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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS

No. R. 1718

23 December 1998

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT NO. 27 OF 1996)

ASSESSMENT POLICY IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND, GRADES R TO 9 AND ABET

I, Sibusiso Mandlenkosi Emmanuel Bengu, Minister of Education, hereby give notice in terms of *Section 7 of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996)*, that I have determined national policy in terms of *Section 3(4)(l)* of the said Act to be applied in respect of curriculum frameworks, core syllabuses and education programmes, learning standards, examinations and the certification of qualifications as far as this relates to the matters referred to in the Schedule hereto.

S. M. E. BENGU
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

SCHEDULE

**Approval of the Assessment Policy in the General Education and Training
Band, Grades R to 9 and ABET.**

No. R. 1718

23 Desember 1998

WET OP NASIONALE ONDERWYSBELEID, 1996 (WET NO. 27 VAN 1996)**ASSESSERINGSBELEID IN DIE ALGEMENE ONDERWYS –EN
OPLEIDINGSBAND, GRAAD R TOT 9 EN VOLWASSE BASIESE
ONDERWYS EN OPLEIDING**

Ek, Sibusiso Mandlenkosi Emmanuel Bengu, Minister van Onderwys, gee hierby ingevolge *Artikel 7 van die Wet op Nasionale Onderwysbeleid, 1996 (Wet No. 27 van 1996)*, kennis dat ek kragtens *Artikel 3(4)(l)* van genoemde Wet die nasionale beleid bepaal het wat gevolg moet word ten opsigte van kurrikulumraamwerke, kernsillabusse en onderwysprogramme, leerstandaarde, eksamens en die sertifisering van kwalifikasies sover dit betrekking het op die aangeleenthede in die Bylae hiervan vermeld.

S. M. E. BENGU**MINISTER VAN ONDERWYS**

BYLAE

**Goedkeuring van die Assesseringsbeleid in die Algemene Onderwys – sen
Opleidingsband, Graad R tot 9 en Volwasse Basiese Onderwys en Opleiding.**

**ASSESSMENT POLICY
IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING BAND
GRADE R TO 9 AND ABET**

DECEMBER 1998



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	7
INTRODUCTION	8
WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?	8
ASSESSMENT IN OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION	9
ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE	9
ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	10
THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT	10
TYPES OF ASSESSMENT	11
WHAT IS ASSESSED?	11
WHO ASSESSES?	12
METHODS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF ASSESSMENT	12
RECORDING AND REPORTING PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT	12
ASSESSMENT IN GRADE R TO GRADE 9	13
ASSESSMENT AND ADULT LEARNERS	15
ASSESSMENT AND SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS	15
SYSTEMIC EVALUATION	16
APPENDIX A	18
APPENDIX B	19

Foreword

This new assessment policy for the General Education and Training Band, alongside the new national curriculum framework, provides the pedagogic basis for our new education and training system.

It will guide the provincial education authorities in designing their own assessment policies and will therefore become a vital instrument for shaping educational practice in the thousands of sites of learning across the length and breadth of our country.

In preparing this policy document, the Ministry consulted widely with key stakeholders and the broader public. As a result, the policy carries wide support and legitimacy. During the process of consultation, many issues were examined and re-examined. The most difficult of these was the matter of progression between grades and phases. I believe that the solution which we have found – the use of expected levels of performance for each grade and phase as an additional policy instrument in the determination of progression – is a landmark. Expected levels of performance will also provide vital yardsticks to identify learning difficulties and enable remedial actions to be taken.

When expected levels of performance are taken together with the new reporting requirements introduced by this policy, parents and learners will have accurate information on which to base their own assessment of learning progress.

In many learning sites – early childhood development centres, public and private adult learning centres and schools – the new assessment policy is already being practised. Teachers and professionals responsible for curriculum, assessment and quality assurance are undergoing professional development. And, over the next many years, we will promote this policy and provide the professional development and support which will be so necessary for its success.

Just as curriculum transformation is not an event, so too, the transformation of established assessment practice involves a lengthy process of learning and professional development. Together with the provincial authorities, my Ministry is in it for its full duration.

