

**EXPLORING THE USE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN SOCIAL
STUDIES IN THE CONTEXT OF OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION IN
MALAWIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION) THESIS

WEZZIE KADUZU MAXWELL CHIUME CHIZIWA

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

DECEMBER, 2022



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By

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Submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Teaching Studies, School of
Education, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Education

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December, 2022

DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis entitled **exploring the use of continuous assessment in social studies in the context of Outcomes-based education in Malawian primary schools** is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Nengezi and our two children, Symon and Patience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to my main supervisor Esthery D. Kunkwenzu (PhD) who has been supportive and helpful during my Master's program as well as in this doctoral journey. I also acknowledge Professor Dorothy Nampota and Annie Chiponda (PhD) for the support rendered to me during the whole process.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore primary school teachers' use of Continuous Assessment (CA) in supporting the teaching and learning of Social studies in the context of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in Malawi. This was in an effort to seek a deeper understanding of how CA is used to support learning. The study was informed by the following main research question: How do teachers use continuous assessment to realise learning outcomes in Social studies? The following specific research questions guided the study: What are the teachers' practices of CA in the teaching of Social studies in the context of OBE? How are prevailing assessment practices supporting the principles of OBE? What opportunities and challenges does CA bring in the teaching of Social studies in primary schools? How do teachers cope with challenges associated with CA practices in Social studies? This was a qualitative case study of eight primary school teachers. Classroom observation was the main data generation tool. In addition, an in-depth interview and document analysis were done which sought to understand teacher CA practices as a tool for learning in the context of OBE. The results of the study revealed the dominant use of continuous testing practices by teachers at the expense of the use of CA as a learning tool. Even though the participants in the study had a good knowledge of the integration of CA into the teaching and learning process, the assessment practices showed little alignment with the curriculum intentions regarding its use. The findings imply that the reform regarding CA in the Primary Curriculum Assessment and Reform (PCAR) will not translate to its intended purpose if the systemic factors impeding it are not addressed. In this study, I contend that a comprehensive teacher re-education on CA and resolving the factors impeding CA would result in narrowing the gap between the intended and the actual implementation of CA in the education system in Malawi.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CA:	Continuous Assessment
DCE:	Domasi College of Education
DEM:	District Education Manager
DQAS:	Directorate of Quality Assurance
FPE:	Free Primary Education
IEQ:	Improving Education Quality Project
LoU	Level of Use
MANEB:	Malawi National Examination Board
MGDS:	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MIE:	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST:	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NCLB:	No Child Left behind
NESP:	National Education Sector Plan
OBE:	Outcomes-Based Education
PCAR:	Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform
PIF:	Policy Investment Framework
SAAEA:	Southern Africa Association for Education Assessment
SADC:	Southern Africa Development Community

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Classroom assessment practices: This covers a wide range of aspects such as teachers' beliefs and the value they have regarding the assessment of students, their perceptions about assessment training, their test planning, construction, grading and use of assessment results.

Teacher-made assessment: These are forms of assessment tasks made by the teacher which are used for monitoring learners' performance and feedback.

Standardised tests: These tests are constructed by tests specialists used for making high-stakes decisions that include the selection and placement of students at higher levels of learning.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Chapter overview

Malawi adopted the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) system in its primary school curriculum in 2001, marking a paradigm shift from an objective-based to an outcomes-based curriculum framework. The move to OBE therefore marked a significant paradigm shift in the way the schools operate, in the overall organisation of the curriculum and the teaching and learning process. The reform came as a result of dissatisfaction with the 1991 curriculum, in addition to the shifting global trends towards a learner-centred approach to teaching. A critical element in this curriculum reform is CA which has been underscored as an integral element in the teaching and learning process. This chapter provides a brief background to this curriculum reform in Malawi. It further explains the structure and model of the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR). The chapter further presents the statement of the problem, research questions and significance of the study.

1.2 Conceptualisation of the curriculum reform in Malawi

The conceptualisation of the primary school curriculum and assessment reform was necessitated by the deterioration in the standards of education in Malawi. The 1991 curriculum was characterised by high school dropout rates, repetition and studies showed that some communities were not valuing education for the youths (Bisika 2005; Chimombo, Banda & Mchikoma, 2001; Kambankadzanja 2005; MoEST & MIE,

2006;). In addition, the curriculum was seen to be overloaded in terms of content and it was characterised by teaching for examination (Chakwera, Khembo, & Sireci, 2004). This state of affairs led to the need for a new curriculum with a new approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Malawi's vision 2020 is said to have played a pivotal role in contributing towards the reform. Vision 2020 envisaged that by the year 2020, Malawi would create a vibrant culture, would be food secure and advanced in technological development. Apart from Vision 2020, the reform was a direct response to the government policies such as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) 2011 -2016 (Malawi Government, 2012). The Vision 2020 and the MGDS envisaged that the provision of quality education was instrumental in spearheading national development.

These key policy documents acknowledge that the education sector is marred with myriad challenges such as poor and inadequate education infrastructure: a shortage of qualified teachers: inefficiencies in the education systems, and high absenteeism, repetition and dropout rates. One of the goals that MoEST intends to achieve is to build a highly skilled population which will contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Reviewing and reforming school curricula is one of the strategies put in place to address national development challenges.

As a result of this, the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) which is mandated by MoEST to handle issues of curriculum development inaugurated what was called the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) in 2001. A national consultation

process commenced leading to the conceptualisation of the national curriculum and assessment framework in 2003.

The consultation process involved various stakeholders, at the national level, teachers, head teachers, pupils, parents/guardians, non-school-going children and various other stakeholders. In addition, 60 inspection visits to various schools were made to inform the process. Apart from the local experiences, literature review from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region was conducted. Experiences from a total number of six countries, namely, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa were taken into consideration (MoEST & MIE, 2006).

The stakeholder consultation, the literature and document review revealed major challenges in the primary education system. It was noted that there was a poor return on investment in terms of learning outcomes; literacy and numeracy rates were very low, characterised by 0.6% of learners who could read to desirable levels by Standard 6 (Kaambankadzanja, 2005). Other challenges compiled by Kaambankadzanja (2005) included: Inadequate teacher support on the 1991 curriculum: ad hoc accommodation of emerging issues in the curriculum such as HIV/AIDS, democracy and human rights, rapid population growth and environmental degradation resulting in an overloaded curriculum. In addition, the introduction of free primary education (FPE) resulted in constrained school resources as the number of learners almost doubled. These challenges led to the drop in quality of education characterised by high school dropout, absenteeism and high repetition rates.

Various countries provided insights into the challenges faced by the Malawi primary education system. Aspects which were recommended included: adoption of the breakthrough to literacy from Zambia; Provision of basic pre-school facilities at every school from Tanzania; introduction of hardship allowances from those who teach in rural areas from Zambia; and reduction of learning areas from South Africa and Namibia (Kaambankadzanja, 2005).

Having considered input from various stakeholders and experiences from other countries, Malawi considered the adoption of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) as the main reform. OBE in Malawi was dominantly modelled on the curriculum South Africa education system adopted in early 1997 under the banner Curriculum 2005. Curriculum 2005 stressed the paradigm shift from rigid content-based to outcomes-based with emphasis on learner-centred teaching and continuous assessment (Jansen, 1998).

In his review, Kaambankadzanja (2005) looks at OBE as a plan designed to measure the quality of education driven by outcomes displayed by the learner at the end of the learning process. Kaambankadzanja (2005) further points out that, OBE believes that all learners can learn and succeed and it is characterised by learner-centred methods and continuous mode of assessment. In Malawi, focus on learner-centred teaching was not new. The curriculum documents for the 1991 curriculum had an emphasis on use of learner-centred approaches. However, literature revealed that teaching was still dominantly teacher-centred (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000).

What is unique with OBE in the current primary school curriculum and assessment reform is the strong emphasis on continuous assessment (CA) in the teaching and learning process. Vibrant school-based continuous assessment is therefore critical to

realisation of the curriculum reform in Malawi. It has been underscored that the current curriculum reform minus CA would render the review process and implementation meaningless (Kayira, 2017).

This study explored the use of CA in primary schools after more than ten years had elapsed since its implementation. This was in an attempt to examine teacher practices in the use of continuous assessment and to learn how their CA practices support learning within the key principles of outcomes-based education advanced by the education reform agenda in Malawi.

Curriculum documents tend to glorify the use of CA as having an inherent instrumental role in promoting quality learning (Kaambankadzanja, 2005; MoEST & MIE 2006). This motivated the researcher to interrogate teacher practices regarding the use of CA in the teaching and learning process in Social studies over ten years of its implementation in Malawian primary schools.

1.3 Motivation for the study

The desire to seek an understanding of the OBE education reform in Malawi began in 2009 when I was pursuing a Master of Education degree at Chancellor College. During one of the courses in curriculum theory and practice, in a group, we were tasked to make a presentation on OBE. In the first instance, I had no idea about OBE. However, after doing some information search, I found a great volume of literature on OBE as an education reform in South Africa.

When we met as a group to share our findings, my colleague in the group who happened to come from Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), brought forward some of the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) conference papers. It was at this moment that I learnt of the curriculum reform in primary school. I was given the task of consolidating the materials and prepare a power point presentation on the topic. My interaction with the literature at that moment cultivated my curiosity in the subject. It was at that moment that I started hatching the idea of carrying out a study on outcomes-based education. After coursework, I proposed a study on OBE. Indeed, I successfully carried out the study focusing on teacher experiences in the process of implementing the reform which marked the departure from the objective based curriculum.

As a secondary school teacher at that time, I felt like experimenting some of the aspects of OBE. What is interesting with OBE is that it cultivates teacher and learner autonomy and accountability yet this change challenges the way we were teaching in the objective-based curriculum. From personal experience, I cherished learners who performed very well in my subject. This excitement made me come up with the challenging end-of-term exams which would filter the best, consequently leaving out less-performing learners. This is the thinking that OBE challenges. The reform challenges teachers to provide necessary support to learners who are perceived as less achievers in order for them to achieve the expected learning outcomes. This can be achieved if CA is used meaningfully and purposefully.

As a teacher educator now, I feel compelled that those passing through me should meaningfully support learners after joining the teaching profession. It is for this reason

that I want to broaden my knowledge regarding the reform by interrogating the use of CA in the Malawi primary school OBE curriculum.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The rationale for Social studies in Malawi is to provide learners with the knowledge, skills competencies, positive attitudes and values which will enable learners to participate actively, intelligibly and responsibly in daily life activities as a citizen of the democratic world (MoEST, 2013). The intention is that learners need to actively participate in social, political and economic development of the country. The reform of the primary school curriculum to OBE offers a favourable platform to achieving the rationale of Social studies since its focus is on the learners demonstrating learning outcomes.

Over ten years after the paradigm shift to OBE in primary schools in Malawi, it is yet to be seen if teachers have changed their practices to fully use CA as a teaching and learning tool. The reform demands much accountability from the teacher, the school and the learner in the teaching and learning process, particularly on matters of CA. For a long time, standardised tests administered by the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), exert a significant influence on the teaching as well as school-based assessment. Teachers either taught learners in an effort to pass examinations or replicated previous national examination papers for classroom use. School-based assessment was either used as a tool to prepare students to pass the public examinations or provided results for summative purpose.

sizes and uncoordinated professional development with little understanding of OBE principles (Chiziwa, 2020 & MIE, 2009). During the 2017 Southern Africa Association for Education Assessment (SAAEA) conference organised by Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), some critical issues regarding assessment emerged. For instance, fears associated with high stakes examinations leading candidates to seek unorthodox ways to passing examinations, teachers lacking technical skills in assessment, teachers having low capacity in school-based assessment, there is laxity in school-based assessment due to lack of supervision. This hostile environment shared by different countries in Southern Africa creates uncertainty in attaining the desires of CA in an education system in general and Malawi in particular.

It is within this problematic context that the study was located to explore the use of continuous assessment by primary school teachers in Social studies within the confines of OBE over ten years after its rolling out to appreciate how teachers manoeuvre with the use of CA within a bleak learning environment.

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore primary school teachers' use of CA in supporting the teaching and learning of Social studies in the context of OBE in Malawi. The focus was to seek deeper understanding on how CA is used to support learning in line with the curriculum reform.

1.6 Research questions

The following was the main research question which guided the study:

How do teachers use continuous assessment to realise learning outcomes in Social studies?

The following specific research questions guided the study.

- i. What are the teacher's practices of CA in the teaching of Social studies in the context of OBE?
- ii. How are prevailing assessment practices supporting principles of OBE?
- iii. What opportunities and challenges does CA bring in the teaching of Social studies in primary schools?
- iv. How do teachers cope with challenges associated with CA practices in Social studies?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study explored the use of CA in the teaching of Social studies in the context of OBE. It is envisaged that the findings presented in this study shall add to the existing body of knowledge in OBE, particularly regarding CA as practiced in Malawian context. The study suggests ways of improving teacher assessment practices in view of the study findings. In this way, it will contribute to the general discourse among educational practitioners on ways of improving the delivery of quality education in Malawian schools. In addition, stakeholders may use findings of this study to provide appropriate support regarding assessment practices to education institutions.

1.7.1 Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) through the Directorate of Quality Assurance (DQAS) is responsible for monitoring standards of education particularly, primary, secondary and teacher training colleges. Results of this study provide an insight on the type of support and intervention the DQAS can provide to schools.

1.7.2 Education Divisions and District Education Managers

At both division and district levels, monitoring of teaching and learning process is one of the priority areas. The findings therefore shall serve as an eye opener to the supervisors on what is happening in schools regarding the use of CA, hence they would devise appropriate support in form of in-service training and intensive orientation workshops.

1.7.3 Malawi Institute of Education (MIE)

MIE is an institution which is responsible for curriculum development in Malawi, therefore, the findings generate vital information regarding implementation of CA ten years after its rolling out. The information can be used to further inform curriculum development or review process.

1.7.4 Schools

Schools are the centres for the implementation of any curriculum. The results of this study are therefore vital in informing the experiences on challenges and opportunities encountered in schools. This will in turn stimulate dialogue among educators surrounding key issues regarding CA.

1.8 Chapter summary

In summary, this chapter has highlighted the background of CA in teaching and learning process in reference to the 2007 primary school curriculum and assessment reform. The chapter has outlined statement of the problem, the research questions, the purpose of the study, motivation for the study and significance of the study. The next chapter examines literature review regarding CA and experiences from other countries in the process of implementing a curriculum where CA is an integral part of teaching and learning.

1.9 Structure and organisation of the thesis

This thesis has been organised into five chapters. Chapter one provides the background information to the study. It highlights how CA has been embedded in the curriculum structure as well as the model for development. The chapter has further put forward the statement of the problem, research questions and motivation for the study.

Chapter two provides a review of literature on OBE and how it links with CA. The chapter also highlights worldwide education reform revealing the shift from traditional forms of assessment to CA with the aim of informing learning. It brings to light the ongoing theoretical debate and experiences regarding CA. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the background of CA in Malawi. This is followed by a conceptual framework derived from OBE principles and Hall and Hord's Level of Use (LoU) framework.

Chapter three, highlights the research design and methodology for the study. It also provides justification for taking the interpretive approach within the qualitative design.

It then provides details of the participants and their context. Furthermore, the chapter highlights data generation procedures and ways of analysing data. Finally, the chapter discusses ethical principles followed in the study.

Chapter four provides findings and interpretation of individual cases from the study sites. Themes emerging in each case arising from lesson observation and interview are discussed.

Chapter five finally provides conclusion for the study and highlights implications for the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

Chapter one discussed the background of the study by highlighting the Malawi primary school curriculum reform (PCAR). PCAR stresses on the importance of continuous assessment in teaching and learning process. This chapter provides literature on the developmental structure of the primary school curriculum, and the model of curriculum and assessment reform revealing the centrality of CA in learning. In addition, the chapter highlights the meaning of OBE and how its key principles can be supported by CA practices. Further, the chapter discusses the history of assessment and its associated debates. The chapter also provides a review of literature in selected African countries which embraced the use of CA as an integral element in teaching and learning process. Finally, the chapter discusses the theoretical framework guiding the study.

