers on the problems that students might be encountering in their learning. As a result, the teacher is able to evaluate how much learning has taken place and make decisions about the next instructional steps to take. All types of assessment are based on the principle that the more clearly and specifically you understand how students are

learning, the more effectively you can teach them. Research shows that classroom assessment is more than high quality evaluation of knowledge content. It requires a more thoughtful administration of assessment systems where every learner has the opportunity to demonstrate what they know in a manner that is consistent and favorable to their learning needs (Earl, 2000).

Empirical researches document the rationale for teacher assessment of student achievement and how that plays a central role in many important classroom and school decisions, including instructional planning, screening, placement, referrals, and communication with parents (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992). Moreover, teacher judgments can also influence the study patterns, self-perceptions, attitudes, effort, and motivation of students (Rodriguez, 2004). In general, timely, thoughtful, and accurate appraisal of student achievement can inform and help improve instruction and, by extension, student achievement, especially in the case of students performing significantly below desired levels (Shepard, 2006; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005).

From the foregoing studies, it is not clear how the teachers provide for classroom assessment systems and students learning outcomes that are perceived to be equitable for all. This concern comes at a time when strong international and national policies in many countries clearly recognize the need to review assessment procedures to accommodate progress through formative evaluations in regular educational settings (UNESCO, 1994). Furthermore, the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) asserts the necessity to apply systems of assessing learners' achievements that ensures learners achieve their fullest potential. In view of this background, Rodriguez, (2004) points out that students learn more and develop a more mastery oriented approach to learning when they experience formative assessment that emphasizes communicating clear learning targets; interpreting their work, behavior and discourse for what it says about their achievement; and providing clear descriptive feedback on learning targets.

Although it appears research has quite been conducted around the area of classroom assessment in the developed world, it seems to be in contrast to the developing world where it appears less has been done. Moreover, studies that focus on helping teachers to improve on their classroom assessment practices appear virtually hard to come across. Researchers in the developing world seem not to have fully addressed the issue of classroom assessment in their countries; a case in point is Uganda. In an article; 'construction of tests for classroom

assessment', written by Odongo (2012) from Uganda National Examinations Board, it appears that classroom assessment is mainly used for summative purposes intended for promotion of students to the next grade or even retention in the same grade. Classroom assessment in this case is usually aimed at producing the best academic results among students in the national examinations and this comes as a result for the demand for better academic grades by the school authorities as well as by the parents. This however, seems to have limited classroom assessment to basically testing academic competences leaving out other skill areas in students' learning potentials.

On the other hand, considering Norway as a case where this study was conducted and as one of those developed countries, research indicates that a mix of teacher-based assessment and final exam to measure students' achievement in lower and upper secondary education are used. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training in a report prepared by Nilsen et al., (2006) states that national assessment or assessment for grading is not carried out in the primary schools in Norway. To them, the legal system provides all students the right to assessment which is based on the provisions in the Norwegian Education Act and the legal system states that;

“An emphasis must be placed on giving feedback and guidance to the pupils for purposes of promoting learning and development. Arrangements must also be made for the pupils to be able to make good self-assessment.”

It is further stated in the aforementioned report that this kind of assessment which does not require grading is meant primarily as a tool in providing information about what the student has learned, which they termed as 'summative assessment'. Besides, this kind of assessment is used with the aim of providing feedback that helps in promoting learning and that is referred to as 'formative assessment'. Against this background, it is apparent that accurate and valid information about student learning outcomes is widely understood to be essential for effective instruction, as it enables teachers to give appropriate feedback and adapt their instruction to match student learning needs. However, it appears not much information is available on how teachers actually carry out classroom assessment that is perceived to be fair enough to cater for all students learning needs in the primary schools in Norway.

Based on the assumption that quite often classroom assessment seems not to be carried out in a way that is equitable to all students with diverse learning needs in the classroom, there is a need to understand what exactly happens in the classroom during assessment processes. The

purpose of this study is therefore, to explore the teachers' classroom assessment practices in order to come up with the understanding of how teachers in Norway practice classroom assessments that cater for all students and give them the opportunity to achieve their potentials. It is anticipated that this study may be beneficial to Norway as well as Uganda in such a way that its findings might be used as a basis for future research in the area of classroom assessment in other municipalities in Norway and in Uganda.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Empirical studies and policy frameworks emphasize the need for equal and accessible learning opportunities as enshrined in the call for education for all and inclusive education. However, there appears to be a dearth of information with regards to classroom practices which guarantee equity for all learners as far as assessment systems are concerned. The gap in information about classroom assessment practices that foster equitable learning for all is deemed to have profound and pervasive effects on the learning outcomes of students (William, et al., 2004). This apparent gap in information is presumed to directly or indirectly influence the overall learning outcomes of students and the teachers' ability to adequately provide for learners with diverse needs in the classroom. Even in areas where such knowledge and practices exist, it appears not to have been adequately documented to reflect how teachers negotiate the teaching -learning processes. However, research seems to show that where and when teachers are empowered and they conceptualize their roles in alternative classroom assessment practices, their input are likely to improve the teaching – learning process and the learning outcomes of all students (Birenbaum, 1996; Dunn et al., 2004). Yet, the effectiveness of such assessment interventions focusing on promoting equity in classroom teaching learning processes appears not to have been systematically assessed. This study therefore, is aimed at filling this knowledge gap by exploring the assessment methods that teachers use in the classroom, and how teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessment.

1.3 Research questions

Main research question

How do teachers practice classroom assessments?

Sub-questions

In an attempt to answer the main research question for this study, I sought answers to the following specific questions:

1. What assessment methods do teachers use in the classroom?
2. How do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessment?

1.4 Significance and scope of the study

Carrying out this research is deemed to be relevant and timely based on the current quest for provision of education for all under the policy of inclusive education in which all learners are to be educated and supported in the mainstream classrooms regardless of their differences. It is anticipated that this study would generate information on teachers' classroom assessment practices that promote equity for all students and positively influence their learning outcomes. Although this was a study involving a small sample, it is envisaged that the findings might be of importance in the following ways; help in enlightening other teachers on how to carry out a range of classroom assessments that cater for diversity in the classroom; benefit students because they will be assessed as individuals based on their capabilities and in all areas of learning; benefit teacher educators in that it may provide them with a model for the preparation of pre-service teachers which can help improve on their effectiveness in classroom assessment practices while in the field; and finally, the findings of this study may be used as a basis by other researchers to replicate the study in different classrooms and teachers, extend it to different schools and levels, districts and probably conduct comparative studies between different countries in order to understand deeper how teachers administer classroom assessments.

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

The present study attempted to find out classroom assessment practices that promote equity and students' learning. It was designed to seek answers to the main question: *How do teachers practice classroom assessments?* And this was tackled throughout the thesis as follows:

The first chapter provides a brief description of the research problem and the justification for carrying out this study.

The second chapter deals with the theoretical framework that serves as a basis for the researcher's justification of this study and reference point for some of the assessment practices adopted by the participants in this study. The focus was on classroom assessment which is also referred to as assessment for learning, taking into considerations that assessment and instruction are inseparable.

The third chapter gives details of the design, population and sample of the study. It explains the procedure adopted for the study and describes the research instrument in detail.

The fourth chapter presents the analysis of the data collected.

The fifth chapter deals with the discussions of the findings.

The final chapter which is the sixth makes the summary and conclusions of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Theoretical framework

In this theoretical framework, the major focus is placed on the significance of Vygotsky's theories to the current study. This theory is chosen based on Vygotsky's suggestion that instruction and assessment should be inseparable. This will be discussed from the perspectives of other researches done elsewhere including those based on Vygotsky's theories on the related subject under study. For the attention of the reader, the theories are discussed under the research sub-questions; what assessment methods do teachers use in the classroom? And how do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessments?

2.1. Assessment methods used by teachers in the classroom

According to Linn and Miller (2005), assessment methods refer to "any of a variety of procedures used to obtain information about student performance" (p.26). There are quite a number of assessment methods with each one of them involving a particular purpose for its use, and Stiggins, et al., (2004) have categorized these assessment methods under; selected response and short answer, extended written response, performance assessment, and personal communication. The responses provided by participants regarding assessment methods in this study will be looked at based on these categories. Employing a variety of assessment methods within the educational system seems to require a significant change in teachers' assessment beliefs and their understanding of the role of assessment in the teaching and learning. Research indicates that teachers need to gain knowledge in using a variety of assessment options such as portfolios, observation, performance tasks, self-assessment and peer-assessment as well as gaining experience in matching the assessment tool to the purpose of assessment (Birenbaum, 1996; Dunn et al, 2004).