Professor SME Bengu
Minister of Education
November 1998

Introduction

1. Section 3(4)(l) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (No. 27 of 1996), provides for the determination of policy on curriculum frameworks, core syllabi and education programmes, learning standards, examinations, and the certification of qualifications, subject to the provisions of any law establishing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or a certifying or accrediting body. This policy has been developed in response to a need to phase in assessment practices that are compatible with the newly introduced outcomes-based education.
2. The policy currently in use, known as *A Résumé of Instructional Programmes in Public Schools, Report 550 (97/06)* serves a maintenance function in terms of the old curriculum and the summative examination that occurs at the end of Grade 12, known as the Senior Certificate examination.
3. Report 550 has serious shortcomings as an instrument of assessment. It prescribes a complex set of rules and regulations for subject groupings and combinations. These form the basis for matric certification and qualification for entrance into higher education. The complexity of these rules and regulations, coupled with a lack of transparency and accountability, and inadequate assessment practices, have contributed greatly to the inefficiencies in the learning system. High repetition and drop-out rates have been linked to the inappropriate use of tests and examinations, and the absence of meaningful feedback and support for learners who may experience learning difficulties.
4. Thus, both the shortcomings of the current assessment policy, and the requirements of the new curriculum for grades R-9 and Adult Basic Education and Training, have made it necessary to develop a new assessment policy. The new policy applies to learning in the General Education and Training Band of the National Qualifications Framework, i.e. grades R-9 in early childhood development and school education, and all four levels of Adult Basic Education and Training. Provincial departments of education will develop assessment guidelines based on this policy for use in early childhood development centres, public ordinary and specialised schools, and public adult basic education and training centres. This assessment policy will come into effect in 1999. While it will have initial application to grades 1 and 2 and ABET levels 1, 2 and 3, measures will be introduced to extend its application progressively across all school grades and ABET levels of the General Education and Training Band.

What is assessment?

5. Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement, as measured against nationally

agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning. It involves four steps: generating and collecting evidence of achievement, evaluating this evidence against the outcomes, recording the findings of this evaluation and using this information to assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching.

Assessment in outcomes-based education

6. Outcomes-based education (OBE) is a learner-centred, result-oriented approach to education and training that builds on the notion that all learners need to and can achieve their full potential, but that this may not happen in the same way or within the same period.
7. It implies the following:
 - what learners are to learn is clearly defined;
 - each learner's progress is based on demonstrated achievement;
 - each learner's needs are accommodated through multiple teaching and learning strategies and assessment tools; and
 - each learner is provided the time and assistance to realise his or her potential.
8. Assessment in OBE focuses on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes, making it possible to credit learners' achievements at every level, whatever pathway they may have followed, and at whatever rate they may have acquired the necessary competence. This applies to adult and child learners with special education needs (LSEN), both in and outside ordinary schools and ABET centres. This is of great importance for LSEN, as both curriculum and assessment for this sector have presented problems in the past.
9. Assessment in OBE requires the use of tools that appropriately assess learner achievement and encourage lifelong learning skills. Continuous assessment (CASS) is considered the best model to assess outcomes of learning throughout the system and enable improvements to be made in the learning and teaching process. It must be used to support the learner developmentally and to feed back into teaching and learning and should not be interpreted merely as the accumulation of a series of traditional test results.

Assessment and quality assurance

10. One of the principal aims of this policy is to enhance the provision of education for each learner which is continuous, coherent and progressive making it one of the key elements in the quality assurance system. The policy introduces a shift from a system that is dominated by public

examinations, which are 'high stakes' and whose main function has always been to rank, grade, select and certificate learners, to a new system that informs and improves the curriculum and assessment practices of educators and the leadership, governance and organisation of learning sites. For that reason, diversification of modes of assessment and improved expertise among educators in designing, developing and using appropriate assessment instruments, must be given priority.

11. Moderation will be carried out to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained in the assessment process. This will be done on a sample basis at the different levels of the system. Moderation mechanisms will be put in place at school, provincial and national level. This function will be the responsibility of the Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQA's).