2.2 Curriculum structure of OBE in Malawi

The primary school curriculum structure depicts three important elements. These elements are; Teaching, learning and assessment. Figure 1 outlines the curriculum structure for primary school in Malawi.

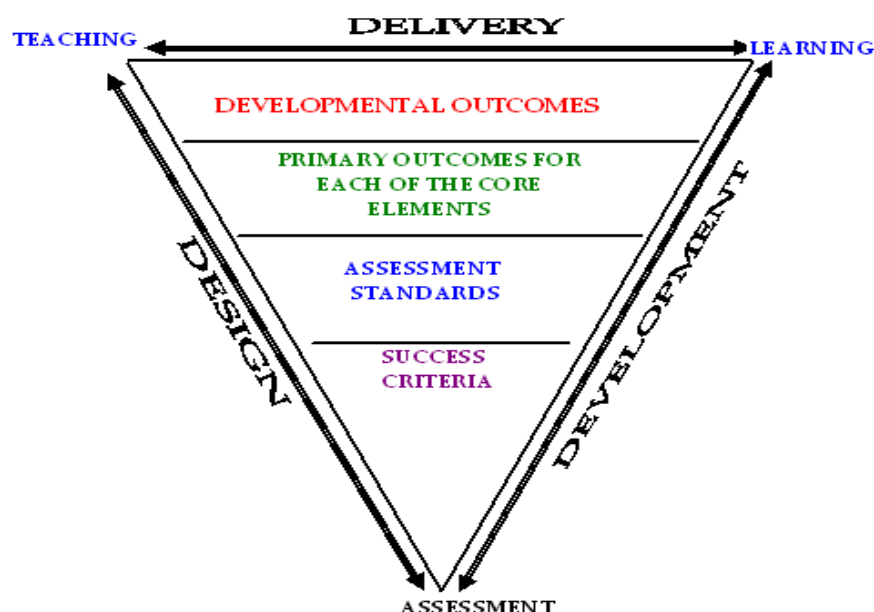


Figure 1: The developmental structure of the primary school curriculum in Malawi

Source: MoEST (2008 p4)

The developmental structure of Malawi outcomes-based primary school curriculum expresses interrelationship that exists between teaching, learning and assessment. The structure signifies that when teachers deliver, learners learn and what learners learn needs to be assessed, the feedback from assessment assist teachers to plan teaching and learning activities (MIE, 2015). The structure highlights important components of the curriculum and these are: developmental outcomes, primary education outcomes, assessment standards and success criteria.

Developmental outcomes stipulate the overall outcomes students are expected to achieve at the end of a primary school cycle. These outcomes have been derived from various policy documents such as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and other global policies (MIE, 2015; MoEST, 2014). Furthermore, the primary school education outcomes reflect skills to

be acquired by a primary school graduate. These skills were selected from the 1991 primary school curriculum as well as the developmental outcomes. There are eight developmental outcomes that a learner is supposed to attain after completing the whole primary school cycle. The following are the primary school developmental outcomes:

1. communicate competently, effectively in a variety of contexts and in multiple languages
2. apply mathematical concepts in scientific, social environmental, cultural and economic contexts to solve problems
3. produce products and solutions through science and technology in a creative way and demonstrate respect for the environment to solve problems
4. demonstrate health promoting behaviour in their personal lives as well as their communities and the wider environment, with particular attention to prevalent diseases such as malaria and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS
5. observe and interact with the natural environment in order to understand and make use of their relationship with it in a responsible and appropriate manner
6. demonstrate appropriate moral, ethical and health behaviour in accordance with the acceptable norms and values of the society
7. make use of the basic knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong learning, personal advancement, the development of the society and nations
8. apply imaginative, creative mind and vocational and management skills in a productive manner that will serve the individual and the society

These developmental outcomes are to be achieved when learners attain the assessment standards and success criteria. Assessment standards provide indicators of agreed basic

level of knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes that students must demonstrate as evidence of achieving the learning outcomes. The accumulated achievement of the assessment standards from Standard 1 to Standard 8 determines the achievement of the primary education outcomes.

Finally, success criteria provide a description of behaviour of what students must be able to do in connection with the learning process in a subject of the specified assessment standard (MoEST, 2014). An achievement of a set of success criteria means an attainment of assessment standard. It implies that each assessment standard has a number of success criteria supporting it.

The developmental structure of the primary school curriculum in Malawi further signifies the centrality of assessment in teaching and learning process in the context of OBE. The key issue to focus on, is what happens after assessment. It can thus be concluded that neglecting the use of continuous assessment counters the spirit behind the reform.

The significance of assessment is further illustrated in the model of the curriculum and assessment reform.

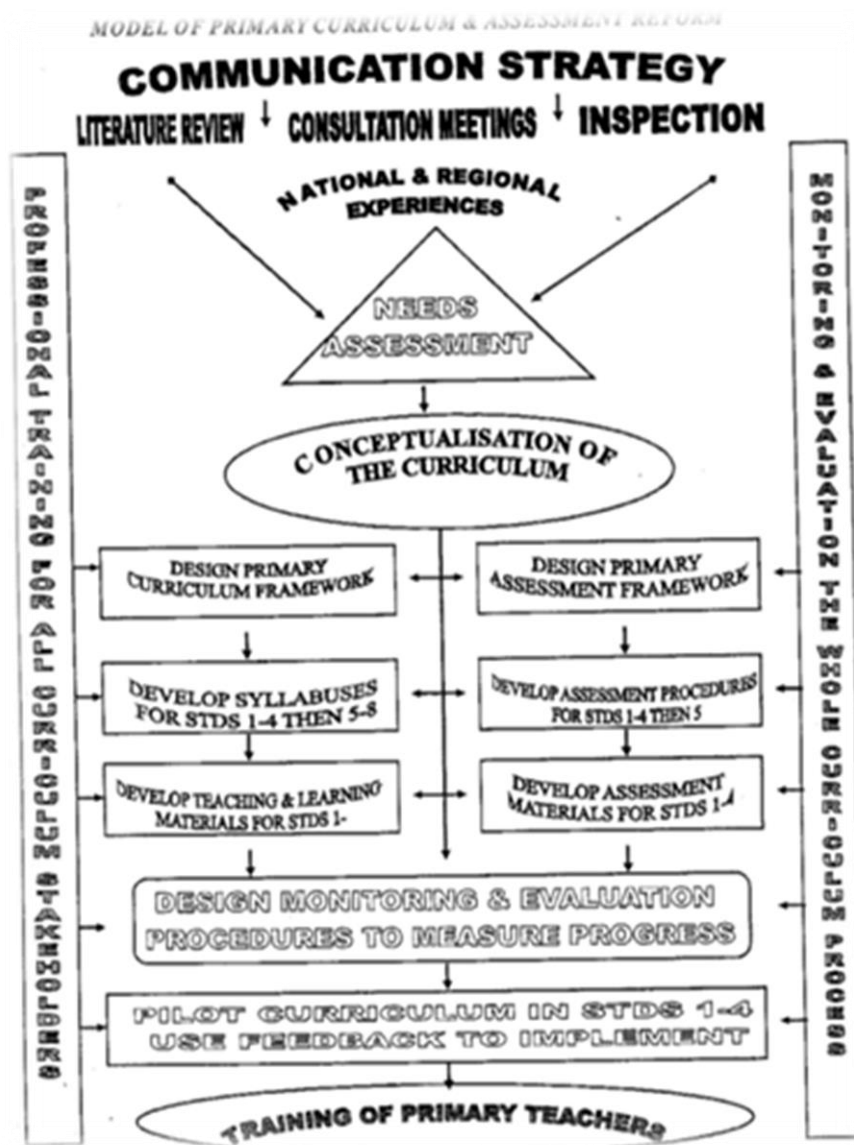


Figure 2: Model of curriculum and assessment reform (MoEST, 2008 p1).

The communication strategy outlines what has been happening during the conceptualisation of the curriculum and assessment reform. Key issues under this strategy as highlighted earlier, were the carrying out of a comprehensive literature review, consultation meetings with various stakeholders in Malawi, inspection reports in selected schools in Malawi and other aspects from both national and regional experiences. This information constituted needs assessment and later resulted into conceptualisation of the curriculum.

After the conceptualisation of the curriculum, the next activity was designing of the primary school curriculum framework together with the designing of assessment framework. This was followed by the development of syllabi and assessment procedures then the development of teaching and learning materials together with the development of assessment materials. After this process, monitoring and evaluation procedures were designed to measure progress and then a pilot study was done followed by training of teachers and implementation. Throughout the process of curriculum reform, monitoring and evaluation of the whole process and professional training for all curriculum stakeholders was done (MoEST 2008).

As opposed to the 1991 curriculum, the design of the 2007 curriculum reform centres on outcomes rather than content. In addition, the design takes assessment as an integral activity in teaching and learning process. In order for the curriculum to be effectively implemented, teachers need to be familiar with the design (MoEST, 2014). The model of the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform clearly stipulates the importance of assessment in the curriculum.

2.3 Differences between the 1991 curriculum and the 2007 OBE curriculum

Kaambankadzanja (2005) underscores that OBE is designed around outcomes which learners are supposed to demonstrate, while the 1991 curriculum puts much emphasis on content to be covered in the teaching and learning process. Scholars in support of outcomes-based criticised the content-based approach as a model that is not concerned with learning but rather coverage of the content. In Malawi however, the curriculum was not adopted wholesomely. Schools use prescribed texts and it follows specified time (Kaambankadzanja, 2005). Although the 1991 curriculum documents like the

syllabus showed learner-centred teaching methods, in practice teachers used transmission method of teaching. This is similar to practices in other countries in which teachers used transmission method instead of using a variety of learner-centred teaching methods (Adeyemi, 1992; Harber,1997; Tabulawa, 1997).

Another difference is that OBE is tailored with continuous assessment which is supposed to support learning in case of learner failure to demonstrate expected learning outcomes and provide extra learning tasks to gifted learners while the 1991 curriculum was more of exam-oriented with little attention towards improving learning. It can therefore be noted from the two contrasting curriculums that, on one hand, the 2007 model is interested in what happens after assessing learners. Its interest is to see learners being supported when need be so that they attain the learning outcomes. On the other hand, the 1991 curriculum was interested in end point achievement without necessarily focussing on improvement during the learning process. These main features are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Main features of the 2007 (OBE) and the 1991 curriculum (MoEST, 2008)

2007 curriculum	1991 curriculum
• Learner-centred • Activity-based • Emphasises on continuous assessment • focusses on attainment of learning outcomes	• Teacher centred • Ensures content coverage • Examination oriented • focuses on attainment of learning objectives

The adoption of OBE in Malawi education system meant a shift in the way learning areas formerly known as teaching subjects were handled. This study mainly focused on teachers teaching Social studies learning area which is referred to as Social and environmental studies in primary school. The preceding section provides the background of Social studies education in Malawi.

2.4 Social studies education in Malawi

In a quest to come up with the nature and purpose of Social studies education after never ending debate, the National Council for Social studies education (NCSS) 1994 outlines the working definition of the subject and its nature as follows:

Social studies, is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, Social studies provide coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of Social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

In Malawi, Social studies as an integrated subject gained its prominence soon after democratisation in 1994. Before that, when Malawi was under the British protectorate, the kind of education offered during the missionary phase alienated Africans and hyped the colonial masters (Merryfield, 1986). In addition, the colonial education in various academic disciplines such as geography and history contained content far removed from the Malawian context. Most of the content reflected the British Empire and the western world (Merryfield, 1986).

Soon after independence, many African countries began discussing ways of making their education system more relevant to their context. The Mombasa Conference was convened to consider the integration and Africanisation of history, geography and civics into an integrated Social studies curriculum. However, Malawi maintained the teaching of the subjects in their separate state (Tlou & Kabwila 2000; Merryfield, 1988). The subjects still maintained the colonial legacy by retaining the structure and content of the British education. Nevertheless, after the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994, there was a great need to revamp the Social studies curriculum to reflect the political change.

With democratisation, Malawi attempted and still continues to cultivate democratic values in its citizens, especially among the youth through the school curriculum. Social studies subject was used as a vessel to accomplish the inculcation of democratic values. This could only be achieved in the context of a free and empowering environment during the teaching and learning process. However, many scholars have reiterated that one of the major challenges of Social studies teaching is in the area of pedagogy in the recent past. In most African countries, the traditional lecture method is dominant

instead of modern learner-centred methods (Harber,1997; Tabulawa, 1997; Adeyemi, 1992).

The rationale for Social studies in Malawi has been to provide learners with the knowledge, skills competencies, positive attitudes and values which will enable learners to participate actively, intelligibly and responsibly in daily life activities as a citizen of the democratic world (MoEST, 2013). The subject further aims at making learners actively participate in social, political and economic development of the country. Even though there have been different viewpoints as to the purpose of Social studies, the general consensus is that Social studies purports to achieve citizenship education (Martorella, 2001; NCSS, 1994).

TenDam and Volman (2004), argue that citizenship competence is closely related to critical thinking though it remains contested. Citizenship competence focuses on learning to think critically, the acquisition of skills, dispositions and knowledge to participate in communities (TenDam & Volman, 2004). In order to achieve the rationale for Social studies, it is imperative that the pedagogical processes and assessment should be tailored towards the goals of Social studies. However, Kirman (1991) contends that, most of the tests and assessment in Social studies mainly focus on knowledge of facts with no or little focus on testing complex thinking, behaviour, attitude and values.

For Social studies to truly attain the expected goals, it requires a change in its assessment practices. Mathison and Fragnoli in Ross (2006) lament that a shift in assessment practices from traditional ways of assessing learners to authentic assessment of learning is hampered by increased accountability demands by national education authorities which have resulted into use traditional ways of assessing learners through

multiple choice and other tests which are easy to score (p. 197). In this vein, Kirman (1991) suggests that assessment tools must truly reflect the intended outcomes.

In Malawi primary schools, Social studies is taught as Social and Environmental Sciences. Its rationale is to contribute to the development of the learner's full potential, identity, self-esteem and dignity through tracing their history and investigating their relationships between Malawi and the world on one hand, and the individual, family, society and the environment on the other (MIE, 2007). Studies done in Social studies so far stress on the use of participatory methods in teaching and learning of Social studies in order to attain citizenship competence (Mhango, 2008; Mwala, 2012; Sabola, 2008; Tabulawa, 1997). However, there has been little attention on how teachers use CA in advancing the rationale of Social studies particularly in the institutionalised curriculum reform.

The learner-centred teaching approaches, if effectively used, Social studies can promote learners to develop democratic values and critical thinking skills. It is within this context that the study intended to explore the use of CA in the teaching of Social studies to see if it supports the attainment of the subject rationale as well as the key principles of OBE.

2.5 Outcomes-Based Education

Killen (2009) identifies three ways in which curriculum frameworks are structured. These frameworks are content-based, experience-based and outcomes-based. Killen (2009) notes that content-based curriculum framework starts with the identification of content. Experience-based curriculum framework starts by identifying the learning

experience in which students will participate. Finally, outcome-based curriculum framework starts with exit outcomes a learner is expected to display after the learning process. But what does OBE mean?

OBE has been a contested phenomenon worldwide and it has been subjected to different meanings, understanding and interpretations (Killen 2009, Barlach, 2004, Evans, 1994, Towers, 1992). However, Spady (1994) who has been considered as the father and architect of OBE defines it as:

Clearly focusing and organising everything in education system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means that starting with clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising the curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens (Spady 1994:1).

Killen (2009) argues that OBE is an approach to teaching and learning in which outcomes play an important role in the way teachers organise their teaching and learning process. He postulates that all decisions in teaching and learning are guided by outcomes which are supposed to be demonstrated by learners. Lorenzo (2002) underscores the importance of learners in demonstrating learning outcomes in OBE. What this means is that the focus of all instructional activities is tailored towards a learner who is a central figure in the learning process. It should be noted in the definition by Spady (1994) that a component of assessment helps to know that learning has actually taken place or not.

Killen (2009) recognises outcomes as statements of what we want learners to be able to do as a result of learning. The use of outcomes relates to the need to measure educational effectiveness in terms of student's learning (Donnelly, 2007). Instead of measuring the success of schooling based on input such as money, number of teachers and class size, the intention is to measure students' learning (Spady, 1994). According to primary school Social studies teacher's guide, prior knowledge of the learner and new knowledge introduced to them, if integrated, form the final learning outcomes (MIE, 2007). It further states that outcomes must be stated before teaching and learning begins. Learners are supposed to transfer outcomes to life beyond school.

