An Exploration of Teachers' Strategies used in Assessing Grade R Learners' Readiness to Transition to Grade One

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Mapule Yvonne Segooa[1] & Habasisa Vincent Molise[1]

[1] University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that teachers use to assess Grade R learners to determine their readiness to transition to Grade One. Assessment involves the process of recording learners' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills using measurable conditions. Readiness assessment in Grade R is a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning. It incorporates planning, implementing, interpreting, and reporting to parents and other stakeholders. The study encompassed four Grade R teachers teaching Grade R in two schools in Limpopo Province. Data was generated through face-to-face interviews for the purpose of gathering in-depth understanding. Data was analysed through the thematic analysis method. The study revealed that teachers use the common tools to develop readiness in Grade R. Teachers continuously use formal, and informal assessments and observation to assess the learners' readiness. They assess a certain group each day doing various activities in different learning areas. Formal and informal assessments are a prerequisite in CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Standard Policy Statements). These strategies will ensure learners' readiness progress and learning process when entering Grade One.

Keywords: *Formal and Informal Assessment, Beliefs, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, Readiness Assessment, Observation*

INTRODUCTION

The significance of assessment is for the development of learners' achievements and monitoring of the learner to determine progress and improvement in learning. The purpose of this study was to obtain an understanding of how the quality of grade R learner performance impacts teaching in grade one classrooms, especially focusing on teachers in the foundation phase. Grade R is the final year of preschool before children start Grade One. These learners are normally approaching age six. Most of the Grade R learners enter Grade One unprepared to tackle Grade One activities. This may be attributed to the learners' inability to hold pencils, cut out pictures, write their names, identify phonics, letters, vowels, numbers, and number names, and demonstrate underdeveloped gross and fine motor skills during baseline assessment. The researchers discovered that grade one learners were not ready for the prescribed curriculum. These learners' lack of readiness hampers the teaching-learning progress, and this adversely affects curriculum coverage. Some teachers adjust the curriculum to accommodate the level of individual learners' readiness, whereas others become frustrated and demoralised, which leads to unfulfilled learning outcomes. Teachers acknowledged the importance of assessment even though they use different terminologies to express different types of assessments and the methods they use to assess readiness in Grade R classes.

Research report in Kindergarten, Readiness Assessment (KRA) shows that motor, mathematics, physical, emotional, social, language, and literacy development are basic skills to be used in assessing Grade R learners annually.[1] Similarly, Davin and Sethusha, attest that in assessing Grade R learners' readiness teachers should use different types of assessment methods, and different assessment settings outside and inside the

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[1] Readiness Assessment (KRA), 2021.

classroom, and should assess learners at different times of the day, continuously throughout the year.[2] In addition, De Witt believes that readiness assessment involves the process of recording learners' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills using measurable conditions.[3] Readiness assessment means "a process of gathering information on learner performance for the purpose of making instructional decisions."[4] Readiness assessment in Grade R plays a central role in planning, implementing, interpreting, and reporting to parents and other stakeholders. The assessment strategies used to assess readiness in Grade R, are thus important to help the teachers to analyse the learners' readiness and to make decisions about the learning process so that each learner can be guided toward optimal learning and development. The research question the study sought to address is - What are the strategies that teachers use to assess Grade R learners to determine their readiness to transition to Grade One?

The paper is organized in the following manner: it starts by justifying the need to assess the Grade R learners' readiness before they enter Grade One. Next, the researchers review the related literature on the strategies that teachers use to assess Grade R learners to determine their readiness to transition to Grade One. Lastly, the study presents the research methodology followed in collecting and analysing data in order to arrive at meaningful conclusions. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the strategies that teachers can use in assessing the learners' readiness. The study contests the idea of pass-one-pass-all, and suggest that the progression of learners should be dependent on the skills learners acquired for them to tackle learning activities in Grade One.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, studies reveal that assessment is a universal approach that generates information to determine learners' progress, capture informed decisions, and report learners' readiness to all stakeholders. In the Midwestern States, United States(US), in order to ensure that all learners meet the required standards of readiness, they must undergo an assessment process.[5] In Australia, teachers use assessment for teaching and learning through play as an instrument that would assist learners to have confidence, communication, and involvement in learning; connection with the world, and a strong sense of identity and well-being.[6] Furthermore, Weipeng et al., highlight that holistic assessment is believed to entail cultural, spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, of physical well-being.[7] Yehya believes that in Lebanon, the assessment of learners in the classroom involves social and emotional development, including creative activities and a play-based environment that affords children opportunities to interact and play games.[8] However, in China, assessment entails moral strength, physical well-being, aesthetic sensibility, and cognitive growth.[9]