Vygotsky in his sociocultural theory claims that the human mind is mediated (Lantolf, 2000) by what he refers to as 'tools' in humans' understanding of the world and of themselves. According to Lantolf, Vygotsky further, recommends that humans do not act directly on the physical world without the mediation of tools, whether they are symbols or signs and these tools are referred to by Vygotsky as artifacts created by humans under specific cultural and historical conditions. This aspect of mediation may be significant to this study in that teachers at some point need to act as mediators in the process of using any assessment method in the

classroom. Vygotsky's focus was also on the linkage between people and the sociocultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). This could be another point of interest in that sometimes students need to be grouped with mixed abilities so that they can share their experiences and be able to support each other in accomplishing tasks. In support of this view, Brown and Duguid (2000), assert that learning is a social process and social groups provide resources for their members to learn. Students learn to synthesize multiple perspectives, solve problems in different ways and use each other's diverse knowledge and skills as resources to collaboratively solve problems and advance their learning (Collins and Bielaczyc, 2000). This assertion may help the teachers to effectively use peer-assessment method. Vygotsky's theory further, promotes learning contexts in which students are given the opportunity to play an active part in learning. This view is important in this study in that both teachers and students need to participate in formulating the assessment goals and to peer-assess. Bruce (2001) and Chappuis (2005) also support this view by arguing that student self-reflection and goal setting are key aspects of 'goal setting' and when students are given time and training, they gradually assume more responsibility for evaluating their own learning and identifying what they need to improve. In addition, Wilkes (1995) argues that self and peer-assessment encourage students to become more responsible for their own learning. Concurring with Wilkes, further research notes that when students and teacher assess a student differently it can open up productive dialogue to discuss student learning needs and goal creation (Ross, 2006). As a result, the teacher can then use that information to plan the next lesson around the needs and goals of those students. It is therefore, important in this study to get teachers' views on whether students are given the opportunity to play a role in assessment. It is assumed that when a teacher collaborates with his/her students in order to help facilitate the construction of meaning in students, learning becomes a reciprocal experience for the students and the teacher. Furthermore, Vygotsky states that, any aspect of a child's cognitive development occurs first, in a social plane in interactions with others and second, on the psychological or internal plane. This therefore, may imply that children develop their abilities to think and reason through their social interactions with others. Consequently, Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002) point out that when assessments are created collaboratively, they enable teachers and students to interact in a way that blurs the roles in the teaching and learning process. This study intends to find out if students and teachers are collaboratively involved in creating assessments and whether they are given the opportunity to interact during assessments.

Vygotsky in his sociocultural theory appears to have a holistic opinion concerning the act of learning. According to Williams and Burden (1997), they claim that the theory disagrees with the idea of distinct teaching of skills and argues that aspects of any unit of study should constitute meaning. This theory puts emphasis on the significance of what the learner contributes to any learning situation whether in terms of an active ‘meaning-maker’ or ‘problem-solver’. It recognizes an active nature of interaction between teachers, learners and tasks and provides a view of learning as emerging from interactions with others. The assumption of the sociocultural theory according to Ellis (2000) is that learning develops not through interaction but in interaction. Learners are first successful in performing a new task with the assistance of another person thereafter; they internalize this task so that they can do it on their own. The theory further, according to Ellis claims that interaction that successfully mediate learning are those in which the learners scaffold new tasks. This claim is in relation to dynamic assessment and it suggests that instruction and assessment should be inseparable from one another. This makes a significant point in this study in that the assessment methods are explored in the context of learning with the view of understanding how teachers use assessments to enhance learning.

Moreover, Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development is also worth considering in this study due to its specific aspects like guiding a student to perform a task to facilitate development. Vygotsky refers to the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Reflecting on this definition, my assumption would be that students need the teacher’s or peer’s help in performing a task for the first time before he/she can do it on his/her own. Vygotsky views interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. His suggestion is that teachers need to apply cooperative learning exercises so that the less competent children will develop with the help from more skillful peers – within the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky believed that when a student is at the zone of proximal development for a particular task, rendering the necessary help will give the student enough of a “boost” to achieve the task. Moreover, students learn and create understanding through social interaction. This means that teachers should engage learners in collaborative activities and use assessment practices that provide information on the learners’ level of development and level of potential development (c.f; Vygotsky ZPD). Additionally, conceptual development occurs first as a result of social

guidance from a more capable peer which sparks the child's process of internalization. This is relevant to this study in such a way that a teacher or more advanced peer helps in structuring or arranging a task to enable a student lacking experience to work on it successfully.

Furthermore, the perspective of collaborative learning as argued by the theory with the suggestion that group members should have different levels of ability such that the more experienced peers can render help to the less experienced ones to operate within the zone of proximal development is deemed relevant to this study.

Consequently, classroom assessment involves mutual interaction and participation between the teacher and her students as described by Rogoff (1995). This can be argued that the transformative participation occurs within the zone of proximal development. In this case, teachers and students can be viewed as participating in a mutual rhythm of appropriation of ideas and actions (Brown, et al., 1993). Moreover, in constructivist classrooms grounded in the work of Vygotsky, students learn from active participation and have opportunities to explore their own ideas through discourse, debate, and inquiry". Within this frame lies the presupposition that instructors assume a facilitator's role and students assume responsibility for their learning (Fosnot, 1996). In addition, the constructivist model conceptualizes assessment as a continuous and interactive process that measures the achievement of the learner and the quality of the learning experience. It is assumed that the feedback created by the assessment process serves as a direct foundation for further development. Moreover, Brooks and Brooks outline five overarching principles of constructivist pedagogy, one that is relevant for this study: "assessing student learning in the context of teaching" (Brooks, et al, 1993). This may imply that teachers can create assessments in a way that will give students the opportunity to interact with each other and ensure that each student participates in the assessment process.

Accordingly, other researchers notably Stiggins (2005) argues in his "model of assessment FOR learning" that assessment for learning informs students about their own learning and their own progress in meeting their own goals. Meanwhile, William, et al., (2004) argue in favor of formative assessment which they also call assessment for learning. They observed that increased use of this kind of assessment leads to higher quality learning. Performance assessment has been described by Oosterhof (2003) as one that requires an observation of specific behaviors or outcomes and a judgment of the appropriateness of the response. Moreover, research has demonstrated that substantial learning gains are possible when teachers introduce formative assessment into their classroom practice (Black and Wiliam,

1998). Consequently, Meyer (1992) asserts that performance assessment is authentic and as a result, it allows students adequate time to plan, to complete the work, to self-assess, to revise and to consult with others. It is further argued that student self-assessment skills, if learned and applied as part of formative assessment, enhances student achievement (Black and Willian, 1998). Moreover, they argue that this type of assessment helps in adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment. In addition, McMillan and Hearn (2008) also point out that formative assessment allows a high degree of student self-assessment which is much more than just checking answers; rather, it gives students the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the nature of their thinking to identify strategies that improve understanding. In light of this background, this study intends to find out whether these identified assessment methods are used and whether they have any positive influence on learning. Further research by Bransford and others indicate that when teachers establish students' prior knowledge and monitor their changing conceptions as teaching proceeds, students are able to construct knowledge and understanding on the basis of what they know and believe (Bransford et al, 2003). To ensure that meaningful learning occurs through students' active involvement and have the opportunity to take control of their own learning, Bransford and others assert that teachers need to provide sensitive and constructive feedback to students and use assessment practices that encourage self-assessment and metacognition. Irwin-De Vitis, (1996) argues in favor of portfolios and he says that portfolios provide the students with opportunity to see themselves as individuals with special interests and needs and also provide them with unique opportunities to advance their learning. Meanwhile, Gronlund (2006) uses the term alternative assessments to include portfolios, observations, and other performance-based assessments. He argues that these types of assessments are higher in realism and allows for complexity in tasks assessed. In support of the above assessment practices, Shepard (2000) notes that they are more intrinsically motivating. It is therefore, important as well in this study to find out whether assessment practices motivate students. Classroom assessment researchers have also noted that the "assessments best suited to guide improvements in student learning are the assessments that teachers administer in their classrooms" (Guskey, 2003). This study therefore, seeks to explore these classroom assessments with the view of finding out whether teachers actually practice them and the variation in their use. In addition, Afflerbach (2007) makes the case that simultaneously employing a variety of assessment methods is the only sure means to understand where students are in their learning and how best to inform their progress.

It appears that when students are given the opportunity to self-assess, they become autonomous in working towards achieving their learning targets and they take control of their learning. Moreover, there seems to be no one assessment method of itself that will provide sufficient useful information to the teacher. This might then imply that teachers need to vary their assessment methods because it also seems that any one method employed usually involves using other methods to a lesser or greater extent. For example, a teacher designed task may also involve observing children. It also seems that an awareness of the interaction between assessment and learning can potentially improve the effectiveness of both thus yielding positive learning outcomes on students.

2.2. Provision for diversity in classroom assessments

Research indicates that diversity has of recent attracted much attention in the education sectors and Ruddell (2005) asserts that more schools these days have got students representing diverse needs. To be able to cater for these diverse needs, Valencia (1997) argues that when a variety of different assessment methods are used, students are provided with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and this also ensures that teachers have the necessary information needed to construct a complete, balanced assessment for each student. Consequently, Cho and Forde (2002) suggest that assessment should include methods such as 'performance-based' and that the methods used should respond to students' learning style preferences. They further assert that assessment must be both qualitative and quantitative. In addition, Carless (1999) seems to agree with the use of a variety of assessment methods in order to cater for diversity in the classroom. He suggests that teachers need to use methods such as supplementary work-cards, graded worksheets and individualized questioning. It is on the basis of these foregoing arguments that this study set to find out whether classrooms are characterized by diverse needs as it is claimed above and what teachers do to cater for this diversity. Moreover, research from the Constructivists view as described by Hackbarth claim that negotiation of objectives for learning should be with the students based on their own needs; activities that are programmed should arise from within the contexts of students' lived worlds; students should work together with peers in a way of social construction of personally important meaning; and that evaluation should be a personalized ongoing with a shared analysis of progress (Hackbarth, 1996, p.11). This therefore, means that teachers need to realize that students are not the same in the way they learn and if a teacher decides to use only one style of delivering content, students are not likely to maximize their learning

potential. Considering that this study was carried out in Norway which appears to highly advocate for all students to be educated in the same classroom irrespective of their differences, I wanted to find out how teachers are able to reach every student in their assessment practices. Some researchers notably (Martinez and Mastergeorge, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman, et al., 2000) however, argue that reaching every student on the same level accurately especially in classrooms with a substantial number of students with special needs may be challenging. But other researchers seem to disagree with the above claim and their claim is that if teachers have the necessary information regarding each student and how best to help them, they will be able to construct a complete and balanced assessment for each student (Valencia, 1997; Angelo and Cross, 1993). This therefore, means that teachers provide every student with an opportunity to learn in at least one way that captures his/her learning style.