According to Killen (2009), outcomes-based education model rests on three premises and these are: all students can learn and succeed, but not all in the same time or in the same way; successful learning promotes even more successful learning; and schools and teachers control many of the conditions that determine whether students are successful at school.

These basic premises are very important to the realisation of OBE goals in the teaching of Social studies. The premise that all students can learn and succeed, but not all in the same time or way, recognises diversity existing in the classroom among learners. This diversity has an implication in the way teachers facilitate the teaching and learning process. In order to identify these differences, assessment plays a crucial role in determining levels of success for learners in class. In addition, teachers need to adjust their approach in order to assist every learner to achieve their individual potential.

This gives an optimistic view that all learners can achieve and demonstrate expected learning outcomes if given appropriate support upon noticing learning gaps. It is the interest of the Ministry of Education that each learner should reach a level where they are able to be promoted to the next level (MoE & MIE, 2007). This being the case, teachers are supposed to provide remediation lessons where need be (MoE & MIE, 2007).

This is in contrast to the way teaching was organised traditionally in which teachers were concentrating on delivering content and disregarding whether learning was taking place or not. The premise that successful learning promotes even more successful learning entails that when learners succeed, they are motivated to do well on other tasks. This can only be done if there is an ongoing CA and provision of feedback on learners' performance. The expected change in CA practices by teachers in Malawi is a problem worth exploring.

Finally, an assumption that schools and teachers control many of the conditions that determine whether students are successful at school, makes teachers more accountable to students' learning. Spady 1994 cited in (Killen, 2009) underscores that teachers in the objective-based education framework often blamed learners and the system for academic failure. Most of the times, none or few teachers accept responsibility that they exert a significant impact on students learning.

This new approach to schooling puts responsibility on teachers to create an environment that ensures all learners succeed. In this case, no learner is labelled as a failure as it is envisaged that learners would be provided with necessary support once learning gaps

have been identified through CA. The basic premises led to the development of four major principles on which OBE is grounded. These principles are, clarity of focus, design down, high expectations and expanded opportunities. The Principles of OBE are explained in the theoretical framework section.

2.6 Origins, growth and spread of OBE and its assessment dilemmas

OBE has been adopted and adapted in various education reform efforts in different countries. This section briefly highlights the origin, growth and the spread of OBE in various contexts.

2.6.1 The case of USA

Between 1980s and early 90s, the USA education system underwent various reforms following various publications on the status of education including a publication titled ‘Nation at risk’ (Murphy, 1990). It was felt that education provided at the time did not prepare youths for challenges of future life roles (World Bank, 2007). Manno (1994) observes that many states in USA began instituting programs of OBE by mid 1980s. OBE was favoured because of the thinking that it would bring significant changes and its perceived ability that it would provide a balance between school autonomy and accountability (MacNeir, 1993). Some schools such as Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Arizona, Sparta School District in Illinois, Pasco School District, Minnesota and Utah began implementing OBE amidst widespread criticism (MacNeir, 1993).

Criticism against OBE in USA mainly came from religious groupings which felt that its introduction promoted secular values (Schlafly, 1993). Other forms of criticism focused on the philosophical underpinnings of OBE which critics felt that it would lead

to dumbing down of education standards (MacNeir, 1993). However, major debate and controversies of OBE in USA had no specific reference to CA.

2.6.2 The case of Australia

The education reforms in USA ignited similar reforms in Australia. According to Anderson and Martine (2007), OBE in Australia was modelled on the American response to a particular social and political pressure in 1960s and 70s. Just as USA, the introduction of OBE in Australia was welcomed with a barrage of criticism from teachers (Berlach & McNaught, 2007). While OBE debate in USA had no specific reference to CA, Australia reported widespread criticism towards CA. Donnelly (2007) reports that adoption of criterion referenced continuous and diagnostic approach to assessment resulted into difficulties in managing and recording individual student's assessment. Such a barrage of criticism likely overshadowed perceived benefits of CA and consequently teachers' use of CA in the reform process.

2.6.3 The case of South Africa

Following the end of apartheid regime in South Africa, education reforms were instituted aiming at democratising education and eliminating inequalities in the post-apartheid education system (Jansen, 1998). The purging of apartheid curriculum which was considered racially offensive was followed by a comprehensive education reform which embraced OBE. Just as other countries, South Africa felt that OBE had a capacity to meet needs of all students regardless of their environment, ethnicity, economic status or disabling conditions (Soudien & Baxen, 1997).

Just like other countries, the introduction of OBE in South Africa was received with apprehension from renowned academicians and critics. Jansen (1998) in his seminal work, highlights that South Africa was ill prepared for the reform. He argues that the language and terminologies associated with OBE were confusing and sometimes contradictory. The introduction of CA in the curriculum resulted into multiplication of administrative burden to teachers. Among other things, teachers were challenged in coming up with appropriate forms of assessment and maintain comprehensive records (Jansen, 1998). Botha (2002), adds that planning for individual instruction, remediation and enrichment overload teachers during their teaching and learning process. While scholars and critics in Australia and South Africa blamed CA for multiplying administrative burden to teachers, their studies rarely suggest better ways of using CA to ensure efficiency in its use.

It is interesting to note that the introduction of OBE was motivated by different factors in different countries. In USA and Australia, it was dominantly motivated to address specific global social economic pressure and competition. South Africa found OBE as a tool to bring together racially polarised nation as a result of the apartheid which brought about undesirable skewed benefit of education among its populous. Malawi on the other loop, considered OBE as a panacea to addressing deteriorating standards of education. Though all the reforms are under the same umbrella, their varying contexts yield unique results and challenges. This study sought to unwrap Malawi's experience in the use of CA in the teaching of Social studies and seek ways to address associated problems.

2.7 The Concept assessment

The concept assessment has been defined in various ways by various scholars. MoEST and MIE (2006) define assessment as *“the process of collecting and interpreting information on learners which shows whether there has been changes in learner’s behaviour after instruction”* p.65. Macintosh, Coleman, Graham and Middlewood (2003), define assessment as all activities undertaken by teachers and learners in judging themselves which provide information to be used as feedback in order to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.

Unlike the first definition by MoEST and MIE (2006), the second definition goes beyond collecting and interpreting information on learner’s progress. The definition by Macintosh *et al.* (2003), captures the functions of assessment and stresses the need for information from assessment results to be used as feedback to change the teaching and learning process.

2.8 Assessment in the PCAR

This section highlights the expectations of CA practices as recommended in the Primary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform. The section discusses types of assessment; methods of assessment and tools of assessment in the PCAR.

2.8.1 Types of assessment

The PCAR identifies three major types of assessments and these are: Assessment for learning and assessment as learning which are both formative and assessment of learning (summative) (MoEST, 2014). Formative assessment according to MoEST (2014), monitors students’ performance with the intention of providing support to

learners so as to meet the learning goals. This form of assessment promotes learning through timely feedback based on the results of the learners' performance. Formative assessment is highly favoured by the PCAR as it is meant to improve learning.

Assessment as learning enables students to reflect on their performance to inform their future learning goals. Assessment as learning is unique in the PCAR as it calls for learners to take an active part in the assessment process. Learners are encouraged to assess themselves or to assess their peers in what is known as self-assessment and peer assessment respectively. The information derived from CA helps teachers make changes to their strategies if their approaches prove to be ineffective. The frequent feedback on learners' progress therefore, serves both as a motivation for the learner and a guiding tool for better planning by the teacher (MoE & MIE, 2007).

Assessment of learning helps teachers in gathering evidence of students' knowledge, understanding and skills at the end of any learning experience. This form of assessment helps in providing feedback to different stakeholders such as parents, communities and examinations boards for further action. In addition, it acts as a tool for placement and classification. Summative assessment also plays a role for a periodic self-evaluation by teachers in order to improve quality or performance (MoEST, 2014). Summative assessment is commonly done at the end of the term or topic usually through paper and pencil exams. This form of assessment was dominant in the 1991 curriculum before the PCAR. Though assessment of learning is still in practice through end of term examinations and Standard 8 national examinations administered by MANEB, there is an emphasis on the use of CA to improve learning. This is so because summative assessment has been highly criticised for not providing room for improvement.

The curriculum further identifies other types of assessment such as baseline and diagnostic. Baseline assessment is done at the beginning of each learning activity to find out what learners already know (MoEST, 2014). This type of information assist teachers to present the materials which is built on already existing knowledge of the learners. Baseline assessment is therefore an important component that provides the teacher with initial adjustment prior to the learning process.

Diagnostic assessment aims at finding out learners' progress, particularly challenges learners' face during teaching and learning process (MoEST, 2014). Depending on findings of diagnostic assessment, the teacher is capable of deciding whether to provide remedial or enrichment learning tasks.

Critically examining forms of assessment recommended in the PCAR, it is noted that in the previous curriculum, summative assessment was dominant. The PCAR has brought in another dimension of assessment with a focus on formative as well as self-assessment. This scenario calls for change in assessment practices by teachers in the process of implementing the PCAR. However, this might not be an easy process. This study is therefore important as it aims at highlighting such potential challenges and how they can be resolved.

2.9 Methods of Assessment

According to expectations of the PCAR in Malawi, there are three methods of assessment that teachers are expected to put into use and these are; self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment (MoEST, 2014).

2.9.1 Self-assessment

This form of assessment is done by learners themselves. It is important for learners to know the criteria against which they can assess themselves. Self-assessment encourages a learner to take responsibility for his or her own learning. Teachers have a critical role in stimulating learners to engage in self-assessment activities (MoEST, 2014). There is limited literature in Malawi regarding self-assessment as a tool that places learner responsibility in the learning process.

2.9.2 Peer-assessment

As the name implies, learners assess each other's work against a given criterion. Peer assessment is associated with the current curriculum reform which uses active learning techniques. Teachers may ask learners to assess fellow learners particularly when they are performing group related tasks or sometimes individual tasks. This mode of assessment is beneficial in that learners develop assessment skills. In addition, learners develop the capacity to identify their mistakes and be able to correct them, in that way they become lifelong learners.

In Malawi, there is limited literature on studies regarding peer assessment practices apart from policy documents which require teachers to engage learners in peer assessment with no guidelines on how teachers would go about implementing peer assessment.

2.9.3 Teacher-assessment

The teacher is responsible for assessing each learner on a regular basis as individuals and as a group. The previous assessment system was dominantly teacher centred. In the approach, teachers are required to embrace peer and self-assessment. Teachers are therefore crucial in the devolution of assessment roles as required in the PCAR. It is yet to be seen as to how teachers in primary schools are managing this approach to assessment.

2.10 Tools of assessment in Malawi

As already discussed, teachers are expected to carry out CA in each learning area during the teaching and learning process. Apart from assessing intellectual and literacy skills, teachers are also supposed to consider other developmental areas such as behaviour, attitude and values. Other aspects may be measured through observation, peer assessment and self-evaluation. The other common way of conducting formative assessment is question and answer. This is a common approach that teachers use to find out learners' understanding.

However, the art of questioning is instrumental in generating useful data to be used for further improvement. Most of the times teachers simply use recall-based questions which are easy to respond and only one correct answer is elicited (Black & William, 2006; Kellighan & Greaney, 2003). Scholars argue that teachers should formulate or ask questions which are thought-provoking and that teachers should adhere to proper questioning techniques. The new questioning technique represents the new paradigm aiming at encouraging critical thinking and discussion in a classroom setup.

However, a study done by Chulu (2013) reveals that most teachers in Malawi lack the ability to formulate valid assessment tasks. This creates a problematic picture if teachers who have been trained and used to traditional way fail to come up with valid questions to support reasoning skills. Traditionally, teachers used questions with the aim of eliciting correct responses from learners. Apart from class work and exercises, teachers are expected to give assignments and homework to extend learning time for a learner (MoEST, 2013). The following are the tools for CA in Malawi primary schools.

2.10.1 Profile

This document contains learner's details such as, name address, performance and behaviour. Most of the times this is used for administrative purposes such as transfer of the learner to another school. The profile is compiled by teachers (MoEST, 2013).

2.10.2 Portfolio

A portfolio is a deliberate collection of learner's work by the learner shared with the teacher. The work is stored in a box and it is the property of the learner. It provides evidence of learner's growth, progress and achievement (MoEST, 2013).

2.10.3 Rubric

A rubric provides a criteria or characteristics of performance for each grade on a particular assessment activity. Ideally, each learner is supposed to be assessed using a given rubric. Table 2 provides an example of a rubric (MoEST, 2013).

Table 2: Shows an example of a rubric

How well is the learner able to	Excellent	good	Satisfactory	Needs support
1. Identify countries sharing borders with Malawi				
2. Locate Malawi on the map of Africa				
3. Locate Malawi using cardinal points				
4. Draw map of Malawi in relation to neighbouring countries				

Source MIE 2007

2.10.4 Report card

A report card shows learners performance in all learning areas for the term or year. Generally, a report card provides a summative evaluation of a learner. It constitutes grades derived from a series of continuous assessments generated and the final examination results. In primary school, particularly the senior phase, 40% constitute CA and 60% constitutes a grade from final examinations (MOE & MIE, 2009 p.27)

2.11 Continuous assessment

Chilora *et al* (2003 P.4), define continuous assessment as “making observations and collecting information periodically to find out what a pupil knows, understands and can do”. This information can be generated if specific tasks are given to learners. Teachers are required to observe learners doing these tasks and then make judgments based on the level of performance. As the name suggests, continuous assessment is an ongoing process.

2.11.1 The role of formative assessment in the learning process

Bill and Marie (2014) contend that traditionally assessment was designed to grade a learner so as to earn a certificate at the end of an academic programme. It was noted that traditional forms of assessment promoted recall of facts because it measured the ability of learners to replicate what was considered as truth from teachers as well as authoritative literature (Department of Education, 2008). This attracted widespread criticism, hence the popularisation of formative assessment. It is argued here that formative assessment promotes learning since it is designed to assist the learning process.

Macintosh *et al.* (2003), affirm that there is resounding research-based evidence that formative assessment raises standards even to learners who are considered as low achievers. They reveal five key factors that CA makes to improve performance, and these are: Provision of effective feedback to pupils which is regularly discussed with them: The active involvement of pupils in their own learning: Adjusting teaching to take into account the results of CA: The recognition on influence of CA on motivation and self-esteem of pupils both of which are crucial influences on learning and the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve their learning.

Bill and Marie (2014) argue that assessment cannot be used formatively if it is only intermittent. They contend that learners develop all the time not just at the end of the term, year or key stage, thus assessment should be a continuous iterative process. Macintosh *et al.* (2003), note that factors which inhibit the appropriate use of both summative and formative assessment include: The tendency for teachers to assess quantity of work and presentation rather than quality of learning: Greater attention

being given to marking and grading than providing advice for improvement: A stronger tendency of comparing pupils performance with each other which consequently demoralise less successful learners: Teachers feedback serving social and managerial purposes rather than helping learners to learn and teachers not knowing enough about their pupils learning needs.

Apart from these inhibiting factors of CA, there is research evidence that the quality of how teachers assess their students has a variety of weakness. Kellagan and Greeny (2005) cited in Altinyelken (2015), highlights that teachers use poorly focused questions, predominant questions requiring memorisation void of critical analysis and reflection.

The argument advanced by Macintosh *et al.* (2003) reveals that the use of CA is not as easy as one may think. It is twofold in the sense that, on one hand, it requires total commitment to needs of learners by the teacher, and on the other hand, learners have to play a pivotal role in the process. The dilemma now is to attain a balance between teacher and learner commitment so as to sustain the ideals of enhancing learning through the use of CA. Many a time, it is noted that proper use of CA can promote the learning process.

The use of CA has been incorporated in various education reforms around the world. Those advancing it point out that CA gives an opportunity to all pupils to succeed in school. They argue that by continually observing pupils to see what they know, help teachers to make sure that all pupils excel (Mchazime, 2003). This is in tandem with the ideals of OBE that all students can learn and succeed. This being the case, CA is critical to the realisation of OBE assumption that all learners can succeed though at

different rates (Killen, 2009). If CA is not meaningfully used to support learning in the PCAR, then it would signal a failure of the reform.