In Africa, assessment is guided by cultural roots and the child's context (Western and homogenous). This means assessment merges the characteristics of modernity and tradition. Through play, learners can reconstruct, construct, and solve problems they encounter by using cognizance, and they can link new knowledge to prior knowledge to learn the relevant content.[10] In South Africa, there are assessment standards that are used as a measuring tool to determine Grade R readiness based on the current curriculum. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) highlights the expected assessment standards that include the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R to 12 learners.[11] Naude and Davin argue that assessment is "a systematic planned and continuous process to collect information based on the learners' school experience. Learning is systematically stored and analysed to make decisions about the learning process so that each learner can be

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[2] R. Davin and R. Sethusha, "Assessment: Getting to Know the Grade R Learner," in *Handbook for Grade R Teaching* (Cape Town: Pearson, 2020), 57–88.

[3] Marike W De Witt, *The Young Child in Context: A Psycho-Social Perspective* (Van Schaik, 2021).

[4] Reda Johanna Davin, *Handbook for Grade R Teaching* (Pearson Education South Africa, 2020).

[5] Rachel E. Schachter et al., "Teachers' Perspectives on Year Two Implementation of a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment," *Early Education and Development* 31, no. 5 (July 3, 2020): 778–95, https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2019.1679606.

[6] Weipeng Yang et al., "Neoliberalism and Sociocultural Specificities: A Discourse Analysis of Early Childhood Curriculum Policies in Australia, China, New Zealand, and Singapore," *Early Child Development and Care* 192, no. 2 (January 25, 2022): 203–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1754210.

[7] Yang et al., "Neoliberalism and Sociocultural Specificities: A Discourse Analysis of Early Childhood Curriculum Policies in Australia, China, New Zealand, and Singapore."

[8] Yehya Alhajji, "Early Childhood Education of Refugee Students in Lebanon: Teachers' Perspectives" (2020).

[9] Yang et al., "Neoliberalism and Sociocultural Specificities: A Discourse Analysis of Early Childhood Curriculum Policies in Australia, China, New Zealand, and Singapore."

[10] F. Taiwo Ogunyemi and Elizabeth Henning, "From Traditional Learning to Modern Education: Understanding the Value of Play in Africa's Childhood Development," *South African Journal of Education* 40, no. Supplement 2 (December 31, 2020): S1–11, https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40ns2a1768.

[11] South Africa Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grade R-3 Sepedi Home Language* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 2011).

guided toward optimal learning and development."[12] Additionally, Vaccaro and Sabella highlight that successful teaching cannot take place without assessment and monitoring.[13] Through assessment and monitoring the teacher can identify what and how children are learning and the success of their teaching/ facilitation/mediation. Similarly, Davin argues that the main purpose of assessment in Grade R teaching is to assess learners' level of development, provide guidance and assistance to parents, and improve the teaching of learners.[14] The statement above highlights that success with regard to readiness in the Grade R classroom is achieved through assessment. Formal and informal assessments are prerequisites in the DBE CAPS, 2011 policy.[15] By assessing learners, the teacher ensures learners' progress and the learning process during readiness development. It also indicates that assessment is used for a two-way purpose. Meaning for learners' progress and teachers' reflection.

In Nepal, studies have revealed that the learning and teaching process excluding learning readiness deprives the promotion of learners' educational achievement, as such a process is less effective and negatively influences quality education.[16] Through the learning readiness process, learners' academic achievement is enhanced to create favourable circumstances for effective teaching and learning.[17] They further attest that learners without learning readiness become unsuccessful in school.[18] According to Gove et.al., in most African countries, Grade One reading has been negatively impacted by learning readiness due to insufficient and less contact time.[19] Studies reveal that 250 million learners in sub-Saharan Africa are unable to acquire basic skills that will enable them to be ready to learn. The non-payment of school fees has increased learners' enrolment in schools, and this has led to a shortage of teachers and classes to eliminate overcrowding.[20] In Ethiopia, learning readiness is negatively affected by insufficient human and physical resources. However, in Kenya, interventions to remediate learning readiness and Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes have been developed for sustainability. The programmes focus on emotional, social, physical, and mental readiness.[21]