Assessment principles

12. Effective assessment will be underpinned by the following principles:

- The purpose of assessment should always be made explicit.
- The criterion-referenced approach will be used.
- Assessment must be authentic, continuous, multi-dimensional, varied and balanced.
- Assessment is an on-going integral part of the learning process.
- It must be accurate, objective, valid, fair, manageable and time-efficient.
- Assessment takes many forms, gathers information from several contexts, and uses a variety of methods according to what is being assessed and the needs of the learner.
- The methods and techniques used must be appropriate to the knowledge, skills, or attitudes to be assessed as well as to the age and developmental level of the learner.
- It must be bias free and sensitive to gender, race, cultural background and abilities.
- Assessment results must be communicated clearly, accurately, timeously and meaningfully.
- Progression should be linked to the achievement of the specific outcomes and should not be rigidly time bound.
- Evidence of progress in achieving outcomes shall be used to identify areas where learners need support and remedial intervention.

The purpose of assessment

13. In keeping with the principles of the NQF, assessment will serve to:
 - determine whether the learning required for the achievement of the specific outcomes is taking place and whether any difficulties are being encountered;

- report to parents and other role-players and stakeholders on the levels of achievement during the learning process and to build a profile of the learner's achievement across the curriculum;
- provide information for the evaluation and review of learning programmes used in the classroom; and
- maximise learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values defined in the national curriculum policy.

Types of assessment

14. Different types of assessment serve important functions within OBE:
 - Formative assessment, so that the positive achievements of the learner may be recognised and discussed and the appropriate next steps may be planned.
 - Diagnostic assessment, through which learning difficulties may be scrutinised and classified so that appropriate remedial help and guidance can be provided.
 - Summative assessment, for recording the overall achievement of a learner in a systematic way.
 - Evaluative assessment, to compare and aggregate information about learner achievements so that it can be used to assist in curriculum development and evaluation of teaching and learning.
15. These types of assessment are not mutually exclusive and should be integrated in the overall assessment process.
16. Internal continuous assessment administered and marked by educators, from Grade R and ABET Level 1 to the end of the GET Band (Grade 9 and ABET Level 4), is essential. The internal assessment process should be moderated externally, for example by professional support services, within the guidelines set by the provincial education departments.
17. External assessment which is designed, planned, administered and moderated by an examining body will be undertaken at the end of the GET Band (Grade 9 and ABET Level 4).

What is assessed?

18. The specific outcomes, which are grounded in the critical outcomes, will serve as the basis for assessment. The focus of assessment shall be on the progress learners make towards the achievement of the outcomes. This process must be transparent such that the various specific outcomes and their assessment criteria must be available to learners to inform them of what is to be assessed. Learners who do not meet the criteria must receive clear explanations with an indication of areas that need further

work, and must be assisted to reach the required criteria. The transparency of the outcomes makes explicit that which was formerly only implied or assumed.

Who assesses?

19. Educators have the overall responsibility to assess the progress of learners in achieving the expected specific outcomes. The assessment process involves a partnership between educators, learners, parents and education support services (ESS) such as occupational and speech therapists and educational psychologists. Given that the ESS are spread very thinly, it is expected that they will in future be provided at district, circuit and area levels in order to maximise access to such services.

Methods, tools and techniques of assessment

20. Performance or achievement is measured against the specific outcomes using a wide range of methods, including informal monitoring by observation, formal use of appropriate and approved standardised tests, oral questions and answers, conferencing, interviewing, self-assessment, self-reporting, and peer assessment.
21. Continuous assessment must be undertaken with a variety of suitable assessment tools and techniques. All educators should have a sound knowledge of what each technique offers. These include portfolio assessment, observation sheets, journals, tests, project work and assignments. A balanced combination of these techniques should be employed to ascertain achievement of learners, as fairly and transparently as possible.