According to Improving Education Quality Project (IEQ) (2003), CA helps the teacher to find out what the pupil knows and can do. This connects well with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) whereby teachers become aware of learners' knowledge and then provide necessary scaffolding during the learning process. The ZPD is the sphere where learning is said to be taking place (Vygotsky, 1978). This can only be achieved if regular assessment is given to learners resulting into provision of necessary support. Secondly, knowledge of learner's attainment assists a teacher to teach better. Teachers adjust their teaching to accommodate needs of individual learners hence they become effective in the teaching and learning process.

2.11.2 Assessment, test and exams debate

There has been great debate over issues of administering test and examinations which are termed as summative assessment in the education system worldwide (Berry & Adamson, 2011). Historically, the dominant role of exams was to limit membership to certain professions. Thomsen (1975) as cited by Havnes and McDowell (2008), noted that as a measure of limiting candidature for some profession, Law students at University of Copenhagen were required to take exams in 1788. Similar intentions of exams were noted in the medical and accounting profession in Britain in 1835 and 1880 respectively. The exams were also considered as a leeway to social mobility in various professions (Hill, 2010).

Examinations were institutionalised in the education system to identify learners who were educable through the administration of IQ tests (Gipps 1999 cited in Havnes & McDowell, 2008). James (2011), underscores that the 1988 education reform in the UK emphasised on assessment for accountability purposes. Its function was to enable parents to choose schools of their choice for their children (James, 2011). The result of this policy was that unsuccessful schools attracted fewer students than successful ones (James, 2011).

However, widespread literature reveals that traditional system of assessment in form of exams have widely been questioned (Bill & Marie 2014; Havnes & McDowell, 2008; DoE 2008). Critics argue that exams do not provide adequate tool to support learning associated with deep learning, critical thinking, sustainable knowledge and lifelong learning (Falk, 2010). A number of scholarly works on documented impacts of tests on teachers and students, reveals that high stakes testing made teachers to focus less on the subjects that are not tested (Volante & Jaffar, 2010).

In addition, teachers tend to teach to test in order to prepare learners for exams (Teddlie, 2010). Teachers focus only on areas they feel could be examined. This promotes drilling and memorisation of facts thereby compromising deep learning. Such kind of teaching was evident in the No Child Left behind (NCLB) policy in the US. This policy administered national standardised tests with the aim of improving education through the application of rewards and sanctions to teachers, administrators and schools based on the test outcome of students (Falk, 2010; Teddlie, 2010).

The NCLB policy emphasised on high stakes testing for school improvement plans and state accountability. On one hand, schools which persistently failed to meet the annual yearly progress were restructured or sometimes closed. On the other hand, schools which exhibited excellent performance were given achievement awards, sometimes teachers were financially rewarded (Flaitz, 2011; Stobert, 2008).

This policy was however implemented against the backdrop that tests did not provide students with supportive environment for their learning (Falk, 2010). Volante and Jaffar (2010), add that high-stakes created by these standardised tests led to the growth of numerous cases of cheating in the education system. Flaitz (2011), notes that schools tried to use any means available in order to ensure that learners meet the annual yearly progress. This resulted into neglect of formative use of assessment.

Similarly, in his early studies, Mkandawire (1992) notes that assessment has been used as a selection criterion particularly in developing countries as a result of a few opportunities in relation to number of aspirants. As a result of this, high stakes attached to a certificate yielded undesirable effects in the education system. In their study on high stakes exams in Malawi, Chakwera, Khembo and Sireci (2004), argue that the national examinations in Malawi administered by the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB) places high-stakes on examination. This is so because success in the examination provides a gateway to further education in the public universities and other tertiary institutions which are few and entry is very competitive.

In addition, Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) has become a minimum qualification for gainful employment. In primary schools, the primary school leaving

certificate administered by MANEB gives access to learners to limited number of secondary schools hence creating high stakes as well. Chakwera *et al* (2004), argue that the high stakes accrued to examinations in Malawi create security concerns in the handling of examination papers. Extreme cases of cheating in Malawi led to the cancellation of national examinations in the year 2000 (Chakwera *et al.*, 2004) and 2020 (MANEB, press release, 2020). High stakes associated with public examinations and its associated impact has been blamed for lowering of the standards of education in Malawi and elsewhere (Mkandawire, 1992). This scenario likely places potential challenge in the use of CA to support learning as teachers are used to summative assessment culture by national examining bodies.

Furthermore, even though Stiggins (2005), on one hand, contend that traditional forms of assessment through tests may induce some learners to redouble their efforts, on the other hand, it works to the disadvantage of children who perform poorly in a test. The lower grades make them to question their capability as learners. Consequently, their motivation to learning get compromised leading to dropout. Stiggins (2005) argues that most policy makers do not understand the trauma associated with failure of the standardised test, as a result they do not realise the negative effect of tests leading to great failure for a larger number of students. In view of this, for the PCAR to thrive regarding the use of CA, there is need to revisit the reliance on standardised tests administered by MANEB to prevent overshadowing CA in favour of summative assessment.

Havnes and McDowell (2008) note that there has been a paradigm shift in the way assessment is conducted. The shift is from the assessment that was done at the end of

learning (summative), to an assessment that occurs in the course of learning (formative). This shift implies that the focus of assessment is to determine what learners know and can do followed by support in form of either enrichment or remediation. This is contrary to the traditional focus of assessment in which it was used to gauge learner's performance with no effort to improve.

Further, teachers were solely responsible in assessing learners, but now assessment is also performed by learners themselves. In this regard, learners are active partners in the assessment process. With this new dimension to assessment, it is noted that the new approach places responsibility on the learners to monitor their own learning. While self-assessment and peer assessment look attractive, it presents a problematic picture considering that it is a new concept to learners who were used to traditional ways of teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, teachers are supposed to open up opportunities for learners to assess their own learning progress collaboratively. Stiggins (2005) notes that this shift in assessment policy in schools no longer rank and sort students according to achievement. Assessment is now used as a powerful tool that ensures that all students meet the pre-specified standards (Stiggins, 2005).

This paradigm shift in assessment is linked to the emergence of constructivist model of teaching and learning (Berry & Adamson, 2011; Shepard, 2009). Fautly and Savage (2008) note that there is a close relationship between learning theories and assessment. On one hand, behaviourist theories mainly focus on observable behaviour to find out whether the student demonstrates the expected behaviour acquired as a result of learning. The common assessment techniques are short answer questions, true or false or multiple choice which mainly elicit either the correct or wrong response with no

room for open ended questions (Fautly & Savage, 2008). Poor performance results into doing more practice for the incorrect responses (James, 2006).

On the other hand, constructivist approaches provide many opportunities of assessment which are collaborative as well as centred on problem solving (Fautly & Savage, 2008; James, 2006). One can easily notice that the past teaching and learning orientation was dominantly based on facts and its replication, while the new orientation which is increasingly favoured, is based on skill development aiming at dealing with existing challenges. This calls for a change in the assessment strategies and format.

Shepard (2009), argues that this shift calls for change in the form and content of assessment to reflect the new thinking. He suggests that assessment must reflect problem solving skills that apply to the real-world situation. In addition, the way assessment was used and regarded by teachers and students must change as well. This problematic picture can be relieved if both teachers and students change the way they conceptualise CA.

Teachers should be flexible enough to embrace the new paradigm and change their role from givers of information to facilitators of problem solving. Learners should migrate from their passive role to active participants in the teaching and learning process. This require the two parties to work together particularly teachers who are the drivers of change in classroom to facilitate the process. If this does not occur, then assessment under OBE will yield undesirable results.

However, one cannot rule out the tension between past practices and new practices in the environment of implementing the PCAR. The study by Chakwera *et al.*, (2004) and Mkandawire (1992) give evidence that summative assessment in Malawi is highly engrained in its education system. The fact that OBE and CA have not been fully embraced in the entire education system in Malawi, it is likely that educators will incline to the old orientation of teaching, learning and assessment. It is therefore crucial to monitor the use of CA during its implementation to check if it is used in line with the new thinking and seek new possible ways of making it applicable in Malawian context. This study sought to explore this potential dilemma.

Following this paradigm shift on assessment in the education system, Volante and Jaffar (2010) noted that England, Scotland and Australia shifted their assessment regime from traditional testing to teacher assessment aiming at improving learning. The national tests taken by 14-year-old in England were abolished in 2008. This similar change was done by Scotland in 2003 and Wales in 2007 (Volante & Jaffar 2010). The primary curriculum and assessment reform in Malawi is an acknowledgement to the worldwide assessment reforms taking place in various education systems. It has been widely recognised that school-based continuous assessment reduces the prominence of high stakes associated with examinations thereby promoting learning (Volante & Jaffar, 2010).

The integration of CA in the primary school curriculum marks a significant shift in Malawi education system. The challenge now is to see how school-based CA supports teaching and learning process as envisaged in the curriculum documents. The success of curriculum intentions depends on how teachers use CA. The following questions are

very crucial in the use of CA: What is the nature of CA tasks? How often are teachers using CA? How do teachers manage and use the results of CA? Answers to these questions are very instrumental in providing the picture on how teacher CA practices support the intention of the policy shift in Malawi education system.

It should however be noted that, the adoption of CA as a formative assessment practice does not mean the demise of summative assessment. But one key aspect is to see how teachers balance the two forms of assessment in an attempt to promote learning which to some extent was inhibited by too much focus on summative assessment. This study therefore was aimed at examining the use of CA in the context of Malawi amidst potential assessment dilemma.

2.11.3 Continuous assessment studies by various scholars

Following the growing popularity of CA over the past years, many countries have incorporated CA in their education systems. The implementation of CA in schools is therefore instrumental in aligning with the paradigm shift and education transformation in various countries. The paradigm-shift and assessment reforms have stimulated a number of studies bearing in mind the debate associated with it. This section provides CA experiences from studies done by various scholars in some parts of Africa and beyond.

In Ghana, a study was conducted in order to understand how some Ghanaian teachers felt and thought about their respective classroom roles and their pedagogical thinking in respect to policies to improve education practice (Akyeampong, Pryor & Ampiah, 2006). The focus of the study was to investigate how teachers understood teaching,

learning and assessment issues from specific classroom incidents that they identified as illustrating good practice (Akyeampong *et al.*, 2006).

The findings of the study revealed that most teachers had negative attitude towards the official CA requirement. Teachers claimed that CA was time consuming and too bureaucratic. Another interesting feature which might have contributed to teacher's attitude was the nature of support and conduct of supervisors. It was noted that supervisors did not pay attention to classroom practices by only concentrating on checking various records such as lesson notes, registers, marked work and CA records. This demonstrated that the official requirement did not reflect supportiveness in formative approaches in classroom setting (Nittko, 1995 cited by Akyeampong *et al.*, 2006). The views of the teachers regarding the use of continuous assessment consequently had a bearing on their classroom practices regarding assessment.

In a related development, Akyeampong *et al.* (2006) note that due to work pressure teachers failed to meet the targeted CA requirement. However, in order to cover up for unassessed work, teachers guessed grades based on the trend of pupil's performance in what was known as "computation" (Akyeampong *et al.*, 2006). This scenario in Ghana presents evidence on the dangers of giving targets to implementers. Instead of using CA as purported, teacher's attention is to impress supervisors with doctored records.

In their view, Akyeampong *et al.* conclude that CA in Ghana was at variance with the expectations of the education system as it did not support learning. This distortion of reality in the classroom regarding CA prevent learners from achieving their expected outcomes. The conduct of teachers in generating false grades raises serious questions on school-based monitoring mechanism on provision of CA to learners, as well as

record keeping. This is an indicator that teacher assessment practices were merely cosmetic rather than used to inform learning as expected by the curriculum.

Kapambwe (2010), investigated the implementation of school based continuous assessment (CA) in Zambia. Just like other countries in Africa, Zambia implemented outcome-based education in its curriculum reform. The education reform in Zambia considered continuous assessment as an integral element in the teaching and learning process. Kapambwe argues that the introduction of OBE in Zambia in 2001 necessitated the need to reaffirm the importance of school-based CA in an effort to enhance education quality.

The feasibility studies on the use of CA in Zambia suggested positive results as revealed by Kapambwe (2010). This is similar to the feasibility study on the use of CA in Malawi which yielded positive results (Mchazime, 2003). What is unique with Zambia is that teachers were trained in understanding CA, booklets were made for teachers which provided guidelines for use of CA (Kapambwe, 2010).

However, effective implementation of CA was marred with several challenges in Zambia. The study by Kapambwe reveals that large class sizes coupled with low staffing levels in some instances resulted into no administration of CA. It was also noted that there was still tension between finishing the syllabus and provision of remediation and enrichment. As a result of this, teacher's interest was on finishing content at the expense of supporting learning. This situation resulted into focusing on assessment practices which were summative in nature rather than formative (Kapambwe, 2010)

Another challenge was pupil absenteeism. This created challenges on the management of learner performance among others. Similar to Akyeampong *et al.*, (2006) findings, Kapambwe (2010) observes that officials did not monitor the implementation process.

In a study by Vandeyar (2005) regarding CA practices in South African primary schools undergoing desegregation, he found out that teachers reacted differently to the new assessment regime. One group of teachers did not accept the policy wholesome and had to implement it the way they felt it benefited the learners. The other group of teachers entirely rejected the new approach in favour of the traditional approach. While others implemented the wrong way as a result of poor understanding of the reform. A similar study by Vandeyar and Killen (2007) found that whether teachers use assessment formatively and summatively depended upon their conception of assessment. They also note that the use of assessment in the context of OBE were merely used for testing which was far removed from the basic principles of OBE.

The issue of continuous assessment in Nigerian education system was considered as a significant development. In their scholarly work, Faleye and Adefisoye (2016) explain that the history of CA in Nigeria dates back from the 1969 curriculum development conference. The conference presentation by Nigeria National Research Council among others reported that the first six years of primary education certificates would be based on continuous assessment as opposed to the formal examinations at the end of the six years (Faleye & Adefisoye, 2016).

It was envisaged that paradigm shift in the school assessment regime would resolve some of the challenges encountered in the previous system. It was noted that the previous system did not accord teachers with an opportunity to participate fully in the final assessment of students. In addition, the system neglected the evaluation of non-cognitive objectives. In view of the reform, it was expected that teachers would administer assessment using different assessment techniques in order to ensure that each student has an opportunity to express their capabilities for particular techniques.

The use of CA in Nigeria encountered a stream of shortfalls. It was noted that teacher practices on CA were at variance with the expectations of the curriculum. First, teachers conceptualised CA as continuous testing and feedback was rare. Secondly, it was noted that teachers had negative attitude towards CA and this consequently affected the way they conducted their CA activities. In addition, record keeping was another challenge, this prevented teachers to transfer the scores from term to term as required by the cumulative nature of CA (Faleye & Adefisoye, 2016). This was attributed to poor infrastructure to support information management.

While most studies focussed on the challenges associated with the implementation of continuous assessment, this study sought to look at a different dimension regarding the use of continuous assessment in the teaching of Social studies. Focusing on Level of Use provides a unique way of looking at how teachers are progressing in as far as continuous assessment is concerned over a considerable period of its rolling out in Malawi. This is further strengthened with the idea of examining whether the use of continuous assessment is directed towards the intended purpose of informing learning in all subjects in particular Social studies as well as the essence of OBE.

2.12 Continuous assessment in Malawi

The issue of continuous assessment in Malawi can partly be traced from the feasibility study on Improving Educational Quality Project (IEQ) funded by USAID (IEQ 2003). The results of the longitudinal study by IEQ revealed that the majority of pupils were unable to read, write or perform simple mathematical tasks. In the year 2000, a team of IEQ project members started meeting education officials in Malawi to devise classroom-based intervention in order to improve the teaching and learning. This led to the launch of continuous assessment feasibility study in 21 primary schools in Ntcheu District in 2002. In this study, stakeholders involved included, Domasi College of Education (DCE), Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), St Joseph Teachers Training College and Save the Children Federation US.