In the case of this study, formal learning is Grade One. Erasmus et.al., state that many South African learners are not learning-ready when starting formal education in Grade One. Hence, they suggest that a perceptual-motor intervention programme be promoted for Grade R learners for school and learning readiness.[22] According to Venter, learning readiness indicates the young children's ability to receive purposeful instruction.[23]

Previously, the DBE allowed all learners access to Grade R by establishing Grade R classes at most South African primary schools. Since 2012 to date 2023, Grade R has been part of the Foundation Phase.[24] Incorporating Grade R and reading from different studies compelled us to further this research to get an in-depth understanding of the topic. The DBE outlines different assessment standards based on perceptual skills and social, cognitive, creative, and physical development. Learners must be equipped with fine and gross motor skills during outdoor and indoor activities focused on play-based learning.[25] All these aspects, according to CAPS, will develop learners' readiness by the end of the Grade R year. Evans concurs that when studying child development, it is imperative to look at the child's connection with her/his immediate and larger environment.[26]

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[12] M. Naude and R. Davin, *Assessment in the Foundation Phase* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2017).

[13] Deanna Vaccaro and Laura Sabella, "Impact on Student Learning: Monitoring Student Progress," *Journal of Practitioner Research* 3, no. 1 (July 2018), https://doi.org/10.5038/2379-9951.3.1.1070.

[14] Davin, *Handbook for Grade R Teaching*.

[15] South Africa Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grade R-3 Sepedi Home Language*.

[16] Rita Dangol and Milan Shrestha, "Learning Readiness and Educational Achievement among School Students," *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2019): 467–76.

[17] Dangol and Shrestha, "Learning Readiness and Educational Achievement among School Students."

[18] Dangol and Shrestha, "Learning Readiness and Educational Achievement among School Students."

[19] Amber Gove et al., "Assessing the Impact of Early Learning Programs in Africa," *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 2017, no. 158 (December 2017): 25–41, https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20224.

[20] John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

[21] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

[22] Myrtle Erasmus et al., "The Effect of a Perceptual–Motor Intervention Programme on Learning Readiness of Grade R Learners from South African Deprived Environments," *Early Child Development and Care* 186, no. 4 (April 2, 2016): 596–611, https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1048245.

[23] Lieschen Venter, "A Systems Perspective on Early Childhood Development Education in South Africa," *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* 16, no. 1 (December 29, 2022): 7, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-022-00100-5.

[24] South Africa Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Early Learning National Assessment* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 2019).

[25] South Africa Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Early Learning National Assessment*.

[26] O.G. Evans, " Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory. Simply Psychology," https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html, 2021.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts ecological systems theory as the lens to view it. Moletsane et. al., emphasise that the ecological model explains the child's life of development as influenced directly or indirectly by the systems.[27] These are namely, (a) the microsystem, (b) the mesosystem, (c) the exosystem, (d) the macrosystem, and (e) the chronosystem within the child's social context.[28] The ecological system focuses on human development as one progresses from stage to stage of growth. Soyer argues that the Ecological Systems Theory is a human development lifelong process that considers one's insight concerning the environment and his/her interaction with that environment.[29] Some scholars highlight that studies reveal that holistic development is influenced by multiple contexts that impact the person's development.[30] In their argument, they seem to hold a view that there are visible and invisible contexts. The visible contexts are social and physical aspects namely, neighbourhood, family, country, historical time, and culture.[31] This is supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory that relates to the domains of development including the psychosocial aspects as key human development and McLeod who claims that development evolves biophysical human organism and a person, symbols, objects, and in its immediate external environment and it takes place through complex reciprocal interactions and the process between active progress.[32] Using ecological systems theory, De Witt acknowledges that a learner's holistic development is interrelated to different domains, characters, influences from others, historical and cultural context, and experiences from early stimulation connected to the child's future development.[33]