Recording and reporting progress and achievement

22. Cumulative evidence of learner achievement must be recorded and these records should accompany all learners throughout their learning paths. Cumulative records should also include information on the holistic development of the learner, such as the development of values and attitudes and social development. Portfolios should be built over a period of time and retained as visible proof of the development and improvement of learner achievement. Samples of learners' work included in portfolios should show that they are able to integrate knowledge, concepts and skills, and that learners have not been assessed only on memorisation of information.
23. Effective communication about learner achievement is a prerequisite for the provision of quality education. A report must convey, through the educator's comments, a clear impression of personal knowledge of the learner, summarise achievement and progress, and provide useful

feedback to evaluate and improve learning and teaching. Comments from parents and, where practicable, from learners themselves, should be encouraged. The report should be signed by the head of the learning site or other appropriate person, with an overview comment when this is necessary.

24. The reporting process shall:
- serve as an opportunity for educators to provide regular feedback to learners as part of the everyday teaching and learning process;
 - provide an accurate description of progress and achievement;
 - allow for comment on the personal and social development and the attendance of the learner at learning sites;
 - give an indication of the strengths and development needs and identify follow-up steps for learning and teaching;
 - encourage motivation through a constructive approach;
 - become a focal point for dialogue between home, learning site, and (where appropriate) work and Further Education and Training;
 - enhance accountability at all levels of the system; and
 - in the case of learners in grades R – 9, must be sensitive to the needs and responsibilities of parents.
25. All these aspects are relevant to a well-rounded and comprehensive report. Reporting must be treated as an integral part of learning, teaching and assessment.
26. Formal reporting on learner assessment will be done at regular intervals as determined by provincial policy, or at the request of a learner, parent or prospective employer. Reporting may include formal meetings, written reports and the less formal opportunities for dialogue, either individually or in groups.

Assessment in grade R to grade 9

27. The GET band for early childhood development and school education is divided into three phases: Foundation, Intermediate and Senior. The curriculum in each of the phases is organised within learning programmes.
28. The reception year (grade R) has not yet been introduced in all primary schools and attendance at grade R is not yet compulsory as a formal year in the primary school. The National Early Childhood Development Pilot Project for the reception year is being undertaken to evaluate and advise on the implications of the introduction of a compulsory reception year.
29. The learning programmes for each of the phases are organised as follows:
- Three in the Foundation Phase
 - Literacy

- Numeracy
 - Life Skills
 - Five in the Intermediate Phase
 - Language, Literacy and Communication
 - Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences
 - Natural Science and Technology
 - Human, Social, Economic and Management Sciences
 - Arts, Culture and Life Orientation
 - Eight in the Senior Phase
 - Language, Literacy and Communication
 - Human and Social Sciences
 - Technology
 - Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences
 - Natural Sciences
 - Arts and Culture
 - Economic and Management Sciences
 - Life Orientation
30. These learning programmes will serve as the basis for assessment in each of the phases. Assessment must provide a clear indication about how well each and every outcome is being taught and learned. Learners must show evidence of progressing towards achieving all the outcomes, to ensure that the essential skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values are being demonstrated.
31. Expected levels of performance (ELPs) for each grade and phase will provide an additional policy instrument for determining the progression of the learner. ELPs will also provide information about learning difficulties and remedial actions required to support learners who may experience learning difficulties. A national process to develop and pilot the ELPs per grade has begun and will become part of the on-going curriculum and assessment development process.
32. It is expected that in the main, learners will progress with their age cohort. Where it is felt that a learner needs more or less time to demonstrate achievement, decisions shall be made based on the advice of the relevant role-players: educators, learners, parents and education support services. If a learner needs more time to achieve particular outcomes, he or she need not be retained in a grade for a whole year. No learner should stay in the same phase for longer than four years, unless the provincial Head of Department has given approval based on specific circumstances and professional advice.
33. The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) awarded at the end of the GET band will provide accreditation within the NQF, for the end

of the compulsory attendance phase. No other certificate issued in the GET band will be accredited within the NQF. There will be external moderation for the validation of assessment that leads to the GETC.