The findings of the feasibility study were positive to both teachers and learners. It was revealed that pupils who were not literate coming to standard 3 learned how to read and write, and their achievement in mathematics increased. Teachers were reported to have gained new skills and new knowledge which made them better teachers. Among the skills teachers gained, was the creative use of locally available resources (TALULAR) to support learning. In addition, teachers were said to have learned new concepts such as remediation, enrichment, and curriculum-based assessment. Teachers realised that assessment is no longer meant to test. This is a departure from the way assessment was perceived in traditional education. Further, it was observed that teachers used CA to inform their teaching.

The other profound finding was the creation of a more child friendly environment replacing the atmosphere of fear in the classroom. For instance, pupils developed positive attitude towards CA in that they were no longer afraid than was previous. Learners felt relaxed when assessed individually. It was reported that teachers stopped yelling at learners but rather provided support. The study also revealed that parents who were engaged in the project confirmed improved performance of their children. They in turn supported the school through the provision of resources apart from encouraging their children to work hard. At school level, it was reported that relationship between head teachers and staff improved as they collaborated in various aspects. Following positive outcomes of this feasibility study, policy makers were planning to incorporate the assessment model in primary school and teacher training programs (IEQ review 2003).

In a related report, Mchazime (2003) reveals that USAID pushed for the agenda of using continuous assessment following concerns of declining standards of education with the purpose of promoting learning. In addition, USAID influenced the choice of the class of the feasibility study because of its interests which were not clarified by Mchazime. This gives an impression that the idea of incorporating CA was donor driven. El Salvador similarly adopted CA on recommendation by USAID in order to promote effective implementation of competency-based education. It was felt that early diagnosis of children attainment levels would result into provision of early support (Harris, Moran & Florez, 1998).

Donor driven projects initially attract a lot of funding but when that is handed over, often the problem of sustainability emerges. Fears are certainly anticipated in this reform that implementers may not be supported as in the initial stages. In addition, Malawi seems not to own the idea of CA in the education system (Mchazime, 2003). This is evident from the IEQ project which indicated that it spearheaded the feasibility studies on CA having noted that the majority of pupils were unable to read, write or perform simple mathematical tasks.

Mchazime reports that teachers who were involved in the study underwent a training workshop at MIE. The training focused on the concept of continuous assessment, the continuous assessment techniques, recording pupil's progress and record keeping, managing large classes, remediation and enrichment strategies, how to prepare and use locally available resources and how to motivate pupils. Mchazime further highlights that during field work, teachers were provided with intensive field support and the Primary School Education Advisors (PEA) visited them often. The field experience was followed up by another training which offered teachers an opportunity to reflect on challenges and opportunities of implementing CA. Teachers shared experiences and suggested ways of overcoming some of the challenges. Teachers were also helped to develop meaningful assessment tasks requiring higher order thinking.

The report by Mchazime (2003) gives a clear impression that the activity was provided with high level support to ensure that teachers acquired relevant skills in order to effectively implement the innovation. Stiggins (2002), rightly observes that for effective implementation of CA, policy makers must be prepared to spend time in preparing teachers for the expertise they need to assess learners for learning. Does this

same level of training and support exist when implemented at a wider scale? This is one of the questions which needs to be answered. It is not a surprise that the feasibility study generated positive results in as far as integrating CA into teaching and learning is concerned. As noted, teachers in the feasibility study were supported with all the necessary resources they required in their effort to use CA through observations, oral and written exercises.

Before the integration of CA in the Malawi education system, Banda (2005) carried out a study on teachers' perceptions and practices in mathematics regarding classroom assessment. The results revealed that the majority of teachers perceived CA as continuous testing, consequently their assessment practices did not support learning. These findings might have been attributed to the fact that CA had not yet been integrated in the education system, as a result, teachers still had those traditional beliefs of assessment.

Now that assessment is an integral element in the teaching and learning in Malawi's education system, the implication is that teachers need to change their longstanding assessment practices to the new paradigm of assessment. This study sought to explore teacher practices regarding the use of CA in teaching Social studies in the context of OBE in Malawi.

Following the success stories of the project, the idea of CA was carried forward to the primary curriculum conceptualisation in 2003 (Mchazime, 2003). CA was integrated in both primary and secondary school curriculum and assessment reform in Malawi. The Policy Investment Framework (PIF) (2001) highlight the need to introduce school-

based assessment in its policy. This is in an effort to reduce cases of cheating due to high stakes associated with national examinations in the Malawi education system. The policy further highlights that changes were made to respond to the needs of the public and private sectors.

The integration of continuous assessment in the primary and secondary school education system can be seen as a strategy to strengthen the realisation of school-based assessment goals as outlined in the policy statement. Based on literature in Malawi and Zambia, it is noted that a lot of effort is put on the initial stages of incorporating the use of CA in teaching. The government through its partners invest a lot in supporting pilot studies through the provision of training and support materials. In a way, pilot studies prepare the necessary environment for the success of CA. However, little effort is directed towards the system wide implementation. What the curriculum developers fail to do is to balance the support provided during preparatory stages and the implementation process. The uniqueness of this study is to explore the neglected part of curriculum implementation which considers the interplay between the context and change.

2.13 Theoretical framework

Thornton (1989) recognises the role of teachers as instructional gatekeepers. This is so because they make decisions about planning and carrying out all instructional processes. Psacharopoulos (1989) highlights the crucial role of implementation for any success of the policy and notes that “policy outcomes fall short of matching with expectations, mainly because of insufficient, or absence of implementation”.

It should however be noted that, it is not always that these policies are rejected or implemented as planned. There can also be a varying degree of use or putting into practice of these policies. In the same vein, curriculum implementation cannot be uniform among teachers. It is for this reason that this study used some principles of OBE related to assessment and level of use concept during the implementation by Hall and Hord. Principles of OBE provide insight into teacher assessment practices in line with the desires of the curriculum reform towards OBE. The level of use concept helps in analysing teacher CA practices if they are tailored towards assessment for learning in compliance with the demands of CA and Social studies subject.

As earlier on discussed in the review of literature, the definition of OBE is interested in focusing on what the learner is able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. Spady (1994) highlights four important aspects which need to be taken into consideration. These aspects are; coming up with a clear picture of what the students are to do, then organising the curriculum, instruction and assessment to ensure that learning ultimately happens. It should be noted in the definition by Spady that a component on assessment helps to know that learning actually happens (Spady 1994:1). Outcome-based education model rests on three premises (Killen 2009) and these are: All students can learn and succeed, but not all at the same time or in the same way: Successful learning promotes even more successful learning and: Schools and teachers control many of the conditions that determine whether students are successful at school.

These basic premises are very important in the realisation of OBE goals and consequently an implication in assessment practices. In the first premise, it is common knowledge to teachers that not all learners can succeed at the same time (Killen, 2009).

In order to identify these differences, assessment plays a crucial role in determining the levels of success for each learner in class. Again, this premise reminds a teacher on the need to adjust his or her approach in order to assist all learners achieve their potential. This gives an optimistic view that all learners can achieve and demonstrate the expected outcomes given appropriate support upon noticing the learning gaps. This is in contrast to the way teaching was organised traditionally in which teachers were concentrating on delivering content disregarding whether learning was taking place or not.

The premise that successful learning promotes even more successful learning entails that when learners succeed, they are motivated to succeed on other tasks. This can only be done if there is an ongoing CA and provision of feedback on learner's success. Finally, teachers are held more accountable basing on the third premise (MoE & MIE, 2007). Spady (1994) notes that teachers in the traditional education often blame learners and the system for failing (Killen, 2009). More often than not, none or few teachers accept responsibility that they exert a significant impact on students' learning. The implication of this new approach to schooling is that it puts responsibility on teachers to create an environment that would ensure that all learners succeed. In this case, no learner is labelled as a failure.

2.13.1 Principles of OBE and Assessment

The basic premises led to the development of four major principles on which OBE is grounded, these principles are: Clarity of focus, design down, high expectations and expanded opportunities. These basic principles play a pivotal role in influencing educational assessment.

2.13.1.1 Clarity of focus

Clarity of focus entails that the “*education systems should be organised so that teachers and learners can focus clearly, consistently, systematically and creatively on the significant outcomes that learners are ultimately able to demonstrate successfully*” (Killen, 2009, p. 57). In other words, clarity of focus necessitates the need for curriculum developers to define the significant outcomes that learners are required to achieve, for instance syllabus outcomes (Killen, 2009). In this vein, teachers are supposed to use long term outcomes as the focus of all their teaching. Simply put, clarity of focus requires defining the intended learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve (Fitzpatrick 1995 cited in Bean, 1995). In this case, both teachers and learners are aware of the learning intentions right from the beginning. Assessment is critical in this principle. Teachers must ensure that all assessment must be focused on these clearly defined important outcomes. In this case, both outcomes and assessment guide the teaching and learning process.

2.13.1.2 Design down

Killen (2009), considers the process of design down as coming up with long term significant outcomes which becomes the starting point for curriculum design. One important feature of OBE is the coming up with long term significant exit outcomes. Killen (2009), points out that these exit outcomes become the starting point of curriculum design. Once these exit outcomes are developed, then enabling outcomes are developed in order to meet the exit outcomes. In line with assessment, Vandeyar and Killen (2003) posit that teachers need to be able to describe the purpose of each assessment task in terms of: How it provides information about learners’ current understanding: How it provides information on learner’s readiness to proceed to the

next step in learning and how it provides information on each learner's progress towards long-term outcomes (p123-124).

2.13.1.3 High expectations

The principle of high expectations entails that teachers must expect all learners to achieve the exit outcomes which are significant. Fitzpatrick 1995 in Bean (1995) adds that this principle emphasises the importance of defining standards for learning which must be clearly articulated to learners prior to instruction. The implication is that teachers should not give up in providing support even to those learners who are perceived as less achievers.

Killen (2009), highlights that this principle is closely connected to the criterion referenced assessment which provides clear evidence on how each learner is learning. In this case, the norm referenced assessment cannot provide clear and precise data in knowing the attainment of learning in relation to set standards. This principle also recognises the need to provide learners with challenging tasks beyond memorisation to promote deep thinking (Killen 2009, Fitzpatrick in Bean, 1995). This is in contrast with traditional assessment procedures which merely focused on accumulation of discrete facts and skills divorced from learning (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003).

The nature of Social studies at all levels in Malawi education system and as espoused by the Mombasa Conference of 1968, is meant to promote creative and critical thinking in learners. This would enable learners to make rational decisions in their everyday life. This can only be possible if teachers provide learners with opportunities for assessment tasks that are tailored towards higher level of thinking and problem-based.

However, literature reveals that teaching at all levels in the previous curriculum focused on drilling learners to pass exams. As a result, teachers focused on exam items demanding memorisation (Department of Education, 2008; Falk, 2010; Teddlie, 2010; Flaitz 2011; Black& William, 2006). It can be argued that this approach removed a learner from the equation of learning and the focal point became the examination. However, there is a general agreement that teaching and learning in the 21st Century and the future should focus on the bigger picture like preparing learners in problem solving. This current thinking represents a different landscape in the education system to which teachers have to adapt.

2.13.1.4. Expanded opportunities

Following high expectations, there is a need to help learners reach high standards, thus the expanded opportunities principle. Spady (1994) argues that given appropriate learning opportunities most students can achieve high standards of learning. Killen (2009) points out that this principle can be achieved if students are given diverse opportunities to learn. He also expresses the need for flexibility in approaches to assessment.

Fitzpatrick 1995 in Bean (1995) argues that this principle is at variance with the way schools were organised. In traditional setting, time was organised as a fixed constant while achievement was a variable. The paradigm shift looks at achievement of learning outcomes as constant, and time as a variable (Fitzpatrick 1995 in Bean, 1995). He contends that the amount of time and instructional resources to support learning vary depending on the results of ongoing assessment. The principle of expanded

opportunities therefore challenges teachers to use assessment data in order to assist learners to attain high standards of learning.

Vandeyar and Killen (2003) assert that teachers are supposed to provide learners with unlimited number of opportunities to demonstrate what they have learnt. In addition, expanded opportunity relates to assessment principle of fairness. Vandeyar and Killen (2003), claim that it is not fair to expect that all learners would be ready for assessment at the same time nor expect to judge learners' achievement on the basis of limited number of opportunities. Based on Vandeyar and Killen claims, it can be noted that for the principle of expanded opportunity to be realised, there is need for a highly differentiated instruction and CA activities.

Even though OBE principles provide an operating context for the primary school curriculum and assessment reform, it cannot explain teacher characteristics and actions in influencing the attainment of CA goals. The Level of Use (LoU) of an innovation concept provides a theoretical behavioural explanation for use or non-use of an innovation. The section on the users of an innovation clearly stipulates how users put to practice the innovation. The following part explains the LoU framework by Hall and Hord.

In their research, Hall and Hord (2001) notes that policy makers think that when change is introduced and the implementers are provided with training and resources, that automatically translates into use. On the contrary, their observation proves otherwise. It is noted that in any given change effort, implementers of innovations display different

behavioural patterns for non-users and users. Their studies reveal that implementers operate at different levels with any new practice, hence the birth of levels of use (LoU). According to Hall and Hord (2001), LoU has to do with behaviours and portrays how people act with respect to a specified change. This study explored the use of CA in the context of OBE. It is based on the assumption that teachers are heterogeneous in terms of beliefs, values, knowledge and how they react to change. As a result of this diversity, it is expected that the implementation of CA would vary from one teacher to another.

Hall and Hord LoU framework therefore is an appropriate benchmark to understand teacher use of an innovation, in this case CA within the OBE reform or the extent to which CA practices are integrated in the teaching and learning process. In addition, the LoU framework enables identification of expertise which teachers have with respect to the CA reform in Malawi and use their expertise to promote good practices. As postulated by Anderson (1997), LoU framework reflects on teacher behaviour as they prepare to use, begin to use and gain experience when implementing change in the classroom. This progression is likely experienced by primary school teachers who have been implementing CA in OBE for over ten years now.

In addition, the LoU concept is a very important tool that helps generate appropriate intervention measures provided to teachers depending on the behaviour they portray. This is so because the concept describes the characteristics of a person at each level. Depending on the level at which a person is, specific implications can be identified, these implications are instrumental in decision making.

Hall and Hord came up with eight classification levels of how people behave in the implementation of an innovation. These levels are divided into two major categories of users and non-users.

Table 3 provides an illustration on LoU of the innovation.

Table 3: Levels of use of the innovation

U s e r s	VI	Renewal: State in which the user re-evaluates the quality of the use of the innovation, seeks major modification of or alternative to present innovation to achieve increased impact on clients, examines new developments in the field, and explores new goals for self and the system.
	V	Integration: State in which the user is combining own efforts to use the innovation with related activities of colleagues to achieve a collective impact on clients within their common sphere of influence.
	IVB	Refinement: State in which the user varies the use of the innovation to increase the impact on clients within immediate sphere of influence. Variations are based on knowledge of both short and long-term consequences for clients.
	IVA	Routine: use of the innovation is stabilised. Few if any changes are being made in ongoing use. Little preparation or thought is given to improving innovation use or its consequences.
	III	Mechanical use: state in which the user focuses most of the efforts on short-term day-to-day use of the innovation with little time for reflection. Changes in use are made more to meet user needs than client's needs. The user is primarily engaged in stepwise attempt to master the task required to use the innovation, often resulting into disjointed and superficial use.
N o n u s e r s	II	Preparation: State in which the user is preparing for the first use of the innovation
	I	Orientation: State in which the user has recently acquired or is acquiring information about the innovation and/or has recently explored or is exploring its value orientation and its demand upon user and user system
	0	Non-use: state in which the user has little or no knowledge of the use of the innovation, no involvement with the innovation and is doing nothing towards being involved.

From measuring the level of use of the innovation: a manual for Trainers, Interviewers and Raters by S.F Louks, B.W New love and GE Hall in Hall and Hord (2001)

2.13.2 Levels of Use (LoU) explained

2.13.2.1 Non-users

The non-users are classified into three different levels depending on the behavioural characteristics they display (Hall & Hord, 2001). Anderson (2010) explains that “Levels 0 (Non-use), I (Orientation), and II (Preparation) describe the behaviours of teacher’s vis-a-vis an innovation before they actually begin using it in the classroom.” p.68. He adds that once teachers begin to use the innovation in the classroom, they graduate to level III which is mechanical use.