The use of ecological systems theory becomes most relevant in this study as researchers argue that South Africa is not the only country that experiences the impact of Grade R readiness on Grade One teaching. Some countries with similar problems according to Nissksaya in Russia, revealed that the high quality of education in developing Grade R readiness is influenced by the teacher-learner ratio, teacher's time organization, and a balanced curriculum. [34] Whereas, in Turkey, Kartal and Guner indicate that "the consideration of schools' dimensions for the development of readiness in Grade R needs support programmes that are prepared and pre-determined for future development by the established transition team." [35] The interaction of families and the school is viewed as playing a significant role in enhancing the successful relationship in school–family unity, parent partnership, and the schools to develop Grade R readiness.[36] Malawi, studies by Bwezani et al. reveal that the readiness for holistic development of the learners is influenced by parents' roles in their children, teachers' involvement in holistic development, and the availability of resources for appropriate development. [37] DBE in South Africa describes readiness in terms of domains of holistic development, cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional development. These challenges that countries experience are grounded in the Bronfenbrenner Ecosystem Theory. The microsystem (parents) not playing their roles of involvement in their children's learning affected the mesosystem (school) where teachers' play-based activities never reached their set goal due to a lack of resources, and infrastructures which affected the exosystem.[38] Hence, this lack of resources affects the macrosystem as it will not bring change in the future of all the learners and their parents.

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[27] Relebohile Moletsane and Rasheedah O Adams-Ojugbele, "Towards Quality Early Childhood Development for Refugee Children: An Exploratory Study of a Grade R Class in a Durban Child Care Centre," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–8.

[28] Moletsane and Adams-Ojugbele, "Towards Quality Early Childhood Development for Refugee Children: An Exploratory Study of a Grade R Class in a Durban Child Care Centre."

[29] G F Soyer, "Book Review: The Ecology of Human Development by Urie Bronfenbrenner," *Journal of Culture and Values in Education* 2, no. 2 (2019): 77–80.

[30] Moletsane and Adams-Ojugbele, "Towards Quality Early Childhood Development for Refugee Children: An Exploratory Study of a Grade R Class in a Durban Child Care Centre"; Carol K Sigelman et al., *Life Span Human Development* (Cengage AU, 2018).

[31] Erica Munnik and Mario Smith, "Contextualising School Readiness in South Africa: Stakeholders' Perspectives," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–13.

[32] Saul Mcleod, "Cognitive Approach in Psychology," *Simply Psychology*, 2020, https://www.simplypsychology.org/cognitive.html.

[33] De Witt, *The Young Child in Context: A Psycho-Social Perspective*.

[34] Anastasiya K. Nisskaya, "School Readiness Outcomes of Different Preschool Educational Approaches," *Psychology of Russia: State of Art* 11, no. 1 (2018): 43–60, https://doi.org/10.11621/pir.2018.0104.

[35] Hulya Kartal and Fatih Guner, "A Review of Articles That Include the Schools' Readiness Dimension," *European Journal of Educational Research* 7, no. 3 (2018): 431–43.

[36] Jeanne Brown and Mariette Van der Merwe, "A Parenting Skills Programme to Enhance School Readiness of Grade R Learners in South Africa: A Social Work Perspective," *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development* 33, no. 2 (2021).

[37] Agatha Bwezani et al., "Attainability of Appropriate Transition from Early Childhood Development (ECD) To Primary School: Lessons from Kamwendo Zone Schools in Mchinji District," *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science* 16, no. 1 (2022): 4–13.

[38] Kevin M. Summers et al., "Poverty and Pain: Low-SES People Are Believed to Be Insensitive to Pain," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 95 (July 2021): 104116, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104116.

With ecological systems theory, in this study, researchers view and determine readiness as the holistic development of Grade R learners. Using holistic development allows researchers to draw on a study of the selected group of participants to make sense of and communicate conclusions about the development of readiness and its impact on Grade One teaching. This approach considers the way participants assess readiness in their various classes. Ecological systems theory holds that participants' understanding of the subject topic may influence other parts of the study like research methodology and analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research method was adopted in this study. In this study, a qualitative research method was adopted. A qualitative approach was suitable because this method addresses the scientific challenges and real-life problems in society.[39] A case study was appropriate in the case of this study, as it enabled the researcher to gain deeper knowledge and insight into Grade R readiness.[40] The participants provided a sense of their real-life world. This case study further helped the researcher to answer the questions as to how teachers assess Grade R readiness and the tools, they use to assess learners' readiness. The question was linked to the teachers' methods and strategies they used in their different classes continuously in determining the readiness level of each learner in their classes. The experience of the participants selected for this study and their verbal responses to the research questions helped the researcher(s) to understand the reality in Grade R with regard to the development of readiness. Due to the participant's situations in real-life settings, they also constructed a sense of their real-life worlds and adapted to such worlds. This study was conducted in Limpopo Province in South Africa. Two schools from two different circuits in Capricorn South District in Capricorn Municipality were involved. Both schools are from quintile three. School A is situated in a rural area and School B is situated in a suburban area. School A was chosen by the district to pilot the Molteno Project for the development of readiness and training of teachers for the development of readiness during indoor and outdoor activities. Whereas School B is not part of the Molteno Project.