Based on the above arguments, it seems that focusing the assessment on learners' individual learning needs may overcome some of the biases associated with generalization in assessment of learning and ensures, from the perspective of accountability, that the teacher is able to produce reasonable outcomes for the most frequent and important learning outcomes. This study will look at whether this is being done and what strategies teachers are using.

Moreover, Airasian (2005) points out the importance of sizing up the characteristics of each student and the class as a whole. In light of this, he states that this will give the teacher a basis to group, teach, motivate, manage and reward students. Notwithstanding, he warns that if assessment is not sized up well enough, it may result into a classroom environment which is disorganized, disruptive, and unresponsive hence hindering communication and learning.

It may be assumed that differentiating assessment involves changing the traditional practice of having all students do the same assessment task at the same time. To ensure that the needs of all students are therefore catered for during assessment, teachers may need to adopt the kind of assessment approach that is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of students' needs in the classroom.

Moreover, Angelo and Cross (1993) have argued that through close observation of students during the teaching-learning process, classroom teachers get the opportunity to understand each student and how best they can learn. Concurring with the above researchers, Kuhs, et al., (2001) assert that classroom observation provides the teacher with relevant information that

can be used to record development progress for each student and also to evaluate each student's strengths and limitations.

It is also important to note that when assessment is incorporated with instruction, it informs the teacher about what activities and assignments will be most useful, what level of teaching is most appropriate and how summative assessment provide diagnostic information (Shepard, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research design and methodology

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research design, sampling procedure, and sample, instrument for data collection, procedure, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Design (Qualitative interview)

Parahoo (1997, p.142) describes a research design as a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analyzed. The description of how the data for this study was collected, where it was collected and how the data collected has been analyzed is reflected in the next sections of this document. This study explored classroom assessment practices using the qualitative research interview. This design was selected based on the assumption that it seeks to understand the social world from the respondents' point of view through detailed descriptions of their cognitive and symbolic actions and the richness of meaning associated with observable behavior (Schriver, 2001). This appears to imply that during the interviews, the interviewees are given the opportunity to fully express their views but at the same time the interviewer also collects more information by critically observing the interviewees non-verbal communication thus yielding to rich data. Furthermore, Baxter & Jack (2008) argue that qualitative study approach facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This therefore, seems to mean that besides interviews, the researcher may at the same time also use observation to collect the information that the interviewees may not have expressed verbally but is conveyed through their body language.

In addition, qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (Kvale, 1996). It uses a naturalistic approach that tries to understand phenomena in context-specific settings such as "real world setting in which the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). In view of this background, the study was conducted in the natural setting (school) in one of the offices and I tried to make sure that participants were provided with the opportunity to express their own views in a way that was comfortable for them. However, it is also important to acknowledge that as much as I conducted the interviews in the natural setting

where the phenomenon under study was easily and naturally handled, it may not guarantee the fact that the interviewees' experiences unfold naturally; there were also some limitations which I have described under the section of limitations. Furthermore, I tried to transcribe the exact responses of the participants as recorded without adding or subtracting any phrases in order to avoid manipulating the findings. In addition, this design enabled me to select respondents whose views when sought through interviews facilitated deeper understanding on the classroom assessment practices used by the teachers in the teaching-learning process. This was possible in that the sampled teachers had a teaching experience of more than ten (10) years and at least they had had an encounter with students with diverse learning needs in their classrooms.

3.2. Target Population and sampling

The target population for this study was teachers from Bright primary school in Newton municipality in Norway. This school was chosen after the researcher's formal visit to the school earlier on during the course to observe how teachers teach in diverse classrooms. The researcher was impressed by the way teachers handled their classes and after our group members had a discussion with the Principle regarding the visit, I later on expressed my desire informally to the Principle to conduct my study in her school since I felt it was an ideal school for my study. The sampling for this study was three (3) teachers all females. The sampling strategy used in this study was purposive sampling. This is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be in the sample are taken by the researcher, based up on a variety of criteria which may include, specialist knowledge of the subject under study, or capacity and willingness to participate in the study (Jupp, 2006).

I chose this strategy because I thought it would be easier to come up with the sample and also it would enable me to sample participants who would be knowledgeable enough to provide me with the information on the topic of my study. With regard to this sampling strategy, the following steps were done; I had a discussion with my course convener regarding the choice of participants for my study since she was then in charge of connecting me to the participants. I told her to identify for me participants both males and females with some knowledge on assessment, experience in teaching for at least three (3) years and above, those who can express themselves in the English language, and from different grades. I was later on contacted by my convener with the information on the available participants and the dates

and time for the interviews of which the participants themselves decided upon. The issue of language was deemed important because it would enable the researcher to gather much more information from the participants' explanations. Gender was also considered important for the purpose of variations as well as to avoid bias in the findings.

3.3. Justification for the sample

The justification for the choice of the school was that it was easy to access it in terms of location, and the willingness by the Principle to allow me to carry out a study in the school. The choice of the teachers was premised on the view that they are directly involved in classroom assessment practices in the teaching-learning process of students. The teachers' perceptions in the course of the study would help in consolidating and providing points for explaining the views and opinions of other teachers.

3.4. Limitations

This study, however, did not go without the researcher facing some challenges. The issue of language barrier made it technically difficult for me to directly make contact with the school so as to sample the participants by myself. This prompted my convener to make contact with the Principle as well as the participants on my behalf. Furthermore, I could no longer emphasize on the English language being important in the selection criteria because I realized that a majority of teachers in the school did not understand the English language well. I could not use the quota sampling strategy as I had initially anticipated because it turned out to be practically difficult to implement it due to unwillingness by most of the teachers to participate in the study. So it was impossible to come up with the anticipated subgroups in order to narrow them to what I wanted yet there were no teachers for me to sample those groups from. In addition, the unwillingness by the teachers to participate in the study resulted into the researcher not being able to come up with any male participant let alone the four (4) participants as planned hence ending up with only three (3) female participants.

However, another reason also could have been that there were no male teachers in the school staff. I could not establish the exact reason on this issue. All in all, it turned out to be practically difficult to precisely follow the defined criterion in selecting the participants because most teachers were not willing to take part in the study. As a result, the Principal had to talk to one teacher after the other to ask if they were willing to take part in the study until

the three teachers agreed to participate in the study. Fortunately, the three participants had teaching experience of more than three years and they were teaching in different grades. However, from these three, only one was able to express herself well in the English language and so she contributed more during the interviews. But this did not affect the findings in any way because the other two participants too were knowledgeable on the subject and the researcher was able to get the information by follow-up questioning and prompting. I had not anticipated some of these limitations but I would certainly give them more consideration in the future.

3.5. Research tool

3.5.1. Interview

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions mainly to prompt participants to think deeply in their responses. The reason for the choice of this method is that it is claimed to offer opportunities for freedom, flexibility for adaptation of the question items, and the possibilities to probe in-depth on the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 2007). It was anticipated that this tool would further enable follow up of the respondents' answers to obtain more information and clarification on their opinion on the questions asked. Furthermore, Punch (1998) argues that interviews are a way to understand the complex behavior of people without imposing any a priori categorization, which might limit the field of inquiry. Semi-structured interviews provide a very flexible technique for small-scale research (Drever, 1995).

The ideas expressed above by Punch and Drever were used as the basis for the formulation of selected questions that would answer the main research question but at the same time provide participants with the opportunity to have an in-depth thinking in their responses. In view of this background, the main research question guided me in formulating the questions in the guide because I made sure that the questions in the guide were open-ended and seeking to answer the main research question. I did not follow the questions in the guide exactly as they were but instead other questions arose depending on how the interviewee provided the responses and at times I had to rephrase the questions. I also did quite a lot of probing because sometimes I needed clarification or more explanation on the response provided. As a result of the freedom and flexibility involved in this kind of interview, there was no

consistency in the way I posed the questions to the participants. Therefore, the participants were not consistently answering the same questions based on how I asked.

