

# PLANNING & DESIGNING ASSESSMENT

Assessment is not simply a process of checking what learners have learnt but rather a powerful means of directing teaching and improving learning in the classroom. In planning a learning topic or unit, the teacher needs to integrate their assessment strategy with their teaching or lesson plan to maximise the development of understanding in their learners.

## Assessment Principles

### 1. Fairness

Assessment must be fair. Most learners have a well-developed sense of fairness. To maintain faith in the assessment process, the assessor and the assessment must be seen to be fair. Fairness incorporates a number of factors. It must be appropriate for the learners in terms of their age, development and experience. It must be non-discriminatory against any learners in terms of their gender, race, culture, religion, geographic and socio-economic circumstances. It must be reasonable in terms of the evidence to be produced, time to produce this, support required etc. A fair assessment is one which provides all learners an equal opportunity to achieve. The assessment strategy must match the methods used in learning and teaching.

### 2. Transparency

Assessment must be transparent. The learner must know before the assessment what evidence must be produced, why it is being assessed, and how it will be assessed. In this way a learner can take some responsibility for their own learning and can be held accountable for their learning progress. In the same way, the teacher is also accountable for the assessment process.

### 3. Validity

The most important principle for assessment is validity. If an assessment lacks validity, then it is not a successful assessment. A valid assessment is one which actually measures what it sets out to measure. For example, does an assessment of laboratory skills actually measure these or does it measure reading ability and ability to follow instructions. A teacher uses their professional judgement to determine whether their assessment is valid or not.

### 4. Alignment to Curriculum

Assessment must be aligned to curriculum. In South Africa, curriculum policy is presented in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for each

Grade and each Subject. In terms of this policy, assessment should be “an integral part of daily learning and teaching” – “a continuous and planned process” ... “complementing learning activities”. Specific details of requirements in each Grade and Subject are available in the appropriate CAPS document.

## **5. Alignment to Teaching Practice**

Assessment must be aligned to teaching practice. As assessment should be embedded in classroom practice, so methods of assessment should correlate with methods of teaching and learning. This is to ensure other principles such as fairness, transparency and validity. Assessment results can redirect and adapt teaching practice to best reach learning targets.

## **6. Alignment to Learning Targets**

Assessment must be aligned to learning targets. In fact, identifying learning targets is the starting point of assessment strategy design. Assessment must measure achievement of the identified learning targets in order to be valid.

## **7. Authenticity**

Authentic means 'real'. An authentic assessment provides opportunities for learners to use information and skills in realistic situations. It engages learners in tasks that simulate life experiences. An assessment should be authentic in both the evidence which is produced and the level of performance achieved. Authenticity provides relevance for learners and creates interest and motivation.

## **8. Engagement**

Assessment needs to be engaging. Learners who are engaged in the assessment, see the relevance of what they are doing and the value in it. This principle goes hand-in-hand with authenticity and keeps learner interest up and motivates learners to succeed.

## **9. Practicality**

A high-quality assessment must be practical. The information obtained from the assessment must be worth the resources and the time required to obtain it. Factors to weigh up when designing the assessment are: teacher familiarity with the assessment methods, techniques and tools; time for learners to complete the assessment; the complexity of administering the assessment; the ease of scoring and the ease of interpretation of the results.

## **10. Variety**

Assessment strategies should be varied: formal and informal; in timing (pre-learning, mid-learning and post-learning); different purposes (baseline, formative – diagnostic, developmental, consolidative, summative); different methods (teacher assessment, self assessment, peer assessment, group assessment); techniques (tests and examinations, observations and dialogue, performance tasks and created products); and tools (marking memoranda, anecdotal records, checklists, rating scales, performance lists and rubrics – holistic and anecdotal). Variety in assessment strategies results in more reliable overall assessment.

## **11. Reliability**

A reliable assessment is one which will yield the same results when repeated under the same circumstances. Reliability is concerned with consistency, stability and dependability of scores. There is always a degree of error in any assessment – if there is little error, reliability is high but much error results in low reliability. A reliable assessment shows consistency across assessors, over time, or different versions of the same assessment. Reliability is thus only evident over time and with repeated assessments.