Selection of the Participants

In this study, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. According to McMillan and Schumacher, qualitative sampling entails selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study.[41] Ames et al., advise that when using purposive sampling, the researcher needs to select participants who would provide relevant, rich information about the research question and topic.[42] Four teachers who taught Grade R learners were selected as participants because they facilitated and developed these learners' readiness at their respective schools. The sample size in this study was manageable and allowed the researchers to quickly collect enough data from the participants. The participating teachers had different exposure to developing Grade R readiness at their various schools. Both schools had an intake of children with and without preschool experience, and both were situated in rural villages. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' identities (i.e., anonymity) for example, Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), and Participant 4 (P4).

Data Collection

Data was generated through semi-structured interviews. open-ended questions helped the researchers to delve deeply into the social and personal backgrounds of the participants. Questions need to be repeated (if necessary) so that the interviewee can interpret them before deciding how to answer. Probing techniques were thus used to get clarity or further information, which helped the researchers to draw subtle distinctions between the participants' responses and their views.

In-depth, rich information was obtained from Grade R teachers. After the interviews, the researchers determined the crucial aspects raised and identified the similarities and differences in the data. All the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analysed according to set procedures. The researchers obtained an understanding of the participating teachers' attitudes toward developing readiness and how they assessed readiness in their Grade R classes. The consent forms were signed by all the participants before the interviews. The consent forms did not indicate their names, school names,

[39] Patrik Aspers and Ugo Corte, "What Is Qualitative in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Sociology* 42, no. 2 (June 27, 2019): 139–60, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7.

[40] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.*

[41] James H McMillan and Sally Schumacher, *Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry* (Pearson, 2010).

[42] Heather Ames, Claire Glenton, and Simon Lewin, "Purposive Sampling in a Qualitative Evidence Synthesis: A Worked Example from a Synthesis on Parental Perceptions of Vaccination Communication," *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 19, no. 1 (December 31, 2019): 26, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-019-0665-4.

and responses, as they were kept confidential and anonymous; instead, pseudonyms or codes were used to protect identities.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was used as the data analysis method in the study. TA is deemed relevant to qualitative data analysis; in this case, the main statements from participants were identified, and a conclusion was drawn based on authentic evidence and reasoning from raw data. This method of data analysis involves "dismantling, segmentation, and assembling data to form meaningful patterns to draw inferences."[43] The researchers transcribed the collected data from participants, then interpreted, synthesised, and combined all relevant information into a single unit. We transcribed the data, then interpreted, synthesised, and combined all relevant information into a single unit. The collected data was categorised to determine relationships, themes, and patterns. During the data analysis process, the researchers first listened to the audio recordings and looked at the clips captured with the video recorder. They looked at the pictures from the camera and read the transcriptions. Thereafter, they critically examined the four participants' responses. The information was dismantled and reassembled.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the findings which emerged in terms of the research questions of the study.

The Teachers' Assessment of Grade R Readiness

The researchers asked the research question how do you assess readiness in your class? This question was aimed at getting an in-depth understanding of the strategies and tools that teachers use to assess learners' readiness in their different classes. This is how the participants responded.

> **P1:** *I assess them continuously. I use assessment records. I will pick up groups and assess them informally. The learner who does not know how to respond to the assessment question will be put aside to learn how others are responding to the question and after observation, such learner should be given a second opportunity of assessment. In assessing balancing, I put a rope on the floor and allowed learners to walk on the rope to check the balance. I allow learners to throw the ball up 5 times to assess eye-hand coordination. They play on the sand and build and that develops their fingers. Learners can run and catch other learners. They can play netball, catch and kick the ball. They climb the jungle gym and climb to the tree house for storytelling. Learners sit down and listen to the story. Molteno tablets assist in assessing the learners. This time we don't assess the learners through writing we use oral assessment. The Molteno tablet has rubrics that are used and have ratings ranging from 1–3. One for poor, two for good, and three is very good. Each child has their own rubrics. There are two schedules. It is difficult because we must send the Department and Molteno their schedules and their reports. If you must come up with strategies to help the learners go to Grade One, I use the teaching area to assess the learners. I remain with the focus group as I will be assessing them. Then the other groups after they are done with their various activities, go to the reading area. The other group goes to the fantasy area. I use the Molteno gadgets (tablets) which help us to assess our learners. The tablet has the rubrics that we use, and the rubrics have rating scales ranging from 1–3. One is poor, 2 is good, and 3 is very good. Each child has their rubrics on the tablet. I use Marksheet rubrics from Molteno to match with SA-SAMS (South African School Administration and Management System). However, some areas differ from the SA-SAMS mark sheets.*
> **P2:** *I assess learners continuously, using formal and informal assessments. I use orals and writing assessments. I use a poster for oral activities to determine what the learners know and see on the poster. I use the chalkboard for writing activities to check if the learners can transcribe what I wrote on the chalkboard. I also use rubrics, tablets, and books to record my assessments and to generate marksheets for SASAMS and Molteno.*
> **P3:** *I assess learners by requesting them to stand. I use listening and speaking to assess learners. I use listening to check if learners can carry out and follow instructions. I use continuous observation, checklists, and notebooks wherein I note the learners' progress and development, like cutting. I assess confidence, independence responsibility. We play basic*