Moreover, I clustered the questions into categories and the first part was the introduction which was not included in the guide but it was meant to build rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee so as for the interviewee to feel relaxed. This was premised on Bruce's argument that when interviewing someone, start with some small talk to build rapport and make your interviewee as comfortable as possible (Bruce, 1998). The other categories of questions were asked under important topics seeking to address the main research question and they were formulated based on the research sub-questions. The topics included:

Assessment methods used by teachers; questions under this topic were developed to seek responses from the participants regarding the various methods that they use to assess their students in the classroom. The purpose was to find out if teachers were using some of the method suggested in the theory chapter of this document and/or some other new methods that teachers might be using. Methods such as performance based, supplementary- cards, graded work sheets and individualized questioning has been suggested by researchers notably (Cho & Forde, 2002; Carless, 1999) as reflected in the theory. These questions were regarded important based on the argument that simultaneous employment of different assessment methods enables a teacher to understand the level at which their students are in the learning and how best to make known their progress (Afflerbach, 2007). These questions were also formulated based on the assumption that the assessments that teachers conduct in their classrooms guide student learning better (Guskey, 2003).

Provision for diversity in classroom assessment; based on the argument that schools nowadays have got students with diverse learning needs (Rudell, 2005), I was motivated in finding out if this is a reality on the ground. It is further reflected on the theory chapter that when a teacher uses a variety of assessment methods in the classroom, he/she gains the necessary information needed to construct a complete, balanced assessment for each student (Valencia, 1997). In view of this background, I thought it was necessary to ask questions that try to find out how teachers take into account the diverse needs of students in their classrooms. Furthermore, it is believed that the methods of assessment used should respond to students' learning style preferences (Cho and Forde, 2002). This therefore, means that the questions clustered in this category, tried to find out whether the methods teachers use give

an opportunity for each student to learn in a way that is appropriate to his/her learning style and what adjustments they make to ensure all students participate in assessment tasks.

More detailed questions were, however asked as they arose during the interview as a result of probing or paraphrasing the questions because it may have been difficult for the participant to understand or it was misinterpreted. In addition, some questions came up as a result of participants giving responses that the researcher thought were relevant although they were not meant to answer the main research question such as what teachers use the assessment information for. So to explore more on the responses provided, the researcher had to ask more detailed questions. In regard to the dates, time and venue for the interviews, the researcher had no control over. The participants were in control of when and where they wanted to be interviewed, but it was vital that all the three interviews took place within the school. The open nature of the questions was aimed at encouraging depth and vitality and also to allow new concepts to come up. As a result of this approach, the interviewees had the flexibility and the freedom to decide on how much explanation to offer and how much detail to give.

3.5.2. How the interviews were handled

Semi-structured interviews are more about provision of flexible techniques and generation of more useful data for small scale research (Drever, 1995). Since this was an interview study involving only three participants, I applied three techniques during the interviews so as to generate rich data as explained in the following paragraphs;

Rapport building: according to Bailey (1994), rapport is a relationship based upon mutual trust and it is important to consider when establishing and maintaining a relationship between interviewer and interviewee. In this regard, a few minutes were spent building rapport with each interviewee. This was done by sharing common experiences at the beginning of the interview. This rapport building enabled me to ask follow-up or probing questions based on their responses to pre-constructed questions at the time of the interviews.

Thought provoking interjections: Creswell (2007) believes that the researcher should be prepared to follow-up questions or prompts so as to make sure that optimal responses are obtained from participants. During the interviews, I borrowed Creswell's suggestion by re-constructing questions so that they were clearly understood. I was also able to make follow-

up prompts for more understanding. This approach helped me to obtain the information I needed from the interviewees through my follow-up prompts. However, not all followed up questions and prompts yielded positive results.

Critical event analysis: Critical incidents are straight forward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives, and structures. These events seem to be ‘typical’ rather than ‘critical’ at first sight, but are rendered critical through analysis (Tripp, 1993: pp. 24-25). I borrowed a leaf from Tripp’s description of critical events and used it to seek responses from participants regarding what assessment methods they practice and how they make sure every student benefits from them. This was done by asking questions that enable them to identify such methods and describe how they are beneficial to every student.

3.5.3. Pilot study

A pilot study can be referred to as a smaller version of a larger study that is conducted to prepare for that larger study (Lancaster, et al., 2004). In addition, it can involve pre-testing a research tool such as a new data collection method. In line with the above description of a pilot study, I conducted a pilot study for the research tool (interview guide) with similar categories of respondents. The purpose was to enable me familiarize with the instrument, correct errors in questions and improve on the approach for the main study interview process. During the interviews, I realized that teachers were not familiar with the concept assessment and my assumption is that this could be because it is an English word which is probably not known in the non-English speakers’ communities. In fact, none of the interviewees could explain it and this made me to avoid using it throughout the interviews. However, this did not mean that teachers do not carry out assessment practices in their classrooms. In this regard, therefore, I had to use other avenues of extracting the information that I needed from the teachers without necessarily using the term assessment during the interviews hence the featuring of students with behavior problems, social and academic competences. The pilot study helped me to correct errors in the way questions were asked, delete some of the questions and concepts that seemed difficult for the participants to provide the needed answers and predict challenges that arose during data collection thus provided prior insight into ways of managing them.

3.6. Data analysis

The data for this study was collected in a single primary school within Newton municipality in Norway. The study was specifically limited to the teachers' classroom assessments that are perceived to be equitable. The study was further limited in that the data was collected from a small sample and recorded from the perspectives of the teacher only. Data analysis was done progressively during and after field work. This encouraged the flexibility in thinking about existing data and to generate new strategies for collecting new and better quality of data. Interpretation analysis was used to organize and present the data to be collected. The verbatim transcriptions of the interview was read through to find possible categories and sub-categories and patterns which form and explain the underlying meaning of the respondents' views, opinions and facts. I clustered these categories under the research sub-questions and I wrote all the responses provided under each category. I then picked out the concepts, themes and patterns that I thought were relevant from those responses to form sub-categories from which I used to explain the phenomenon under study. The new ones that came were picked out and clustered separately. All the respondents in the selected area were treated as one case. This gave a good picture and pattern of the situation regarding the phenomenon being studied. The analysis procedure included; coding the data, and drawing conclusions (findings). All this was made in line with the research sub- questions. It is also important to bring to notice that not all the information contained in the interview guide was used in this document. The information gathered in regard to particularly students with behavior problems, social and academic competences were not used. Questions regarding these categories of students were asked to enable the researcher obtain information on what methods teachers use to identify these students since I could not uses the concept assessment because participants were not familiar with it. In addition the questions asked about the above categories of students were not answering the main research question in this study. Thus those first questions in the interview guide were taken out during data analysis.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

According to Patton (2002), validity and reliability are two factors that any qualitative researcher should take into consideration when designing a study. To understand the meaning of validity and reliability and how they were controlled in this study, the researcher will first present definitions of each of them as given by other researchers.

3.7.1. Validity

Validity can be described as the extent to which the instrument used in data collection measures what it is claimed to measure (Gregory, 1992). Validity has got different types. For the purpose of this study, I will describe how concept validity in particular was handled in this study.

3.7.2. Concept validity

Maxwell has pointed out concept validity as one of the aspects of theoretical validity (Maxwell, 1992) and it addresses the theoretical constructions that the researcher develops during the study. Maxwell's description of theoretical validity tries to find out the concepts used by the researcher and the relationships theorized among them in the context with the phenomena. The study was intended to answer the main research question; *how do teachers practice classroom assessments?* To answer this main question, I formulated two sub-questions under which other questions that I asked the participants were developed. On realizing that the term 'assessment' was not familiar to the teachers, I avoided using it in the interview guide. Instead I decided to use simple words that the participants could understand and this led me to ask questions that revolved around students with behavior problems, academic and social competences using the term 'identify'.

Questions were seeking for responses on two issues which included; assessment methods used by teachers; and providing for diversity in assessments. Research in the theory chapter points out methods such as portfolios, observation, performance tasks, self-assessment and peer-assessment to be used (Birenbaum, 1996; Dunn et al, 2004). These methods are even categorized further by Stiggins, et al., (2004) under, selected response and short answer; extended written response; performance assessment; and personal communication. The phenomenon studied found out that teachers indeed used some of these assessment methods. This therefore, implies that there was a consensus to a certain extent within the teachers' assessment methods with the research as argued by Maxwell (1992). To check out whether the information teachers gather on assessment is relevant in anyway, I discovered that this information helps teachers to improve in their teaching and motivates students. This seemed to agree with the theory notably by Black and Wiliam (1998) and Shepard (2000).

As regards the issue of providing for diversity, I first asked participants about their experience with different categories of students which included those with behavior

problems, social and academic competences. This too concurred with research about schools being characterized by diverse needs (Ruddell, 2005) as per the responses that I got. This experience was meant to lead the researcher to ask how the teachers provide for such diversity. This was mainly responded in that teachers use different methods to take care of every student and these methods are used based on each student's learning potential. The findings on this issue too seem to be in agreement with Cho and Forde (2002) although not much was provided on this issue by the participants. In an effort to accommodate the issue of validity further, as Maxwell argues, I recorded the interviews and transcribed every word said by participants although the verbatim interview transcription might have omitted the participants' stress and pitch that are said to be essential to understanding of the interview (Maxwell, 1992); and I also used follow-up questions and prompts where I needed clarification from the participants.

3.7.3. External validity

External validity is connected to whether or not research findings can be generalized beyond the immediate study sample and setting (Carter and Porter, 2000). Considering the fact that the results from this study were obtained from a qualitative study involving a small sample of teachers, making generalizations on the findings to a bigger population at this point may not be appropriate. However, the findings from this study may be considered in further research on the same topic.