2.13.2.2 Level of use 0 Non use

The person at this level does not display any knowledge about the innovation and does not display any behaviour associated with the change. Such people do not have any interest in the innovation and do not have interest to learn about the innovation. In case that attempts are made to provide information in terms of literature and orientation, such people do not show any interest in any of the activity related to it. At this level, the facilitator has a crucial role in persuading the user of the innovation to learn as well as use the innovation (Hall & Hord, 2001).

2.13.2.2 Level of use 1 orientation

Unlike level 0, at this level the person makes an attempt to learn about an innovation and demonstrates interest in it. At this level, the person develops interest in the sessions conducted for the innovation. However, decision to use the innovation is not made. The

implication to the facilitator of the innovation is to provide information and sustain the users' interest so that adoption and use is encouraged (Hall & Hord, 2001).

2.13.2.3 Level of use II preparation

At this level, use has not yet started but there are all indications that the person prepares for its first use. This might be as a result of the demands by policy makers and leaders to use the innovation. At this stage, the facilitator has to be supportive so that when the use starts, it should be smooth and efficient (Hall & Hord, 2001).

2.13.3 Users

This is the other phase of the level of use concept. It constitutes of five levels namely: mechanical: routine: refinement: integration and renewal. In the context of the study, the users put into practice CA in the teaching and learning process. However, each user displays various expertise in the use of CA following the five levels from mechanical to renewal.

2.13.3.1 Level of use III mechanical

At this level, the user is engaged in trying out the innovation. In this case, putting into practice the CA. Adaptation is made in managing time, materials and other logistics (Hall & Hord, 2001). At this level the user has not mastered the use of the innovation, but tries to master its use. The teacher tries to make some changes that would enable him or her to manage and make it easy to practice its use. According to Anderson, (2010) it is more teacher-centred. In other words, teachers are more interested in creating a safety zone for themselves and earn a credit for using CA. At this level, facilitators of change are expected to play a significant role in directing and providing constant support to teachers who are considered as novice in practice. The series of

practice and experimentation by the user would eventually result into expertise as they discover what best works for them.

2.13.3.2 Level of use IVA routine

After mastering the trade at mechanical level, one graduates to routine. A teacher establishes a pattern of regular use and makes a few adaptations in use of the CA (Anderson, 2010). Action and use at this level are more stabilised and the user feels satisfied with the current state of affairs as fine hence no need for further changes (Hall & Hord, 2001). Many teachers tend to be satisfied with this level once the innovation is integrated in their practice (Anderson, 2010). The facilitator may conclude that the implementer needs no further help, but it is a step towards other levels.

2.13.2.3 Level of use IVB refinement

At this level the users begin to think on how their practice benefit the consumers (Hall & Hord, 2001). This is a departure from the previous orientation whose major concern was on how best the teacher uses the innovation. In this case, the teacher begins reflecting as to whether students benefit from their practice and strives to use the innovation for students' benefit. Here, the focus of the benefit shifts to the client and not the user as reflected at level of use III (Hall & Hord, 2001). In this case, the interest of the teacher is to see if learners reap the benefits of CA. It can be noted therefore, that this stage is key to the aspiration of the curriculum reform in Malawi. The reform's interest is to ensure that learners demonstrate the outcomes and calls on teachers to ensure that learners benefit from CA. Realising the critical role of CA to learners, facilitator must support this curiosity by the teacher to find better and meaningful ways of using the CA to the benefit of the learner.

2.13.3.4 Level of use V integration

The user at this level collaborates with other users in an effort to make adaptation for the client to benefit from an innovation (Hall & Hord, 2001). Collaboration gives room to share experiences which lead to further modification with the intention of improving students' performance (Anderson, 2010). With regard to the implementation of the curriculum reform and CA in particular, teamwork unlike individualism is key to quality checks.

The nature of the curriculum permits and encourages collaborative approach to both teaching, learning and assessment. Collaboration therefore, should not be a focus in the classroom work among learners only, but also by teachers at school as a learning community. This must extend to other schools within the clusters to form a network of learning communities. The facilitators of change such as the PEA and DQAS must bring together teachers at school, cluster, zone, district, divisional and national level to collaborate in certain ways to ensure that experiences are shared to improve practice. The level of use concept is a reflection of the state of flux in any form of an innovation hence integration is not the end point. Another level is renewal where further modifications of an innovation can be made.

2.13.3.4 Level of use VI Renewal

The users at this level explore to modify the innovation in major ways or replace it altogether (Hall & Hord, 2001). In other words, they see alternative approaches and the sole intention is to benefit the students. This user is a very important resource to the rest of the users. They can be invited to provide professional talk to other users toward the new direction of the innovation. As highlighted earlier on, facilitators of change need

to promote networking of teachers. Teachers reaching this level are critical and can be used as resource persons in forums that bring teachers together to share experiences regarding critical education issues.

The LoU provides an important framework to study how teachers come to terms with the new curriculum because some aspects are directly related to the ideas of the curriculum reform in Malawi. The LoU also provides a benchmark for checking whether teachers CA practices reflect the changing pattern and focus. A critical view of key stages such as refinement, integration and renewal are substantial to the curriculum reform espoused in OBE. Refinement represents a paradigm shift in which a learner is the primary interest of any teacher activity in order to achieve the expected outcomes. This is in contrast with the previous orientation in which teachers were interested in covering and delivering content. With regard to assessment, teachers are expected to focus their CA practices to the benefit of the learner. This represents a shift in the focus of assessment in the new curriculum.

Integration provides a forum for creating a learning community ready to share experiences and practices for the learners to reap the benefits of integrating CA in the teaching and learning process. This is in tandem with the current curriculum which promotes team work and collaboration. Finally, renewal recognises that no innovation is perfect, in that it is subject to further refinement in an effort to bring about quality benefit.

More than a decade after the implementation of curriculum reform, the study comes at the right time to determine the LoU at which teachers are in implementing the

integration of CA in their lessons. The LoU framework therefore fits very well with this study as it has the capability of identifying at what level teachers put into practice CA and determine how teachers have transformed their assessment practices.

However, the concept of LoU has some limitations. As noted, it just focuses on the behavioural characteristics of the users at each level and the role of the facilitator in stimulating the use of an innovation. LoU framework does not adequately explain the reasons for use and non-use of an innovation and what motivates teachers to bring about changes in the approach of doing things. It is paramount therefore, that the facilitators know why an innovation is used in a particular way or not. This will help facilitators make an informed decision on the action to be taken. The following section explains some factors affecting the use of CA.

2.13.4 Factors affecting use of CA

In order to strengthen the framework, I now explain some factors affecting the implementation of the curriculum particularly CA. Consequently, this may address reasons for use or non-use of an innovation. Many authors have highlighted some of the reasons why CA in form of Formative Assessment (FA) activities are not put to use. Izci (2016), reviewed a number of scholarly work and identified a number of factors which impact the adoption and consequently use of FA. These factors are divided into four major types namely, personal, contextual, resource-related and external.

2.13.4.1 Personal factors

In the review of literature, Izci (2016) notes that personal factor constitutes several teacher-related factors which either encourage or impede the way CA can be used. Among these factors are teacher's beliefs about learning. It is noted that teachers who are willing to provide various assessment strategies to meet the students' needs and their ability to engage students in assessment process, are more likely to embrace FA. In addition, teachers who are engrained in traditional philosophy and value factual knowledge are less likely to adopt FA than constructivist teachers.

Furthermore, teachers whose attitude have been shaped by external accountability like national examinations and national accountability tests are less likely to adopt FA. This tension is likely to resurface. For a long time, Malawi education system was affected by national examinations which placed high stakes hence had a significant influence in the teaching process. However, Malawi is taking steps to reduce high stakes associated with national examination by among other things strengthening school-based assessment through CA.

2.13.4.2 Contextual factors

Contextual factors play an important role in influencing adoption of CA or not. Contextual factors refer to the environment in which teachers operate. The environment exerts significant influence on the adoption of CA. Schools which have vibrant support mechanism regarding FA are likely to use FA. Such schools are characterised by high levels of collaboration between teachers, heads of departments and head teachers in the provision of encouragement and support. For teachers to use the innovation, there is

need for constant support both internal and external. In relation to the level of use framework, collaboration is prevalent in the level of use V, which is integration.

Considering OBE and its emphasis on CA in Malawi represent a paradigm shift requiring teachers to change their practices, there is need for constant support until it is accepted and internalised. Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) argue that new ideas introduced in the education system need to have a framework to support long-term teachers learning, otherwise the absence of such efforts tend to reinforce the status quo. For instance, in Zambia and Ghana the nature of support hampered the effective implementation of CA policy. Akyeapong *et al.*, (2006) argue that supervisors did not focus on the actual CA practices but their attention was directed towards record keeping. This revealed that officials had no regard to how teachers used CA to support learning. In Zambia and Fiji, lack of monitoring and support hampered the effective use of CA (Kapambwe, 2010 & Narayang, 2014).

In addition, students on the receiving end can exert an influence on adoption of FA. Learner's negative attitude as well as absenteeism can frustrate teacher's efforts towards the use of CA. In his study, Kapambwe (2010) cites absenteeism as a major aspect that frustrates the use of CA in Zambia. Apart from learners, literature reveal that other stakeholders such as parents and other groupings that maintain strong support for the traditional paper and pencil exams influence teacher practice. Most parents are used to the traditional norm-referenced performance, where they compare the performance of their children in relation to other learners.

2.13.4.3 External factors

Izci (2016), identifies external factors which include state policies and high stakes accountability among others. The national standardised tests put pressure on teachers who only focus on completing the syllabus content. In addition, teachers tend to focus on drilling in order to prepare learners for the national examinations. This makes them to focus on preparing the learners for exams hence little attention to FA.

Finally, resource-related factors include, information, material, funding and time. Working conditions such as large class sizes and overcrowded curricular prevent teachers from using CA. In addition, lack of funding to support professional development of teachers denies teachers the need to understand the use of FA. For instance, change that is associated with the perception of an increase in workload is likely to be resisted. Teachers in Australia were not comfortable with OBE because they felt that it resulted in an increase of workload (Donnelly, 2007).

Similar sentiments were expressed in the implementation of OBE in South Africa. Jansen (1998) and Botha (2002), reported that CA increased workload in planning the work, marking and recording. In Zambia, workload was exacerbated by large class sizes against few teachers. In addition, teachers felt that the syllabus was overloaded hence little attention was given to CA as required by the policy (Kapambwe, 2010). In her curriculum reform, Malawi has embraced CA as integral part to teaching and learning. CA is also instrumental to achieving the intention of the curriculum and aspiration to improve quality learning. This study was therefore important as it aimed at exploring the level of use of CA in teaching and learning process.

In summary, LoU of an innovation, principles of OBE and factors influencing the adoption of FA form an appropriate tool to explore the use of CA in the context of OBE. While the level of use would reflect the effort or no effort in actualising the intended curriculum, principles of OBE provide the operating context for CA. Finally, factors influencing the adoption of FA offer possible explanation as to why CA is used or not.

2.14 Chapter summary

The Chapter has provided a review of literature which point to the fact that the paradigm shifts in most education reforms around the world tend to glorify continuous assessment in form of formative assessment as a panacea for dealing with education woes. The chapter has further put to light the debate associated with traditional summative assessment versus formative assessment in form of CA. Summative assessment has been blamed for separating and not supporting learners during the teaching process.

The prevailing education reforms require the use of CA as an important tool to enhancing learning. Ideally, CA, if practiced effectively can help to diagnose challenges learners face during teaching and learning. However, the review has noted that the context in which CA is implemented in most countries does not offer a favourable platform for its success. Even though CA is becoming an accepted need in the education sector, the challenge is to alleviate the hurdles that militate against its use. The next chapter looks at the research design and methodology guiding the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This study sought to explore primary school teacher's use of continuous assessment in the context of OBE. This chapter provides the research design and methodology of the study. First, it provides the theoretical perspective in which the study is situated and sampling strategies. It also outlines the data generation procedures, methods of data analysis, research ethics that were followed and measures followed to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

The theoretical viewpoint governing this study is interpretive paradigm. The way one views the world is determined by the paradigm one embraces. Niewenhuis (2007), defines a paradigm as a set of assumptions or beliefs about aspects of reality, it deals with the way people view the nature of reality (ontology) and how things can be known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies.

The earliest researchers used positivistic paradigm (Creswell, 1998). According to Wisker (2008), positivists believe that the world is describable and provable, measurable and deductive as such the aim of research is to prove something or a point. However, scholars now feel that positivism does not give adequate explanations about

human experiences. Today, there is a growing popularity of qualitative paradigm in social sciences (Creswell, 1998).

This study is guided by an interpretive paradigm. Creswell (2012), contends that interpretive research aims at “making personal assessment as to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information” (p.238). This means that research brings personal perspective in interpreting the events as Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that interpretation involves making sense of data. This study aimed at understanding teacher assessment practices. The interpretive approach enabled me to deeply understand teacher assessment practices from their day-to-day implementation process.

Stringer (2004) argues that research which provides understanding of the perspectives of the people who are involved, is likely to solve the problems in classrooms or schools. This study sought to explore teacher use of CA in the PCAR, ten years after its implementation. It intended to unpack teacher CA practices in line with the demands of the PCAR guided by OBE principles. Thus, the stories, experiences, voices and the practices of the participants were the medium through which reality was drawn. The choice of qualitative perspective allowed me to uncover teacher CA practices since I entered into the lives of the participants in their natural setting. Prolonged stay in the field and an in-depth face-to-face interview coupled with intensive lesson observations allowed me to understand teacher CA practices.

3.3 Research design

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) define a research design as a “flexible set of guidelines that connects theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and method of collecting empirical material” (p.28). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) refer to research design as the researchers plan on how to proceed with the study. It locates researchers in the practical world and connects them to specific sites, persons, groups or wherever materials for interpretation of the study are available.

This study adopted a qualitative design in order to explore and provide an in-depth account of events regarding teacher practices in the use of CA in the teaching and learning process. The criteria for selecting the qualitative case study design depend on the nature of the study (Cohen, Manion & Keith, 2000). One of the major theoretical underpinnings of qualitative design is that it regards the difference in individual perceptions and uniqueness in interpreting the phenomena. Qualitative research tends to explore attitudes, behaviour and experiences. The focus is to uncover attitudes and behaviour which are important (Dawson, 2002).

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006), explain that the purpose of qualitative research is to promote a deep and holistic or complex understanding of the phenomenon, such as environment, a process or even a belief. For qualitative inquiry to be meaningful, a thick narrative and visual data must be collected for an extended period of time in its natural setting. This is why qualitative studies are sometimes referred to as naturalistic research, naturalistic inquiry or field-oriented research (Gay *et al*, 2006). Thus, qualitative research enabled me to enter in the field of research with an open mind as Patton (2002) reminds those who choose qualitative paradigm. Realising that teachers

are key implementers as they are responsible for making classroom instructional decisions (Thornton, 1989), this approach provided rich data regarding teacher practices in the use of CA in the context of OBE.

3.4 Research Methodology

Methodology is viewed as “the rationale and the philosophical assumptions underlying a particular study” (Wisker, 2008, p.67). Since the interpretive paradigm is essentially inductive in that it creates theory and contributes to meaning rather than testing theory, qualitative case study methodology becomes the core approach. In line with this, the study engaged in qualitative case study methodology.

Literature on case study provides diverse views regarding what a case study is. However, Yin (2002) is among the seminal authors with regard to literature on case study. He defines a case as *“a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context”* (p.13). Creswell (2009) adds that *“case studies are strategies of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event activity of one or more individuals”* p.13. The integration of CA in most education systems around the world, and Malawi in particular, has become a prominent contemporary phenomenon following curriculum reforms towards learner-centred teaching approaches internationally.

The case study research is embedded in the qualitative research design as a main genre. This study considers CA as a contemporary phenomenon as it has not been entirely implemented in the education system in Malawi. In this study the use of continuous

assessment constituted a case that was explored. The case study was appropriate for this research because it helped in providing a deeper understanding of the classroom dynamics in as far as continuous assessment is concerned.