Assessment and adult learners

34. Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) comprises three benchmark levels below the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). The ABET learning continuum therefore covers ABET levels 1, 2, 3 and 4, with level 4 being equivalent to NQF level 1 (GETC level).
35. ABET unit standards will cover the following learning categories: fundamental, core/contextual, and elective, which will be organised into integrated learning programmes. Assessment will be conducted against these unit standards.
36. The combined assessment of learning achievement in these learning categories will constitute an ABET qualification.
37. At ABET levels 1-3, assessment will be conducted internally and moderation of the results will be done by the provincial ABET specialists. A record of learning will be kept for each learner.
38. At ABET level 4 (GETC) there will be summative assessment which will be externally moderated.
39. Recognition of Prior Learning is an important application of assessment in ABET. It is intended to provide learners with recognition of existing competency regardless of where, how and when it was acquired. Evidence may come from any source, including life experience and unstructured learning. This will assist with appropriate placement on training courses and learning programmes, giving mobility in career and learning pathways. The Department of Education in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders is developing a framework for the recognition of prior learning.
40. This assessment policy should be applied in conjunction with the Ministry of Education's ABET policy and the draft ABET Assessment Guidelines.

Assessment and special learning needs

41. The process of assessing learners with special needs, including gifted and talented learners shall follow the same principles outlined in this policy. The policy on LSEN is currently being developed and the following guidelines are expected to be progressively applied as capacity is increased.
42. It is important that learners who are likely to experience barriers to learning and development are identified early, assessed and provided with learning

- support. Ideally, barriers to learning and development will be identified in the early childhood development phase (0-5 years) by parents, professionals in the health sector, community-based and school clinics. This will require the establishment of clear links between these services and the formal education system.
43. Educators should within the guidelines of the Education Support Services (ESS) play a central role in the assessment of barriers to learning and development. Specialist education support personnel should be called upon to support educators when specialised assessment procedures are required to identify learning difficulties.
 44. Some learners with learning difficulties can be appropriately assessed in the same way as those without learning difficulties. However, some learners with learning difficulties such as those with severe disabilities may require additional support during assessment. In these instances additional time may be required to conduct the assessment.
 45. Good practices at learning sites would include measures which would:
 - ensure that learning support plays a full part in the assessment and reporting process;
 - develop a reporting system which does not unfairly discriminate against LSEN or give the impression that learning support is only concerned with those who have learning difficulties; and
 - provide all parents with real opportunities to support their children's learning.
 46. Education support personnel have an important role in supporting educators and parents in assessment and they should develop appropriate intervention strategies to make assessment effective.
 47. The implementation of this new system of educator-driven assessment must be supported by a programme of orientation and training of educators and education support services personnel.

Systemic evaluation

48. Systemic evaluation is an integral part of ensuring that all learners derive maximum benefit from the education system. It includes the periodic evaluation of all aspects of the school system and learning programmes, and shall occur at grades 3, 6 and 9. Systemic evaluation shall be conducted on a nationally representative sample of learners and learning sites.

49. The main objective of systemic evaluation shall be to assess the effectiveness of the entire system and the extent to which the vision and goals of the education transformation process are being achieved by it.
50. Systemic evaluation is a means of monitoring standards and effectiveness and determining the strengths and weaknesses of the learning system on a periodic basis and shall provide feedback to all the role-players so that appropriate action may be taken to improve the performance of the learning sites and learning system.
51. After each systemic evaluation, the Minister of Education, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, will release a national report card on the system.

APPENDIX A**ACRONYMS**

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
CASS	Continuous Assessment
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
ELP	Expected Level of Performance
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

APPENDIX B**DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

Assessment	The process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement in order to assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching.
Assessment criteria	Evidence that the learner has achieved the specific outcomes. The criteria indicate, in broad terms, the observable processes and products of learning which serve as evidence of the learner's achievement.
Assessment tasks	A series of tasks which are intended to obtain information about a learner's competence. These tasks may be workplace/coursework/classroom/homework based or they may be set in an examination paper.
Competence	The capacity for continuing performance within specified ranges and contexts resulting from integration of a number of specific outcomes. The recognition of competence in this sense, is the award of a qualification.
Continuous assessment	An ongoing process that measures a learner's achievement during the course of a grade or level, providing information that is used to support a learner's development and enable improvements to be made in the learning and teaching process.
Credit	The recognition that a learner has achieved a unit standard. Credits may be accumulated until conditions have been met for the award of a qualification.
Criterion referencing	The practice of assessing a learner's performance against an agreed set of criteria. In the case of OBE the learner is assessed against agreed criteria derived from the specific outcomes.
Critical outcomes	Broad, generic, cross-curricular outcomes.
Educator	Any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office