3.7.4. Threats to validity and reliability

Maxwell (1996) has identified five threats to the validity of qualitative research and they include among others; how observations are described and interpreted, and how the data might be consciously or accidentally manipulated to fit a specific theory. In addition, he noted that researcher bias (inherent reflexivity) and even the researchers presence (reactivity) can influence what is observed. He further argues that the researcher should record interviews accurately and completely, and words recorded should be those of the individual being interviewed but not a shortened form written down by the observer. I tried to implement the procedures offered by Maxwell to strengthen the validity of this research. I recorded all the three interviews and I transcribed every word that was said by the interviewee. To respond to Maxwell's view of using open-ended questions that allow the participant to elaborate on the

answers so as to avoid compromising validity, I made sure that the main questions in my interview guide and even other questions that emerged as a result of following up questions and prompting, allowed participants to elaborate on their responses. However, two of the participants could not make any explanations on some of their responses due to language barrier. Maxwell adds that questions should not be misleading or directional in an attempt to solicit any responses apart from the one the participant would have provided naturally. In my effort to help especially two of the participants who had difficulty understanding the English language, I attempted to ask directional questions in some instances and this in a way may have posed a threat to the validity of my findings. As for the data that I collected, I tried to present all the data including that which was not directly answering my main research question. Regarding biases, Maxwell notes that researchers should identify and highlight their biases to ensure they do not influence the research results. In this study, the bias was gender related. I was not able to get any male participant for my study, all three participants were females. This could affect validity in these findings in a way that may be the male participants could have provided different responses from the ones provided by the females or they could have given other new and relevant responses to the study in addition to what I obtained.

3.8. Ethical issues and procedure

Ethical issues are those that relate to the moral standards of which the researcher needs to consider at all stages of the research design. The following are ethical issues that the researcher observed;

3.8.1. Permission from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services

A study proposal was written as required from the researcher before proceeding with the study and on approval thought from the University's appointed supervisor, a letter asking for permission to conduct a study in Norway was written and together with the proposal attached was sent to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) to access the study area. After permission was granted, the researcher then started with the process of getting in touch with the study participants (Appendix iv).

3.8.2. Informed consent

Informed consent is one of the major ethical issues in carrying out any research. According to Armiger (1997), ethical issues imply that a person knowingly, voluntarily, intelligently and in a clear and manifested way gives his/her consent. Based on the above explanation, letters of invitation and consent of the participants were written and copies were provided to my convener who was making contacts with the school and participants. These were however, not given to the participants in advance but the information which was in the letters was communicated to them verbally by my convener. On the day of the actual interviews I provided them with written copies to read through before starting with the interviews and those who confirmed their earlier interest and participation and also met the criteria for participating in the study signed the consent forms (Appendix iii).

3.8.3. Anonymity and confidentiality

ANA (1985) argues that anonymity is protected when the identity of the subject cannot be connected to personal responses. Furthermore, if the researcher is not able to deal with anonymity, he/she has to ensure confidentiality which helps to manage the private information obtained by the researcher is taken into consideration in order to protect the participant's identity. In line with this, both options were dealt with. Before starting any interview, I again emphasized to the participants verbally that their participation in the study is voluntary and confidentiality of information they give will be guaranteed. I assured them that I would not mention their names in the document or anywhere else and that I would instead use pseudonyms to identify them although the pseudonyms were entirely decided by me. This was helpful because it encouraged the participants to be open, to collaborate and express themselves freely.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Presentation of the data

In this chapter I present the interview data. The data is divided into two main parts which are presented under the two sub-research questions; (1) *what methods of assessment do teachers use in the classroom? And (2) how do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessments?*

The interview data was collected from three teachers teaching in one of the schools in Norway. Miss Joy is a grade six and seven teacher with fourteen years of teaching experience, Miss Peace is a special needs teacher in the school and she teaches first, second and third class and she has twenty years of teaching experience and Miss Happy is teaching in the sixth grade and she has thirty years of teaching experience.

4.1. What assessment methods do teachers use in the classroom?

In the findings, it is revealed that observation is one of the methods of assessment that can enable a teacher to understand students' problems. All the three teachers agreed that observation is a *good tool to use* as one of the teachers put it. One of the teachers even suggested that when carrying out an observation, it is not a good idea to observe everything about the student at the same time. She said that it is important to sample just one thing that you want to observe and she gave one example. This is what she said:

Sometimes we use observation. And when you observe, it's important to pick out one precise thing that you want to observe not just observe all but lets say "lets observe if this child is pushing other students on the way in and out" that could be one thing (Miss Joy).

In addition to observing students individually on one aspect, findings also indicate that students are sometimes given an activity in groups while the teacher observes them. Miss Joy explained it as follows:

They sometimes have periods where they do things in groups and then you observe it. You can very fast see who takes the leading role in a group and you can see who gets

done fast and everything is right and they ask me can I go and help her, you know....(Miss Joy).

According to the responses I got regarding observation albeit some of them were just one word ‘observation’ without any further explanation. Teachers support observation as a good method to use to understand students’ behavior problems and social competencies in the classroom.

Findings also indicate that having conversations with students individually is one of the ways to find out students’ needs and problems. Miss Joy, Peace and Happy shared the same view about talking to children being important in finding out student’s problems. Below is how Miss Joy explained it when I asked if observation is the only method they use to understand students’ needs in the classroom:

Dialogue with them to understand which level the child is. Yes. We have a.... these dialogues where we have a piece of paper with questions on and we take twice a year we talk to students ten minutes, may be fifteen (Miss Joy).

According to the teachers, they take the *goal tests* and after evaluating the results of the test they place the student in the appropriate group that are formed in the classroom based on the students’ abilities. However, they do not decide this by themselves without the involvement of the child as Miss Joy put it: *This we do in a dialogue with the children.* They further argue that it is important to *involve* the student in what you do as a teacher although the student does not have to make decisions about everything.

So as much you can, you have to involve the child but you also have to make it clear that’s how things are, you know they cannot decide everything but they must have a feeling that they are being heard (Miss Joy).

Sometimes students are placed in *groups* and then they are given an activity for about *fifteen minutes* while the teacher watches how they are getting along and there after the teacher holds a conversation with each student. This is how one of the teachers put it:

They are sitting in so groups in few minutes. Fifteen minutes with the teacher and we are looking what they are doing and how they do it and so on and we can talk to them one to one (Miss Peace).

From the responses above, the researcher found out that having a dialogue with the students is indeed important in finding out what their problems may be.

Furthermore, findings show that feedback to the students after any activity is very important. To the teachers, feedback involves not just correcting students' mistakes but also talking to them about what they should do to improve.

And then the feedback to the good students, would be, we correct them but we also talk to them and then we say that was very good you wrote eight different animals, you only needed three, so you have done a very good job, you know what I mean? (Miss Joy).

Further, Miss Peace thinks that feedback is good because it makes children part of the assessment and makes them feel that they are recognized. This is how she put it:

I think all feedback is good because a...they want to be seen, they want to show you what they can and they feel worth.

Sometimes we can say you have to do much more homework or something, that's another thing, so we can involve the children too (Miss Peace).

Findings showed that feedback as one of the methods of assessment does not only involve the students in the assessment practices but also increases the students' desire to do better. By the fact that the teacher tells a student, 'you have done a very good job' is enough to make the student feel worth capable of doing better.

Results from the study also indicate that tests are a common means of assessment that teachers use especially if they need to find out a student's problems in academic areas of reading and mathematics. Miss Joy put it rightly as follows:

You would rather go and, what shall I say, get the view of the problem by checking out how he/she is doing on tests. They have tests all the time. So just look more on the test to see if this is the problems (Miss Joy).

Furthermore, findings show that to be able to ascertain the level of the ability of the student in academic areas, different tests need to be carried out in the classroom. In this view, teachers

said that there are different tests that teachers administer but sometimes it depends on a specific class.

We have some tests and when you are in the classroom you.....I can see what level they are. The big one, ones in a year and the small one a.....it depends on classes. Some teachers are doing tests very often every week but I don't do it so often. That's only the test what you have done as homework (Miss Happy).

In addition, Miss Peace stated that: *We have tests, ok. Several kinds of tests so that we can see what they can (Miss Peace).*

The above responses indicate that teachers use different kinds of tests to find out the level at which the student is performing in academic areas of reading and mathematics.

The research findings also show a strong sense of team work among teachers as a way of establishing students' problems and competences in the classroom. All the three teachers that I interviewed said they usually work as a team in trying to find out what could be wrong or right with a particular student and they all sit together to try to find out the remedies.

We have three classes and the third class, the second and so on and these three teachers are sitting together and sometimes they are discussing what has gone wrong, what didn't function because of one or three children that are perhaps outside cannot understand and then we have to find out what to do with them and how we can include them. (Miss Peace).

In support of team work as another method of assessment, Miss Happy said that: *Well, we are teams. We try to do assessment and we are trying to do it all of us (Miss Happy).*

Findings to this particular issue indicate a shared view that team work is another way they can assess students' to ascertain their problems.