Kothari (2004) highlights that a case study focuses on a comprehensive study of “*a person on what he does, what he thinks he does and has done and what he expects to do and says he ought to do*” p.113. Similarly, this study focused on teacher practices in the use of CA which constitute what they think and say about CA and the actual practices in the teaching and learning process. It is for this reason that the case study approach used, constituted an important tool in studying the recent innovation on CA in the PCAR.

3.4.1 Sampling

The study used purposive sampling technique. Merriam, (2002) defines purposive sampling as a procedure in which the researcher chooses participants that best fit the criteria of the study. This study purposively sampled Social studies teachers teaching in the senior section of the primary school level. This constituted Standards 6, 7 and 8. This ensured uniform data generation in the subject regarding teaching and continuous assessment practices. Social studies subject was chosen because its unique goals can be supported by the new assessment culture which has been in cooperated in the PCAR.

There were a total number of eight participants. Out of the eight, six were females and two were males. There was a high number of females because the sampled classes and the subject was dominantly taught by females rather than males who were in few numbers. Each participant was given a pseudonym. Their names were identified with

the letter name of the school followed by T1 as in teacher 1 and T2 as in teacher 2 and T3 as in teacher 3.

Three primary schools were purposively sampled in this study. All these primary schools were from Rumphi District. One primary school was from the Livingstonia area and the other two were from Rumphi Boma. For the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality, each school was given a pseudonym. Alphabetical letters B, L, and S were used in place of the real names.

3.4.2 Pilot study

A pilot study is an important aspect when conducting a study. Walliman (2011) points out that a pilot pre-test the research instrument on a smaller group of research participants before it is used on the main study. Bell (1993) considers piloting as an important phase of any study. The pilot played an important role in that it helped to test the research instrument if there were some pitfalls or not (Baker, 1994). A pilot study was done between the months of January to February 2018. Four teachers were involved in the pilot study. Two schools were chosen for the pilot study. One was from a school at Livingstonia and the other one at Rumphi Boma. Two Social studies teachers from each school were involved from the senior primary school classes. These were the same classes that the main study focused on. The reason for engaging teachers in the similar classes and teaching subject was to ensure creation of similar conditions. This is based on the assumption that studies based on similar situations using same theoretical perspective would produce the same set of theoretical explanation of the phenomenon (Denzin, 2001).

The pilot demonstrated that most of the questions on the interview guide were appropriate. However, some questions needed to be refined while others changed. I therefore refined and changed some of the questions. This was so because some questions were deemed to be too academic and most participants were hesitant or had difficulties in responding. For instance, the research question on *how do you manage data on CA as an individual, as a school, as a cluster?* This question was refined to focus on an individual teacher. The element of the school and cluster was removed. This was so because the intention was to look at individual teacher's CA practices.

The other question demanded the participants to give the meaning of continuous assessment. It was framed like "*What is continuous assessment?*" Teachers involved in the pilot were not comfortable in responding to this question. It was noted through both verbal and nonverbal cues that they struggled to respond as they were trying to search for the correct response. I noted that this brought discomfort to the participating teachers. This was however rephrased to make the teachers flexible and at ease. The question was rephrased as follows "*can you tell me more about continuous assessment based on your experience and understanding.*"

In addition, there was a question that demanded participants to explain the principles of OBE, this again strained participants in trying to recall their school work as it sounded academic. This was substituted with a series of questions which reflected the incorporation of OBE principles in assessment practices, such questions included; *when planning for assessment tasks how do you consider learner diversity in your class? How do you plan assessment tasks to suit both slow and fast learners? What is your view on giving higher order assessment tasks to learners perceived as low ability?*

Furthermore, two questions were added, and these questions were; *do you encourage students to assess and provide feedback to each other? In what way do you assist learners organise peer and self-assessment?* Following this change and refining of questions, most participants responded spontaneously.

Apart from helping in refining the interview guide, the pilot offered me an opportunity to develop my practical skills in interacting with the participants and to consider some of the possible probing questions in the subsequent interviews. Furthermore, the pilot assisted in checking my pace in asking questions. I realised that participants needed some more wait time for them to articulate issues at their normal pace. In the subsequent interview, I gave the participants enough time to articulate issues and respond at their own pace. The observation checklist and document analysis checklist captured the necessary data during the piloting of the study. On the overall, the pilot study built the trustworthiness of the research instruments for the study.

3.5 Data generation

This study used three methods of data generation and these were: face-to-face interview, classroom observation and document analysis. Triangulation of these data generation methods provided a rich perspective from different angles on the use of continuous assessment in the implementation process.

3.5.1 Interview

In this study, I used face-to-face interviews with teachers to generate data. An interview is a purposeful data generation procedure in form of dialogue in which the researcher tries to obtain information from participating teachers (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). Willinam (2011), recognises three types of interviews namely, structured interviews,

unstructured and semi-structured interviews. On one hand, structured interview contains standardised questions which are usually in a closed format. On the other hand, the unstructured interview is a flexible format, usually based on a question guide but where the format remains the choice of the interviewer, who can allow the interview to ‘ramble’ in order to get insights from the attitudes of the interviewee.

Finally, a semi-structured interview contains structured and unstructured sections with standardised and open type question. This study used both unstructured and semi structured interviews (see appendix 1) in a face-to-face approach. The structured and semi-structured approach provided me with flexibility in data generation (Willinam, 2011).

Interviews were very important in that they provided a doorway in exploring teacher understanding of CA and how they envisaged their practices in the lesson presentation as they implemented CA in the context of OBE. Tuckman (1994), explains that the only way to find out the phenomenon is to ask questions from the people who are involved in it in some particular way. In this case, both unstructured and semi structured interviews were used.

Data generation using interview brings forth several advantages. Anderson and Arsenault (1998), state that interview as a data generation method is advantageous in the sense that participants are easily engaged as opposed to the use of the questionnaire. The face-to-face engagement with a participant, benefits both the researcher and the participant. On one hand, the researcher is able to clarify some of the questions which the participants may find it difficult to understand (Walliman, 2011).

On the other hand, the participant may clarify some of the responses which the researcher may not be clear about. In addition, the interviewer has room to dig more information through probing questions, thereby obtaining detailed information befitting qualitative studies, (Walliman, 2011, Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Furthermore, the interviewer is able to pick some nonverbal cues which are equally important during data analysis. All in all, interview gives room to the qualitative researcher to gather thick data which enriches qualitative studies.

There was one long face-to-face semi structured interview with each participating teacher which took an average of fifty minutes followed by a series of short five to ten-minute follow-up interviews conducted during the study. A total of eight long interviews were conducted on all the participating teachers. I used open ended semi structured interview and listened carefully about what teachers said on their continuous assessment practices. These interviews enabled me to get thick descriptions of participant's continuous assessment practices.

The long semi structured interview for each participating teacher was aimed at finding a number of key issues relating to the study. These key issues were: preliminary data about the participants in terms of their background information which included education qualification, experience and teaching load. In addition, the general CA practices in terms of planning, feedback, CA data management and CA tasks were probed.

Furthermore, the interview sought to gather information on their understanding of the concept CA as propagated by the curriculum and how CA supports the core principles

of OBE including the opportunities and challenges they encountered in the process of implementing CA. Lastly, the interview accorded an opportunity to generate data on the teacher's feelings and thoughts and prior preparation regarding the use of CA which was not possible to get using lesson observations.

Apart from the eight long face-to-face preliminary interviews, there were a total of twenty-four short post observation interview which sought to clarify some issues emanating from the classroom observations. The follow up post lesson observation interview ended as soon as the lesson observations reached a saturation point.

Even though interviews are advantageous, Anderson and Arsenault (1998) observe that the quality of interview can be affected by interruptions and pressure of time. This was true in the case of my study when I was conducting the interview in the open space. In order to avoid the interruptions in subsequent interviews, I requested for a special room to conduct an interview. In addition, Marshal and Rossman (1995), observe that sometimes participants are unable to share experiences in an effort to hide their weaknesses. In order to counter such a challenge, I used other methods for the purpose of triangulation. Furthermore, my prolonged contact with participating teachers in the field made them to be freer as such they were able to be very open and provided me with detailed information regarding their CA practices. I visited the school several times for two school terms.

3.5.2 Lesson observation

Walliman (2011), notes that observation just like other strategies help to record data about events and activities. What is observed is the event or phenomenon in action (Tuckman, 1994). This study was interested in the actions and activities teachers engage in the implementation of CA in the classroom. A lesson observation checklist, (see appendix 2) was used in this study. This checklist enabled me to be focused on things I was interested in. However, emerging issues outside the observation protocol were also considered. Lesson observation therefore offered an opportunity for data triangulation. A total of forty lesson observations were done. Each lesson observed took thirty minutes. Five lesson observations were done on each of the eight participants.

The first lesson observation for each of the eight participants was just for familiarisation purpose, however it was important for the study. The intention was to have more than five lesson observations on each participant, however, as I carried out the observations the same issues were recurrent from the beginning to the fifth lesson. Thus, data reached its theoretical saturation point (Auerbach & Silverman 2003, Tuettmann, 2003, Glaser & Strauss 1967) and I felt that it was unnecessary to go on with further lesson observations.

Lesson observation provided me with significant insights on how CA was put into use. In addition, it helped me to check whether information about CA practices obtained from the initial interview corresponded with classroom CA practices. Key aspects in the observation were on how teachers structured their CA tasks, the forms of CA, learner support and feedback and how CA tools such as questions were used. The lesson observation also gave me an opportunity to determine whether teachers incorporated

OBE premises and principles regarding assessment in their teaching. During the whole process of observation, I acted as a non-participant observer. Being a non-participant observer, enabled me to be focused on CA practices which was the crucial aspect of the study. During lesson observation, I was writing key aspects based on the lesson observation schedules and other emerging issues.

The lesson observed was recorded and transcribed. Creswell (2009), points out that organisation of data is very important during data analysis. Transcribing data is therefore important in coding the data for possible generation of categories. In other words, transcribing data helps in making the data ready for analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The information recorded was very useful in that it brought me back to the lesson during data analysis stage. This helped me to have information which I missed when writing the lesson critical incidents. As highlighted earlier, lesson observation was followed by a brief post observation interview which sought clarification on some of the critical issues I noted during the lesson observation. Post observation interview therefore developed some consensus on the data generated at the same time debriefing teachers' thinking and actions on CA practices.

Although lesson observation played a complementary role to other forms of data generation techniques, it has some shortfalls. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) point out that the presence of the observer may alter the behaviour of those being observed. In order to reduce the weaknesses associated with observations, I carried out several observations in order to make the participants become accustomed to my presence.

3.5.3 Document analysis

Yin (2002) recognises a critical role of documents in any case study. He argues that documents help to corroborate with evidence from other sources. Teachers are required to come up with documentation such as learner progress books, lesson plans, schemes and records of work and assessment tasks. In addition, students work may provide valuable information about classwork. These are important documents which highlight important episodes regarding the teaching and learning process.

Other equally important documents are, syllabus, teacher's guides and prescribed teaching and learning materials and policy documents. These are important because they outline the expectations of the policy regarding all what is involved in the teaching and learning process. Information regarding CA are likely to appear in these documents as it is well known that CA is integral to teaching and learning process.

To begin with, lesson plans for each lesson and schemes of work were analysed. This contained information on how teachers planned their work. The lesson plans and schemes of work captured how teachers integrated their CA in their planning process. In addition, lesson plan stipulates how teachers plan written tasks such as exercises, assignment and homework activities.

CA is very important and all lesson plans should include well-planned homework activities, written work, tasks, exercises and assignments. Apart from lesson plans and schemes and records of work, teacher-made CA tasks were also reviewed. All the schools had designated CA day where learners were given written CA tasks. In addition, a selection of student's written work and teacher feedback were analysed. Further, other

CA related documents such as learner portfolios, rubrics and performance registers were reviewed to check their frequency of use and management. Finally, other curriculum documents like learners' textbooks, teachers guide and CA related manuals were reviewed to gain an understanding of the curriculum expectations.

Documents generated information such as different modes of assessment used by teachers, the type of feedback teachers provided such as grades and comments. In addition, documents provided evidence of the quality of CA given to learners. Apart from interview and classroom observation in generating information on teacher practices regarding CA, document analysis was an important method which provided artefacts on teacher practices. Documents are thus important in that they assist in verifying or supporting data obtained from interview or observation and vice versa (MacMillan, 2004).

3.6 Data analysis

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006) and Patton (2002), point out that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories. The data generated in a qualitative study through observation, interview and document analysis results into great volume of data which needs to be summarised and interpreted (Macmillan, 2004). Qualitative data analysis is thus widely accepted as a formidable task (Gay *et al.*, 2006). For this reason, analysis of data began in the process of data generation.

MacMillan (2004), identifies three steps of analysing qualitative data and these are: organising of the data; summarising the data; and then interpreting the data. With regard

to familiarisation of data, I got familiar with it as I personally carried out the data generation procedures through face-to-face interview, observation and document analysis and field notes. An increased level of familiarisation of interview data involved thorough listening and re-listening to the interview recordings. After this process I transcribed the interview. Later, I listened to the interview once more in relation to the transcribed data. This was to make sure that the transcribed data reflected the recorded interviews and that I get immersed and understand the essence of the data.

Later on, I read through the transcribed data and picked up key issues in form of notes and codes in the margins of the transcribed data arising from the data. Initial codes captured the exact words from the research participants. The purpose of the preliminary coding was to capture the essence of the data. Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieh (2006), describe such codes as *in vivo* codes. These codes marked a preliminary step in generating codes. After reflecting on the notes and preliminary codes, new codes were developed to capture similar patterns arising from the data. Constant comparison was done in order to check if there was any form of linkage of the preliminary codes identified and then given a new code forming categories. This was merged with interview summary notes which I took soon after the interview which highlighted key issues arising from the interview in relation to the study. This represented major themes.

During lesson observation, I came up with summary notes regarding the lessons observed where I took note of key issues arising including emerging issues which needed further exploration. I recorded the lesson at the same time came up with a descriptive narration of events during the lesson from the beginning to the end. This

was compared with the data from audio recording to make sure that some aspects recorded during lesson observation were captured. I identified key issues arising from data generated through classroom observation by engaging in reflection on the data and this was linked to the purpose of the study and the research questions. Dawson (2002) notes that taking notes and summaries during data generation process is important as it plays an important role during data analysis.

Thirdly, I analysed teaching documents prepared by teachers. This included: the lesson plan, schemes and records of work. In these documents, I checked for key issues relating to CA. I attempted to check the CA practices in terms of the types of CA tasks prepared for learners, feedback and any other support mechanism coming out as a result of CA activities.

3.7 Research ethics

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) recognise the role of ethics in qualitative research. Ethics looks at how researchers treat individuals with whom they interact. Informed consent is central to any research ethics in that it “*seeks to ensure that all human subjects retain the autonomy and ability to judge for themselves what risks are worth taking for the purpose of furthering scientific knowledge*” (Gay *et al.*, 2006: 408). Issues of ethics in this study included: gaining access: informed consent: and confidentiality.

3.7.1 Gaining access

I obtained permission to conduct the study upon approval of my research proposal from University of Malawi, Chancellor College. This approval letter was presented to the

Education Division Manager but I was referred to present the letter to the District Education Manager who is responsible for primary schools. The District Education Manager appended the signature and asked schools to assist me (see appendix 3). The letter was then presented to the Head teachers who were able to arrange for me the participating teachers of my choice. Jansen (2007) points out that gaining access to participating teachers is a prerequisite to research ethics.

3.7.2 Informed consent

Upon meeting the participating teachers, I explained the purpose of the study. I further highlighted to them that my study would involve face-to-face interview, lesson observation which were to be recorded. I requested them if they were comfortable with all the data generation tools. I further advised them that whenever they felt like withdrawing from participating in the study they were free to do so (Creswell, 2003). All participants consented by signing the consent form.

3.7.3 Confidentiality

Stringer (2004) observes that during research, participants may speak of very private matters and reveal very problematic events even potentially harmful information. In this case it is important to protect the participants by ensuring that reporting is anonymous. During the study, I assured participants of high level of confidentiality regarding the information I generated as a result of the interaction with them. In addition, I assured them that I would use pseudonyms to represent them and that the recorded information would be accessed by myself only. In this study, each participant was given a pseudonym. The names of the schools were also given pseudonyms. Furthermore, all the data was transcribed by myself using pseudonyms. This was done

to ensure that any person who would access the transcripts would not be able to know the exact names of those who were involved.