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[43] David Hunter, Jacqueline McCallum, and Dora Howes, "Defining Exploratory-Descriptive Qualitative (EDQ) Research and Considering Its Application to Healthcare," *Journal of Nursing and Health Care* 4, no. 1 (2019).

activities like cognitive development (problem-solving skills, Emotional and social development (control of emotions), and handle separation well. I also use the rubrics checklists, and mark sheets to check how they socialise with other learners. Their drawings and their pictures to create their storybooks, worksheets, and formative and observation assessments are used. Most of my assessment is formative and observation. I use listening and speaking to determine if the learners can listen and follow instructions. During the observation assessment, I divide the learners into groups of six, when the learner is not [socialising] in the group you see that this one development is slow and this one is fast. Even when they raise their hands and when they are quiet you can see that this one has a problem. And you must develop confidence. I observe them using a checklist or a notebook where I write the learners' names and observe if this learner can cut well or not. I also have mediation questions, checklists, mark sheets, and learners' worksheets

P4: *I assess beginning knowledge. I ensure that learners know themselves, their gender, their parents, their age, and their address. I look at how they hold their crayons and write starting from left to right. We use mark sheets. I write the learners' names and assess them according to the groups and I use rubrics to assess how learners colour pictures. We use pictures and flashcards sometimes we have concrete apparatus small learners need to use different materials if teaching the young learners because the young learners forget quickly. I use beginning knowledge, and baseline assessment. Each term has its theme that needs to be assessed. I use beginning knowledge to assess my learners. I check if learners know themselves, their age, gender, parents, and their home addresses. I also use baseline assessment. At the beginning of each term, I assess what was done in term 1, maybe term one was patterns, and the second term was 2D or 3D. We therefore assess according to themes per term. I rotate the learners for assessment purposes. At the focus area I will be assessing the new group and the other group will go to fantasy and the other group to the reading area. The following day another group also goes. All these learners will find the opportunity to be assessed. We assess learners per group each day. I know which group to assess. I assess how the learners hold their crayons and how they colour the pictures. If they are colouring the pictures using the up and down movement, I will then guide them to start colouring from left to right. The tools we use for our learners' assessments are mark sheets and rubrics. In the rubrics, we write their names.*

DISCUSSION

All participants' responses revealed subthemes of continuous assessment and tools for assessment, even though they used different terminologies to allude to this, as indicated by P1 and P2. Moreover, they acknowledged the importance of assessment to determine the level of readiness in Grade R. Their responses corresponded with the assessment policy (2011) However, P3 and P4 did not experience the challenges with assessment because they were not included in the Molteno project.

The data revealed that the participants assessed learners through informal and formal assessment and observation. These types of assessments were done continuously. This was clear because the participants indicated that they used group assessment. Thus, they assessed a certain group per day while other groups were doing various activities in the different learning areas. The DBE believes that the aim of assessment is to develop learners' achievement and to monitor them so as to determine improvement in their daily learning.[44] The participants also used baseline assessment. The participants highlighted that during beginning knowledge, they ensured that the learners knew their identity, where they lived, and their names. In each term, they reviewed what the learners had learned the previous term. They thus linked the known to the unknown. Festus et.al., believe that it is important for teachers to identify what learners know and to link their existing knowledge to new knowledge. This would ensure that the lesson is neither difficult nor easy for the learners' learning experience.[45] Similarly, Joubert et.al., state that baseline assessment should be used at the beginning of each term to identify what learners know before embarking on new knowledge.[46]

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[44] R. Lemmer, "Assessment and Support of Learners with Autism and Spectrum Disorders," in *Understanding Educational Psychology*, ed. I. Eloff and E. Swart (Cape Town: Juta, 2018), 364-381.