One teacher pointed out other students' complaints in reference to assessing behavior problems as one way of understanding what the problem is. The following statement is what she said:

And then you have the other children they can complain about this child and then we collect the data around that (Miss Joy).

It is clear from the findings that some of the teachers' listen to other students' complaints and use that as a means to establish what the problem is.

Some teachers expressed the view that in order to be certain of the problem that she has identified in the student, there is need to find out more information about the student from the parent. In this view, research findings from one teacher show that some teachers hold talks with the parents whose students they have identified with certain specific problems. Furthermore, findings indicate that when parents are involved, they feel happy about it. This is what Miss Peace said:

Yes, we do, yes. Of course we are talking with the parents first of all when we see that something is wrong or something is not good enough and so we are talking all the time with parents and mostly they are very interested that we are going further with it and do something about it so they can get help (Miss Peace).

It is seen from the above findings that parents are very much interested in furnishing teachers with more information pertaining the problems that teachers have identified in their child.

When I asked them what they use assessment information for, the responses were generally reflecting on three main issues which include; aiding teachers in finding better teaching methods; improving teaching; and motivating students.

Miss Joy argued that assessment helps to look for appropriate teaching methodology that will make the students get interested in learning. She further explains that a student who is not performing well is always not motivated so assessment will help them find ways of arousing his/her interest in learning. In addition she states that the assessment information that they get concerning the child will help them to talk to the parents and the following is her statement:

We a..... of course use it to make the teaching better for the children. We use it to find good methods so they learn more and a.... so they get motivated. It's often that.... a weak child in away is not motivated. It's too difficult they do not like it. So, our job is to find methods so they like it and want to learn. Then we use with a.... We have to talk to the parents and to let them know how things are, what they can do at home (Miss Joy).

All the teachers according to the findings agreed that classroom assessment practices facilitate their teaching by improving on their teaching skills hence making them better teachers. This is the response provided by Miss Joy:

I think this information also gives me a better ground to do things better. In a way I have a better chance to do it better (Miss Joy).

In addition, when I asked what effect assessment practices she carries out in her classroom has on her work as a teacher, Miss Peace gave the following response albeit she did not explain how it makes her function better: *Yes because it will help me function better (Miss Peace).*

Moreover, Miss Happy argues that when she understands students' problems, she will be able to prepare her teaching relevant to the needs of the student. She stated it as follows:

When I know about the child, it helps me to prepare the teaching more adaptive to the needs of the child (Miss Happy).

Two issues were also prevalent as far as student's learning is concerned in connection with assessment practices. All the teachers seemed to agree that the information obtained from assessment facilitates students' motivation to learning and helps them to improve in the areas of their weaknesses or limitations. The following is Miss Joy's view:

I think they feel that they are being seen and they are being heard and..... taken seriously I mean do not just hand out the same things for everyone. They feel seen and special at their level I think. I think as for most people when you are taken seriously, they want to do an effort. Yes, I think they are motivated (Miss Joy).

However, when I made a follow-up and asked her whether students become motivated to work hard, she said that not all students work hard and this is her response: *yes, but not all of them work hard.*

The other teachers however did not use the word motivation in their responses but my interpretation of what they were trying to say is the word motivation just that they did not know how to say the exact word as they had much more difficulty in expressing themselves in the English language. Below is the response that I got:

Yes, because when they are doing well they are feeling that they can a....that its not too much for them, its not too difficult for them and they can manage, they feel good (Miss Peace).

In addition, she gave further explanation of how students come to be interested in what they are doing and this is what she said:

Yes, because when it is not too difficult for them they a... what they want to do and they can a.....can do it by themselves and when they manage to make their homework and they feel that they can, uhm.

Findings also indicate that students improve in their weaknesses through classroom assessment practices. However, not much explanation was given to show how that happens and below is the response provided: *Yes, I think it helps them to improve am.....they do (Miss Joy).*

The responses above regarding the use of assessment information show that when information is gathered on individual students, it is used to improve teaching by identifying appropriate methods that enables students to learn better. This in turn motivates students to achieve the set goals. In addition, it is also used to talk to the parents.

4.2. How do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessments?

Before asking teachers how they cater for diverse learning needs in their assessment practices, I first asked them if they have had encounter with different categories of students in their classrooms. All the three participants acknowledged having had experience with diverse students ranging from behavior problems, social and academics competences. As Miss Joy put it;

“During the years we meet children with behavior problems and my experience is that the first thing you must do to control it is to get to know the child”.

Regarding students with social competences, this is what she said;

“I think we have a lot of children with social competences in our class now.

Pertaining to academic competences, she explained the three groups of students in her class which include the red, yellow and green.

Red is for the very competent students, yellow is for the medium and green is for the weaker part.

Miss Peace gave different examples of students that she has had experience with in her classroom.

The children are very different and a...someone is making much noise and somebody is quiet and don't speak very much at all. You can see a...I have also, I had one child who is not spoken at all... with special a....the most are very kind and they like to go to school and the first class students they are very motivated uhm, to do what the teacher says and most of the time I think they are very a.....good, interested, motivated to do what they are asked to do.

Miss Happy also shared her experience by giving examples of different kinds of students that she has encountered in her classroom during her years of teaching.

I have pupils who are very active, I had pupils with SLD, I have had pupil who is blind,

When I asked them how they are able to cater for all the different categories in their assessment practices, two pertinent issues came up concerning how teachers cater for diversity during assessment. These issues included; reaching the goal in different ways and performing tasks using various means. Miss Joy explained it clearly how all the students are able to reach the goal but in different ways and this is how she put it:

They have a different way of working during the week but they have the same goal to reach but they reach it in a different way and when they get the test, a.... like may be uhm..... three or four questions in English about Australia, They do the same all of them. You must see that a.... the good students the red ones, they are able to write a long nice sentence, may be the green ones they just answer with one or two words and that's ok you know....you know what I mean? Some children they answer 'yes' and some children they answer with a whole sentence and that's ok (Miss Joy).

According to the research findings, all the three teachers clearly explained how students use different means to work on the test. Miss Joy explains:

When we have a bigger test like History, ahm.....the weak ones get to use the computer so they do it and they get the test home a week before so they can practice the questions, uhm..... so they know what to read precisely.

We also have written questions for them to take them home, but then I think they are an influenced from the parents. On the other hand we also have electronic a.... that's a..... what do you call it..... some questions they have to answer and that's about how they feel at school, how they feel about the teachers, homework, all of it.

Moreover, Miss Peace suggests giving students different kinds of tests that suit each student's needs so that everyone has something that he/she is able to do. She had the following to say:

No, because some tests are like this some tests are like that you see, we do all the things that you mentioned but in different periods because I think its not so good to get only one kind of test but when we have different tests we see much more and we can use it in different ways, you see.

We have perhaps another method because we can have for example different kinds of things that they can do so that everyone can find something that they can manage and other times we have smaller groups who can have homework in for example another book is not so difficult, easier things, uhm, and so on. We will find out whats the best for this person.

Furthermore, Miss Happy had this to say:

Children who are not able to write so much and so long sentence, they can tell me because many of them have many things in the head they cannot always write it out and in mathematics, some pupils know the answer but they cannot always show.....when you do the tests in the classroom, you can ask them and then they can answer...

Findings in this regard show that teachers use different strategies to cater for diversity in the classroom during assessment hence all students performing tasks that suit their abilities.

CHAPTER 5

5. Discussion of the findings.

This chapter discusses the findings of the current study and makes a summary of the most important findings. Furthermore, conclusions of the research findings are presented. The research findings are divided into two sections and operationalized under the research sub-questions; *what assessment methods do teachers use? and how do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessments?*. The two headings are discussed as follows;

5.1. What assessment methods do teachers use in the classroom?

Using a variety of assessment methods at the same time is claimed to make a positive impact on students' learning. As stated by Afflerbach (2007), simultaneous use of different assessment methods is the only way to understand where students are in their learning and how best to inform their progress. Although the methods of assessment have no limit, all of the assessments students experience today appears to fall into one of the four basic categories which include; selected response and short answer; extended written response; performance assessment; and personal communication (Stiggins, et al., 2004). Findings indicated that the question about assessment methods was a shared opinion among the participants. Participants expressed that they use different assessment methods in their classrooms. Participants seemed to agree with the use of a variety of assessment methods as argued by some researchers to be important in enabling students to demonstrate their abilities (Valencia, 1997). The first common method identified and consistently used was observation which is also cited by Kuls, et al. (2001) as well as Angelo and Cross (1993). From the above mentioned categories of assessment, observation is classified under performance assessment which is described as one that requires a person to observe a specific behavior or outcomes and judge the appropriate response (Oosterhof, 2003). Participant one (Miss Joy) seems to be in line with the above description as she argued that when observing, it is important to sample just one thing that you want to observe and not to observe everything about the student. Depending on what kind of behavior the teacher wants to observe and how she/he wants to observe it, this participant further gave another option a teacher may apply when using observation by saying that sometimes students are placed in different groups during the activity which is in agreement with (Brown and Duguid, 2000) while the teacher observes although she was not specific on what and who she observes in these groups. Much as the other two participants

agreed to using observation, they gave no further explanation on their responses. Perhaps the interesting issue here is that the participant who gave more explanation was fluent in the English language than the other two participants and I assume that is the reason she explained more. Observation was identified consistently by the entire three participants, but there was actually not much elaboration on how exactly it is used.