or adult basic education centre and who is appointed in a post on any educator establishment under the Employment of Educators Act, 1998, (No. 76 of 1998).

Evaluation

The process whereby the information obtained through assessment is interpreted to make judgements about a learner's level of competence. It includes a consideration of a learner's attitudes and values.

Expected levels of performance

The minimum standard that a learner is expected to attain at the end of a grade or phase.

Formative assessment

Used to support the learner developmentally and to feed back into the teaching/learning process.

Learning site

An environment in which learners are given the opportunity to achieve agreed upon outcomes, including schools and ABET centres.

Levels

The positions on the NQF where national unit standards are registered and qualifications awarded. Levels are arranged to signal increasing complexity in learning and to facilitate meaningful progression routes along career and learning pathways.

Moderation

The process of ensuring that educators/markers are assessing work according to agreed standards, and that there is consistency from year to year, and within districts, provinces and nationally. At higher levels, consistency or equivalence with international assessment criteria is also sought.

Monitoring

The process of continually evaluating learners' performance or checking that the aims of particular instructional activities have been achieved.

Norm referencing

Compares a learner's performance with that of other learners in a given group.

Outcomes

The end products of a learning process. In outcomes-based education, learners work towards agreed, desired outcomes within a particular context. These state clearly what the learner should be able to demonstrate. Outcomes are of two types: critical and specific.

Outcomes-based education (OBE)	A learner-centred, results-orientated approach to education premised on the expectation that all learners can learn and succeed. It implies that learning institutions have the responsibility to optimise the conditions for success.
Parent	The, (a) parent or guardian of a learner; (b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or (c) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in (a) and (b) towards the learner's education at school.
Phases	Refers to the three phases of learning in the GET band which have application to schools: Foundation, Intermediate and Senior.
Performance indicators	The details of the content and processes that learners should master, as well as details of the learning contexts in which the learner will be engaged. They provide educators and learners with a breakdown of the essential stages to reach in the process of achieving the outcome.
Recognition of prior learning	The credit granted for a unit of learning on the basis of an assessment of formal and non-formal learning or experience to establish whether the learner possesses the competence specified in the outcome statement.
Remediation	The correction or rectification of deficient knowledge and/or skills in a particular area of learning.
Reliability	The consistency with which an assessment task is undertaken by different assessors, at different times and in different places.
Specific outcomes	What learners are capable of knowing and doing at the end of a learning experience. A learner's skills, knowledge, attitudes or values may demonstrate the achievement of an outcome or a set of outcomes.
Summative assessment	Used to provide information about a learner's level of competence at the completion of a grade, level or programme.
Systemic evaluation	A process whereby an education system or an aspect thereof, is evaluated. Systemic evaluation targets

quality factors and examines the education process holistically.

Unit standards

Nationally agreed and internationally comparable statements of specific outcomes and their associated assessment criteria and performance indicators, together with administrative and other necessary information. Unit standards are registered on the NQF at a defined level.