[45] Mbalisi Onyeka Festus and Offor Beatrice Ogoegbunam, "Imperatives of Environmental Education and Awareness Creation to Solid Waste Management in Nigeria," *Academic Research International* 3, no. 2 (2012): 253.

[46] I. Joubert, M. Bester, E. Meyer, R. Evans and N. Phatudi, *Literacy in the foundation phase.* 3rd edition. (Pretoria: Van Schaik. 2019).

Formal and informal assessments are a prerequisite in the CAPS 2011 policy. By assessing learners formally and informally, the teacher ensures learners' progress and the learning process during readiness development. The data revealed that the participants used formative assessment differently when developing readiness in their different classes. The data also revealed that the participants used common tools for assessment, as highlighted by Schachter et.al., who believe that learners are assessed annually using different domains of development.[47] However, the participants at School A used Molteno tablets as mentioned during the interviews, supported by DBE CAPS, by setting the expected assessment standard, and promotion requirements that are used as a yardstick for determining Grade R learners' readiness.[48] They also highlighted that the tablets contained each learner's rubrics, including scores ranging from 1 to 3. This implies that they entered their ratings on their tablet. At School B, they used notebooks to create their rubrics and then entered the rating on SA-SAMS only.

The participants have the same views and understanding of assessing readiness in Grade R, though they use different tools and methods for the same purpose. Due to teachers understanding and the experiences they have in teaching Grade R, the teachers from school A have more advanced technological gadgets that they use to assess learners at their disposal. They can use the tablet to read stories to their learners. Molteno is gunning for a paperless future. When Teachers use the DBE requirements, they revert to the old methods of creating their rubrics. They also highlighted that other aspects of Molteno do not tally with SA-SAMS, even though most tally with SA-SAMS. Whereas teachers in school B are still using notebooks, more of their assessments rely on self-made rubrics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that teachers are motivated to assess learners commonly in determining the Grade R learners, the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) must consider these recommendations. The LDoE in partnership with Molteno, should ensure that all Grade R schools in Limpopo receive tablets, as tablets come in handy and are valuable when teachers want to assess, read stories, and mark registers on that tablet. The LDoE and Molteno should share reports and avoid giving teachers and schools duplicates of schedules and learners' reports to allow teachers to work smartly and focus on paperless administration during the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). This would also help teachers not to lose some of their administrative records.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how teachers assess readiness in Grade R in their classrooms. The study found that teachers have the same understanding concerning the use of assessment in their classrooms. They also use common assessment tools when assessing their learners, school A in addition uses tablets to assess their learners. The teachers use continuous assessment throughout the year in the classrooms to develop readiness. The teachers use informal and formal approaches including observations and linking the known knowledge to the new knowledge to enhance their readiness development strategies. Grade R is a crucial year in a child's educational development because it focuses on assisting children in taking significant steps toward independence while learning the importance of academic and social skills to use for their transition to Grade One. Developing and assessing learners in totality will cultivate and enhance learners' readiness in Grade R.

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ABOUT AUTHORS
Mapule Yvonne Segooa is a method of teaching literary (Sepedi & English) lecturer for years 1,2,3, and 4 Foundation Phase student teachers at the University of Limpopo. Mapule is a completed PhD student waiting for results from the University of South Africa. Mapule believes that analytical and written skills are fundamental parts of academic excellence and inspiration for critical thinking in students and beyond. Mapule is the best portfolio teacher for 3 consecutive years, a children & literature writer, and a resource developer who instills these skills in students for the future in their various classes. Mapule holds a B.Ed. Foundation phase degree from University of the Witwatersrand, B.Ed. (Hons) Management University of Natal, B.Ed. (Hons) Early Childhood Development University of South Africa, Masters Education University of the Free State. Her passion as a teacher comes from a lifelong obsession with ensuring that the Foundation phase learners are equipped with skills of reading and writing meaningfully, from a young age.

Habasisa Molise (PhD Student) is a Lecturer: School of Education, Department of Education Studies at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. He holds a Master's Degree in Curriculum Studies. His research interests focus on Commerce Education.