Dialogue with students is another method that featured among all the three participants. Dialogue/conversations/talking to students as was referred to by the participants can be classified under personal communication (Stiggins and Chappius, 2002). Under this method of assessment, the teacher asks questions during instructions, listens to students as they participate in class, and gives examinations orally among others. This has been highlighted by participant one as she stated that she uses dialogues to understand the level at which students are operating and this can as well be done through written questions where students are expected to answer. The explanation of participant two (Miss Peace) seems to closely relate to what has been said by Stiggins and Chappius in what happens during personal communication. To her, students first perform the task in groups while she observes what and how they do it then she talks to them individually. In the case of this participant, two methods seem to co-exist at the same time and these are observation and dialogue. Participant three (Miss Happy) however, was very limited in her explanation and this made it difficult to get meaning from what she said. Although the participants did not single out grouping students as another method, I think at this point it seems to be consistently used by all the participants. Grouping students as has been reflected from the participants' views is argued to be helpful in facilitating learning (Ellis, 2000; Hanckbarth, 1996).

Findings also revealed feedback as another method used by the teachers. Feedback is claimed to inform students about their own learning and progress (Stiggins, 2005). The views provided by participant one seems to fit into Stiggin's claim. Apart from correcting students' mistakes, she also adds talking to them on what they need to do in order to improve being important when using feedback. This participant's response might also relate to what other research describes about students being able to construct knowledge and understanding based on what they know (Bransford, et al., 2003). This implies that through providing feedback to students, they are able to know their abilities and limitations. However, in this participant's explanation she appears to describe how she carries out feedback with regard to only students who are doing well whom she categorically named the reds. It is therefore, not clear from her

response what kind of feedback she provides to the students in other groups since there was no explanation given in reference to other groups. Meanwhile participant two also seems to concur with participant one in her view of this method but she does not point out a specific group of students. This may also pose a question such as, does she provide feedback to all the students at the same time and in the same way? We shall discuss how these teachers take care of diversity later in the next section. In addition, she seems to mention another point which according to my opinion is vital when using feedback. To her, feedback also acts as a stimulant because as a teacher provides feedback to the students, they will feel that they are given attention, respected and involved. This participant's view can be associated with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in which he promotes learning contexts where students are given the opportunity to play an active part in learning. In addition, through feedback, teachers and students can be perceived as participating in a mutual pattern of appropriation of ideas and actions (Brown, et al., 1993).

The other method that featured out prominently among all the three participants is tests. The main issue that seems to emerge from all the participants' responses is that they use tests to measure the level at which students are operating academically. Selected response is not used in the tests but short answer and extended written response are used (Stiggins, et al., 2004). Findings also revealed that students are assessed using tests once every week which teachers said it is in form of homework. The assumption could be that this type of assessment is for learning (William et al., 2004) and is used by the teachers to evaluate the learning target for the week. The other type of test is what the participants referred to as the major one which is done once a year and this could be used to document student performance at the end of the instruction (McMillan, 2004) but participants said that they do not use this assessment to grade students. One issue however, that did not come out clearly from all the participants is how these tests are created and whether students are also involved in the creation of these tests. It is claimed that when students are also involved in creating assessment, the roles in the teaching-learning process become less distinct Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002). Much on how these tests are administered will be discussed in the subsequent section under sub-question two.

Besides the methods of assessment that featured prominently among all the three participants, other methods were also mentioned by some participants which according to my opinion they were not directly answering this particular sub-question. Team work was one of such

methods that two participants agreed as important in helping them understand the student's potentials and challenges. One participant put it clearly that they are teams and they try to do assessment together. The other participant pointed out that they discuss as a team about specific children whom they have identified as having problems. This seems to mean that after individual teachers have carried out assessments in their classroom, they then meet as a team to come up with the intervention measures which to me may not directly be a classroom assessment method. My opinion is that it may not necessarily be a classroom assessment method when arguing in the context of assessment for learning as has been described by Stiggins, et al (2004). Based on the responses regarding this approach, it is likely that the participants mixed up team teaching and assessment method. Although the teacher may be responsible for carrying out assessment of students, my view is that this may not make this assessment method. Another method that one of the participants pointed out is listening to other students' complaints. In this case she particularly referred to students with disruptive behavior. She said that the teacher can use other students' complaints to collect data about a particular student. Although it might be true that other students' complains regarding a particular student may provide the teacher with information regarding that student, it might be quite tricky in a way that you cannot trust all the complaints as being genuine given the fact that some students who might complain about others may themselves be having behavior problems. However, this method may also work when used alongside other methods such as observation. The last method identified by another participant is talking to parents. She said that they talk to parents all the time especially after identifying a problem in the child. This method may as well not likely to fit into the classroom context although it is one way of carrying out assessment especially if a teacher wants to find out background information concerning the student or make a follow-up regarding a particular student. It is claimed that the assessments teachers carry out in the classroom improves student learning best (Guskey, 2003). The focus in this study was particularly the classroom context, implying those assessment methods that are used to assess students in the context of teaching (Brooks, et al., 1993).

Regarding how useful the information teachers gather from assessments is concerned, the issues raised by the teachers were basically to do with improving teachers' methods of teaching, it results into students becoming motivated to learn because they will be given tasks that they are able to perform, and as a result, they feel recognized. Findings also revealed this information being important in talking with the parents. Two teachers said that the

information helps them to improve in their teaching by aiding them in selecting the most appropriate methods for teaching so as to cater for the diverse needs of students in the classroom. In this case, teachers seem to be informed by Black and Wiliam's argument as noted in the theoretical chapter of this document, that assessment helps in adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Ross, 2006)). As a result, of improved methods of teaching, students become motivated because they will be given tasks that they are able to perform and at the same time they will feel recognized, special, motivated (Shepard, 2000; Irwi-DeVities, 1996) and work hard although not all of them work hard as commented by one teacher. Relating this to Wiggins (1998) assertion of assessment influencing what is learned and the degree of engagement by students in the learning process, assessment information is indeed important in improving the teaching and learning. The teachers' views regarding assessment information can be taken as vital because incorporating assessment with instruction lets the teacher know the most useful activities and the level of teaching that is appropriate (Shepard, 2000).

5.2. How do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessment?

Research indicates that more schools nowadays have got students representing diverse needs (Ruddell, 2005). This view pointed out by Ruddell seems to agree with findings of my study. I asked the participants if they have had experience with students having varying needs. The responses provided by the entire three participants concurred with Ruddell's view. The experience of participant one according to her response is that she has had students with behavior problems, social and academic competences. Participant two went further and mentioned the specific kinds of children that she has had experience with ranging from noise makers to those motivated to learn. Participant three also gave examples of the categories of students she has had including one who was blind. Findings on this issue seem to show that the main category of students in the classrooms is those with behavior problems. It may be argued that providing for all these diverse needs in the classroom may be challenging and it could be possible to assume that not all the students may benefit equally from the classroom assessment practices especially if a classroom has got quite a substantial number of these diversities (Martinez and Mategeorge, 2002, Kaufman, et al., 2000). Participants seemed to agree with these when I asked if they faced any challenges in their practice although they were not very free in responding to this question, my interpretation of the clues I gathered and the short responses given agreed with the above research.

When I asked how they provide for such diversity in classroom assessments, one participant elaborated more by explaining what different categories of students do and how they perform any given task to achieve the goal. She stressed the point that all students have the same goal to reach but they however use different trajectories to arrive at the goal. This implied that they use different methods that give students opportunity to demonstrate their potentials (Valencia, 1997; Cho and Forde, 2002). Her subsequent explanation and examples indicate that every child at least is catered for and has something to do in a way that is appropriate to his/her need. This too can be linked to Airasian (2005) argument about sizing up the task of each student so as to manage them. The participant however, seemed not to agree with Vygotsky's claim in the zone of proximal development. According to her, some students who take the task home may be helped to do it by their parents. Yet Vygotsky claims that when a student is at the zone of proximal development for a particular task, rendering the necessary help will give the student enough of a boost to achieve the task. The other two participants did not however, mention about all students having the same goal to reach. But they too pointed out some other relevant ways that takes into consideration students' diverse needs. For instance, having smaller groups do the task in a different book which is not too difficult. And also the teacher reading the questions for the student and the student gives the answer orally (Stiggins, et al., 2004). This could be seen as likely to motivate students because they are given what they can manage (Airasian, 2005). Grouping students based on their abilities may not necessarily be a bad idea if it is not consistently done according to students' abilities. For instance, Vygotsky in his zone of proximal development suggests that teachers need to apply cooperative learning so that the less competent students will develop with the help from the less skillful peers. This could be interpreted to mean that groups should have mixed abilities. Through these groups students learn to collaboratively solve problems and advance their learning (Collins and Bielaczyc, 2000). Furthermore, findings reveal that names are given to these groups such as red for the brighter students, yellow for those who are not very bright while the green are the low achievers. This might also not be a good idea because this in a way is actually labeling students which may result into stigmatization. Although not all the participants noted grouping students and assigning names to the groups, it may be assumed that this practice probably depends on the teacher and the grade taught. On the issue of all students having the same goal to achieve, the response from one participant seemed to agree with what Bruce and Chappuis' claim. She said that students are involved but they do not have to decide everything. It is claimed that involving students in self-reflection and goal

setting will gradually enable students to assume responsibility for evaluating their own learning and identify what they need to improve (Bruce, 2001; and Chappuis, 2005).