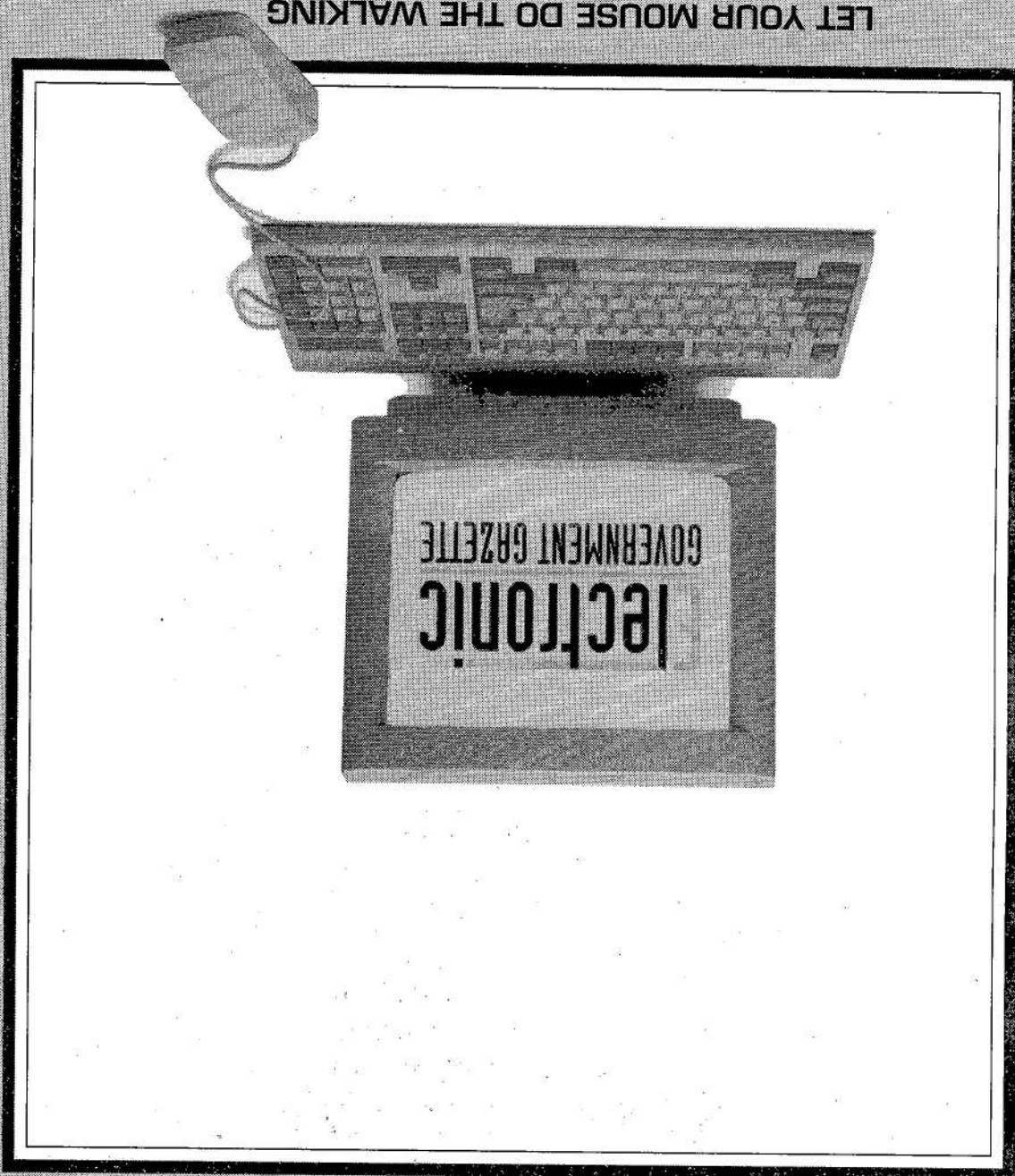
Validity

The extent to which an assessment of learning outcome measures that which it purports to measure.

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CONTENTS**INHOUD**

No.	Page No.	Gazette No.	No.	Bladsy No.	Koerant No.
GOVERNMENT NOTICE			GOEWERMENSKENNISGEWING		
Education, Department of			Onderwys, Departement van		
<i>Government Notice</i>			<i>Goewermenskennisgewing</i>		
R. 1718 National Education Policy Act (27/1996): Assessment policy in the general education and training and, grades R to 9 and abet	1	19640	R. 1718 Wet op Nasionale Onderwysbeleid (27/1996): Assesseringsbeleid in die algemene onderwys-en opleidingsband, graad R tot 9 en volwasse basiese onderwys en opleiding	3	19640