CHAPTER SIX

6. Summary and conclusions of the findings

6.1. Summary

This section summarizes the research findings of the study and the main question is: *How do teachers practice classroom assessment?* The study sought to provide answers to this basic question by answering the following sub-questions;

What assessment methods do teachers use in the classroom?

How do teachers provide for diversity in classroom assessments?

6.1.1 Assessment methods used by teachers in the classroom

Findings from this study indicate that teachers use different assessment methods in their classrooms although some of the methods revealed appear not to be more specific to what this study intended to find out. The study revealed methods such as observation, dialogue with the students as well as with the parents, tests, feedback, listening to other students' complaints and team work being used by the teachers. This is evidence that teachers indeed practice classroom assessments in a way of employing a variety of methods that best suits the purpose for the assessment. Most of the assessment methods revealed in this study fall at least in one of the following categories; selected response and short answer, extended written response, performance assessment, and personal communication. Observation can be used on an individual based on the specific aspect that the teacher wants to observe and at times students are placed in groups while the teacher observes especially the social aspect.

Dialogue with students is used to understand the level at which a student is operating and it can also be done through written questions. This method is mostly used in a form of feedback after a specific task has been performed. Meanwhile, feedback on the other hand is not only used to correct students' mistakes but also to talk to them about areas they need to improve in. The use of this method however, appears to be biased on the side of brighter students as the only group mentioned by one of the participants. Furthermore, it is evident that there appears to be basically two types of tests which include; the weekly tests which is done in a form of homework and the major test which is done once a year. This therefore, implies that

this method is done under two different forms of assessment which may include; formative and summative assessments. Findings further have revealed that teachers work in teams and sometimes they do conduct assessment as a team and together they discuss issues concerning specific students whom they identify as having problems. It is also brought to notice that some teachers use other students' complaints to gather data concerning a particular student particularly with regard to behavior problems. The study further found out that the information obtained from assessment is important in that it helps a teacher to find better methods of teaching that will in turn have a positive effect on students' learning by motivating them and it is also used to talk with the parents.

6.1.2. Provision of diversity in classroom assessment

Responses to this question on diversity in the classroom in the first place showed that all the three participants had experience in classrooms having students with diverse needs. Students such as those with behavior problems, social and academic competences were identified by the teachers. Some teachers have also been in classrooms with students who are motivated to learn and a student with visual impairment. Regarding the question of how teachers are able to cater for all these diverse needs in their assessment practices, responses showed that students usually have one goal to reach but they reach it in different ways. This implies that each student performs a task in the best way that is appropriate to his/her learning style in order to reach the main goal. Findings on this issue show that some students write a nice long sentence while others just write the word yes or no and both responses are treated as right. Meanwhile other students get to do the task using the computer, others take the task home before the date of the test because they need to practice and to others, the teacher reads the question to them and they provide the answer orally. All of these are the different ways that teachers use to cater for each student's needs to enable them reach the goal. Findings further reveal that sometimes students are grouped according to their abilities and suitable tasks are designed for each specific group.

6.2. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to find out the classroom assessment methods that promote equity and students' learning. This was addressed by focusing on the main research question: *How do teachers practice classroom assessment?* The study first wanted to get the teachers understanding of the term assessment before asking them about how they practice it.

However, feedback was not promising as teachers were not familiar with the concept since it is an English word. I first explored their practice by asking them if they have had experience with different categories of students in their classrooms and what those categories were. I finally focused on how they were able to identify these students' needs and what they do to ensure every student benefits from their classroom assessments.

After collecting and analyzing the data, results reveal that there is a connection between theoretical perspectives and the teachers' practices. Most of the assessment methods pointed out in the theoretical chapter of this document by different authors were used by the teachers. The explanations and examples provided by the teachers on these methods particularly observation, however, seemed to be associated specifically with students with behavior problems and participants seemed not to vary their methods much more. The results from one participant were not very convincing as she could only say yes or no when prompted without giving any further explanations. Her responses, however, could not be disqualified because the problem could have been language barrier. According to the results of this study, the teacher who could express herself better in the English language gave more information. I also realized that teachers could be practicing these assessment methods using their personal knowledge and experience as they said sometimes they consult other teachers when they are not sure on what to do and they especially consult the teacher in charge of special needs education in the school. Teachers feel that the information they gather from assessment is important to them in their teaching and also to students as it motivates them and they use it as a basis for talking to parents.

Regarding diversity, there were only two major trajectories that ensure all the students benefit from the given task. These included; students reaching the same goal but in different ways; and the other one was that students perform the tasks using different means. Relating this to the main research question, results revealed that teachers use different methods that respond to the students' learning style preference. The responses provided by one teacher were the

ones that clearly answered the question of diversity because she even went ahead to give different ways that the students use in performing the tasks. The responses of the other two teachers were however not elaborated.

Given that this thesis explored on teachers' classroom assessment methods and how they cater for the diverse needs of students, a number of conclusions seem possible. One may be that classrooms indeed have got students with diverse needs and to ensure accommodation of all these needs in classroom assessments, a variety of assessment methods need to be used. This has been revealed by the findings from this study. Perhaps another significant issue is the relationship between the information gathered from assessments and the teaching and learning which findings revealed as important in improving teaching, motivating students to learn and as a basis for talking to parents. However, despite the fact that the findings have revealed that teachers use quite a number of assessment methods that at the same time provide for diversity in the classroom, nevertheless, it appears there is still need for teachers to gain more knowledge in using more assessment options as well as gain experience in matching the assessment tool to the purpose of the assessment (Birenbaum, 1996; Dunn, et al., 2004). This is because findings have shown that there are much more assessment methods that teachers have not exploited.

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APPENDIX

1. Interview guide

Methods of classroom assessment

Have you had experience with different categories of students in your work as a teacher?

Possible categories

Behavior problems

Key words:

Extrinsic behavior

- Teasing, disrupting the class, aggression, seeking attention talking during the lesson, etc.

Intrinsic behavior

- Withdrawn, depression, attention problems, impatience, etc.

Social competence

Key words

- Cooperation e.g. helping others, sharing, complying with rules
- Responsibility e.g. ability to communicate with adults
- Self-control

Academic competence

Key words

- Reading, writing, time management, note taking, test taking, etc.

Why do you think these students had problems/ were competent?

How do you find out about these students' needs?

Do you use any specific method to identify them?

Do you use the same procedures to identify all these different categories? If not, can you tell what other procedures you use in your classroom?

When do you use these methods?

Are these procedures used only during the lesson or any other time of the school term?

What do you do with the information you collect concerning these students?

Diversity in Classroom

Do you have students who do not show the above problems/competences in your classroom?

How do you cater for all these diverse needs in your classroom practices?

Is there anything you do differently to make sure all the students' needs in your classroom are met?

Do you encounter any challenges in your work?

Do you have any suggestions on what we have discussed?

2.Information letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Hellen Atim, a Masters of Arts Erasmus Mundus Special and Inclusive Education student at the University of Oslo, Norway. My course is sponsored by the European Union and it requires me to carry out my research study in one of the European Countries which is a partner in the programme.

My research topic aims at investigating Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices that Influence Students' Learning Outcomes in an inclusive school in Norway. The responses provided will be used for the purposes of this study only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality, with no association made to your name or place of work during and also after the results have been published in the final thesis in December, 2012.

Participants will be referred to by pseudo names. For purposes of capturing all the information and also in order not to lose important information during interview sessions, our voices will be recorded but will be deleted soon after the project has ended. The reason for carrying out this study is to help come up with some suggestions/recommendations on suitable classroom assessment practices that are equitable and positively influence students' learning outcomes.

I kindly and humbly request you to participate in this twenty (40) minutes interview by answering the questions as honestly as possible. Participation is, however, absolutely voluntary in the sense that you can choose to/not to participate or even withdraw at any time without any need to give an explanation as to why.

Thank you for participating in this study. Once again I re-assure you of the utmost confidentiality in the whole process of this study.

Yours faithfully

.....

Masters Student

Department of Special Needs Education

University of Oslo

3. Letter of consent

I agree to take part in this study; I have heard the explanation about the study and have also read the information sheet. I understand that;

There will be utmost confidentiality in the information that I provide.

Any information that could identify me will not be disclosed in the course of the study and also in the research report or to any other party

It is voluntary to participate in this study

I can choose not to take part in some or in the whole process of the study

I have the freedom to withdraw at any given time without prior notification and without being punished or disadvantaged in any way

Name: (Optional)

Signature:

Date:

4. Letter from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Postboks 1140 Blindern
0318 OSLO

Vår dato: 02.08.2012

Vår ref:31030 / 3 / SSA

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 07.07.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

31030	<i>Classroom Assessment and Students' Learning Outcomes</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens overste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Jorunn Buli-Holmberg
Student	Hellen Atim

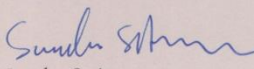
Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html.

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen

Yigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim
Knut K Skjak


Sondre S. Arnesen

Kontaktperson: Sondre S. Arnesen tlf: 55 58 25 83
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