3.8 Trust-worthiness and credibility

Generally, critics of qualitative research argue that qualitative studies are liable to subjective judgment because of their nature of inquiry (Creswell, 2009; Stringer, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). With this in mind, this qualitative study used several mechanisms to guard against any form of bias. The study was informed by Gay *et al.*, (2006) ideas on approaches to take in order to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of research studies, some of these ideas included the following:

3.8.1 Prolonged participation at the study site

The presence of the researcher usually influences the behaviour of the participants. It is common that participants may artificially display behaviour in order to impress the researcher. Prolonged participation is said to reduce the distortions produced by the presence of the researcher (Gay *et al.*, 2006). Stringer (2004), adds that when one stays longer in the field, an atmosphere of trust with the participants is created. As a result of this, the researcher can gain greater access to insider knowledge. Creswell (2009) argues that the more contact the researcher has with the participants, the more accurate or valid the findings will be.

In this study, I stayed longer in all the study sites. I first made familiarisation tour to introduce myself to the schools and participants. This enabled me to solicit information about the school and take note of the ethos. I had visited the schools for two school terms periodically. The prolonged visits created rapport with the participants and as a

result, the participants were free to conduct their duties normally without any form of anxiety resulting from my presence (Gay *et al.*, 2006).

3.8.2 Persistent observation

Just as prolonged participation, I carried out several lesson observations until reaching saturation point. The term saturation as used by Auerbach and Silverman (2003) refers to a situation when no any new information is obtained from the study. As highlighted earlier, I planned to carry out more than five lesson observations but I stopped at five because the same issues kept on recurring in the subsequent lesson observations.

3.8.3 Member check

Member check makes it possible for an independent person, for instance a critical friend to examine the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Gay *et al* 2006). In this study, I requested my colleagues to go through my work to make observations on instances of biased interpretation and to check on issues which were not substantiated with evidence. In addition, the research seminars in the course of my study and supervisory support enabled me to make follow ups with the participating teachers on the gaps identified during such seminars.

3.8.4 Practice triangulation

Triangulation according to Gay *et al.* (2006) refers to the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies and data sources to obtain a holistic picture of what is being studied. Reliance on one source of information cannot provide diverse perspective of the phenomenon. In this study, I used interview, classroom observation,

field notes and document analysis. Again, there were a series of follow-up interviews to seek clarification on certain issues.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has highlighted the use of qualitative research design which ably helped to unpack teacher assessment practices by listening to their stories, voices and experiences in their school and classroom setup. The study was in form of the case study. The case study methodology helped me in getting a deep and holistic picture of teacher classroom assessment practices in the teaching of Social studies.

The chapter has highlighted the use of purposive sampling technique and engaged eight primary school teachers handling Social studies from three primary schools in Rumphi District. Several interviews, classroom observations and document analysis provided me with the thick description on the realities of CA practices by participating teachers in an effort to support the desires of the PCAR. In addition, the chapter has highlighted the use of classroom lesson observation which was done more than three times for each of the participating teachers. The study has also highlighted the use of documents analysis on lesson plans, schemes and records of work and student's scripts in order to understand how teachers planned their assessment.

The study has underlined the use of pseudonyms for both schools and participating teachers in order to ensure the anonymity of the participating schools and teachers. In terms of trustworthiness, the chapter has stressed prolonged stay in the field. Several visits were made in two terms and this helped develop familiarity with the participating teachers, consequently they were free in expressing themselves.

The next chapter presents and discusses the finding of the study. First, the study has provided participating teachers details and their schools. Second, the chapter presents and discusses the teacher's assessment practices with their associated opportunities and challenges that they face and how they resolve such challenges.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The study was aimed at exploring the use of CA in the teaching and learning process, ten years after rolling out the Primary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) in Malawi. This chapter presents and discusses the findings in line with the research questions guiding the study. The following were the research questions: What are the teacher's practices on continuous assessment in the teaching of Social studies in the context of OBE? What opportunities and challenges does CA bring in the teaching and learning of Social studies in primary schools? How do teachers cope with challenges associated with CA practices in Social studies? The chapter begins with a description of participating teachers and their schools followed by discussions of the findings in line with the research questions.

4.2 The study case: Teachers and their schools

In this study, eight primary school teachers were sampled. The eight teachers came from three primary schools in Rumphi District. Each school and participating teachers were given pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity. Names of the schools were referred to as school B, L and S. Each teacher per school was labelled T1, T2 and T3. When describing the participating teachers, the first letter represents the name of the

school followed by the labelling for a specific teacher. Table 4 provides a summary of the schools and participating teachers.

Table 4: Shows profiles of study participants

School	Name of the teacher	sex	Teaching subjects	Classes taught	Qualification	Years of experience
B	BT1	F	Agriculture, Science and Technology, English, Chichewa, Social studies, Expressive Arts, Mathematics	6	Primary school teaching certificate	2
	BT2	F	English, Social and Environmental Sciences	6	Primary teaching qualification	2
	BT3	F	English, Chichewa, Science and Technology, Social and Environmental Sciences Expressive Arts, Bible Knowledge, Agriculture, Life Skills	6 7 5 2	Primary teaching qualification	3
L	LT1	M	Social and Environmental Sciences, Science and Technology, Mathematics	7&8	Primary teaching certificate	9
	LT2	F	Science and Technology, Social and Environmental Sciences, Chichewa, Bible Knowledge	5&6	Primary teaching qualification	4
S	ST1	M	English, Social and Environmental Sciences Agriculture, Expressive Arts, Bible Knowledge	7&8	Primary teaching qualification	5
	ST2	F	Social and Environmental Sciences, English, Expressive Arts, Life Skills	6	Bachelor of arts in guidance and counselling Primary school teaching certificate	21
	ST3	F	Social and Environmental Sciences, Mathematics, Bk, Chichewa, Expressive Arts	6	Primary school teaching certificate	6

Based on the table, the sample had the following participating teachers, BT1, BT2, BT3, LT1, LT2, ST1, ST2, and ST3, making a total of eight teachers.

4.2.1 School B and its participating teachers

School B is at Rumphu Boma. It had a total population of 1291 learners. Standard 6 and 7 had a total number of 187 and 145 learners respectively. The school had 21 classrooms. School B had spacious head teacher teacher's office and a deputy head teacher's office. The school also had a staff room that could accommodate close to 15 teachers and a library with a reasonable number of books that were well-shelved. During the whole period of the study, learners were never seen using the library although it was reported that learners were allowed to borrow books from the library.

At school B, three teachers participated in the study. They were given the following pseudonyms; BT1, BT2 and BT3. Teacher BT1 had primary school teaching certificate and had taught in primary school for two years. She was teaching in Standard 6 in the following subjects: Agriculture, Science and Technology, English, Chichewa, Social studies, Expressive Arts and Mathematics. Teacher BT2 taught English, Social and Environmental Sciences in Standard 6 and had two years teaching experience with her primary school teaching certificate. Finally, teacher BT3 taught English, Chichewa, Science and Technology, Social and Environmental Sciences, Expressive Arts, Bible Knowledge, Agriculture, and Life Skills in various classes such as standard 2, 5, 6 and 7. She had three years teaching experience in primary school. Table 4 above provides a summary of teachers and their attributes.

4.2.2 School L and its participating teachers

School L is away from Rumphi Boma as opposed to school B and S. The school had a total number of 591 learners and 12 teachers. Both Standard 6 and 7 had a total number of 68 learners each. Each teacher was assigned to teach many subjects in one class. The school had 12 classrooms. The school has a library, although there were no signs that learners were using it. The library had few resources for the primary school curriculum, most of the books were of the old curriculum including some books which were donated. At this school, there were two teachers who participated in this study. The teachers were labelled LT1 and LT2 as pseudonyms.

Teacher LT1 was teaching, Social studies, science and technology in Standard 7 and 8. This teacher had nine years of teaching experience and had primary teaching certificate obtained from Karonga Teachers Training College (see table 4). Apart from teaching, teacher LT1 was an Assistant Coordinating Primary Education Adviser (PEA). Teacher LT2 was teaching Standard 5 and 6 in the following subjects: Science and Technology, Social and Environmental Sciences, Chichewa and Bible Knowledge. Teacher LT2 had four years of teaching experience during the period of the study.

4.2.3 School S and its participating teachers

School S is located at Rumphi Boma. The school had a total population of 2280 learners and a total of 53 teachers. Standard 6 had a total number of 318 learners and Standard 7 has a total number of 310 learners. There were 14 classrooms. In order to resolve the challenges of class size, the school introduced a double shift system with 6 streams. Teachers in one shift were expected to teach all the three streams in subjects allocated to them. More frequently, teachers were seen combining classes when teaching

resulting into large class sizes. Class sizes ranged from 50 to 60, in some classes it was higher. When classes were combined, the numbers rose up to 100 plus.

The school had 24 classrooms. However, six classes were conducted outside the classroom due to lack of space. The school had one small office shared by the head teacher and the deputy head teacher. In addition, the school had no staffroom. Teachers spent most of their time outside as the head teacher's office could only accommodate five people. Teachers were seen under nearby trees marking and making lesson preparations. The school did not have a Library for learners. However, they had a small storeroom where some school books were kept, though mixed with other equipment like wheelbarrows and other cleaning materials.

At school S three teachers participated in the study. Each teacher was assigned a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity. These were teacher ST1, ST2 and ST3. As presented in table 4, teacher ST1 possessed primary teaching qualification and had five years of teaching experience at primary school level. Teacher ST1 was teaching Standard 7 and 8 in the following subjects: English, Social and Environmental Sciences, Agriculture, Expressive Arts and Bible Knowledge. Teacher ST2 had 21 years teaching experience. The teacher had Bachelor of Arts in guidance and counselling and possessed a primary school teaching certificate. Teacher ST2 was teaching Standard 6 in the following subjects: Social studies, English, Expressive Arts and Life Skills. Teacher ST3 with a primary school teaching certificate, had six years of teaching experience and taught Standard 6 in the following subject's: Social studies, Mathematics, Bible Knowledge, Chichewa and Expressive Arts.

4.3 Teacher practices in the use of CA in Social studies

The study noted five aspects regarding teacher CA practices in the teaching and learning process. These CA practices bordered around the following areas: forms of CA tasks, nature of CA tasks, frequency of CA, functions of CA and management of CA records.

4.3.1 Forms of CA tasks

This section presents the findings on the forms of CA tasks that teachers used during the teaching and learning process in Social studies. The findings of the study revealed that teachers used the formal paper and pencil test in order to assess learners. During face-to-face interviews regarding the forms of CA tasks the teachers were using, the teachers had this to say:

Let us say in Standard 7, the learners have learnt about latitudes and longitudes and they cover the whole topic including new topics then we give them a test. We ask them questions like what are latitudes? Or what are longitudes? Mention the importance of latitudes or longitudes. These are some of the questions (Teacher ST1, face-to-face interview, 20.04.2018 9am)

I use multiple choice and then thinking questions. Sometimes they have to answer on their own. They have experience so I use those questions within their experience. On the type of questions, I usually take the Malawi National Examination Board type (MANEB). When asking questions, I use the past papers for the MANEB so that they should be familiar with those tests administered at national level. (Teacher BT2, face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

In the above extracts, teacher ST1 and teacher BT2 demonstrate that formal paper and pencil tests are mostly used in assessing learners. In the case of teacher ST1, the impression given indicates that the CA task is administered at the end of the topic,

thereby pointing to the idea of summative assessment. In addition, teacher BT2 seem to be influenced by National examination in framing continuous assessments tasks.

Another teacher expressed similar orientation. Teacher LT1 said “*practical work, oral questions, written questions...mmm...there are so many of course*”. When asked on the tasks teacher LT1 frequently used, the teacher said practical work, written tests and oral questions. Teacher LT1 was hesitant to mention other CA tasks. This gave an impression that those tasks she was hesitant to mention were either rarely used or she was not conversant with them.

Another teacher highlighted the following when asked about continuous assessment tasks used.

... apo tikuyikapo ma question ngati multiple choice na yanyake yakuti bapange thinking baganizilengepo naoso. Kufumba waka no kuyikapo ma answers cha kuti uwone kuti ka payekha angazgola pala wakumana na fumbo angazgola ngeti kupanga explain or kupanga kuyowoya meaning yay a chinthu. Kweni pa multiple choice meaning ya chinthu iyo ungayikaso pa multiple choice. Kweni ungapanga waka kunyake kumusi, ngeti kufumba waka question. *We just put multiple choice questions. We also add some questions which demand reasoning such as questions which demand one to explain. We put some questions without putting answers so that we should see whether the learner can think. But on multiple choice we put answers. But in other questions learners have to write their own responses.* (Teacher BT1 face-to-face interview, 20.06.2018)

Similar to teacher ST1 and BT2, Teacher BT1 above highlighted the use of formal CA tasks which takes the form of periodic tests in form of multiple choice and short answer questions. In teacher BT1's explanation, the teacher thought that by administering CA tasks with no answers, that promoted thinking. However, this is not usually the case, actually it is the way questions are structured that determine whether they promote thinking or are merely recall based.

Of all the participants, only teacher ST2 indicated that she used group and pair work as forms of CA tasks. This gave an opportunity for learners to analyse their responses critically and in turn enhanced peer assessment. Teacher ST2 also mentioned peer assessment as an important aspect that was promoted in the lessons. Teacher ST2 had this to say:

... actually, we assign reading work to our learners in specific topics. That reading work is done in groups. After that has been done, we ask them questions at the end of the week. If some learners do not understand, we ask them to help each other and ask each other some questions. Or else we just discuss in class. Later on, they are given assessment at the end of each week (ST2 face-to-face interview 19.04.2018, 8am)

Teacher ST2 statement above is a manifestation that she used peer assessment which is promoted in the PCAR. However, the teacher did not articulate how she facilitated the process of peer assessment in order to be more meaningful. It should be noted that this teacher had 21 years of teaching experience, her assessment practices might have been attributed to long experience she had served as a teacher. Even though this was a unique observation in as far as CA is concerned, on the overall, the dominant assessment tasks administered to learners included, class-based oral question and answer and the periodical fortnight or monthly tests. Levstik and Barton, (2011) posit that Social studies constructive assessment is supposed to give many ways in which students know.

This could be through a variety of formal and informal assessment tasks. The teachers in this study failed to live to this expectation. The dominance of formal CA tasks did not provide a wider platform for assessing learners. Teachers were supposed to use different types of assessment tasks in order to allow different learning opportunities. These CA practices did not go beyond the essence of improving learning. Restricting continuous assessment tasks to dominantly formal tasks through tests did not provide opportunities for learners to display their competence based on individual difference. Such CA practices did not support expanded opportunities as per OBE principles which entails the use of diverse assessment tasks. In addition, the use of formal test with little effort of improving learning portrays routine level according to Hall and Hord (2001). At this level users of an innovation tend to be satisfied when an innovation is put into practice but fall short of achieving desired elements.

4.3.1.1 Forms of continuous assessment noted from lesson observations

A series of lesson observations were made in order to have an overview picture on teacher use of assessment in the teaching and learning process. Boxes 1, 2 and 3 represent teacher CA practice on forms of CA.

Box 1: Lesson observation summary for teacher LT1

Subject: Social and Environmental Sciences

Topic: Forest reserves in Malawi

Class: Standard 6

Number of learners: 50

School: L

Teacher: LT1

The teacher asked learners to mention some of the forest reserves in Malawi. Learners were asked to open a Social studies book on page 57 where there was a map of Malawi and names of the forest reserves. The learners were told to be in groups to discuss the forest reserves in Malawi. The discussion took 14 minutes, after that, group leaders were asked to write on the chalkboard and read out the responses. Learners just mentioned the forest reserves as they just copied from the textbook. The teacher then concluded by going through the learner's responses and that marked the end of the lesson. No class-based exercise or take-home assignment was given.

Teacher LT1 lesson observation vignette, 30.05.2018, 11:15am

The form of continuous assessment in the lesson observation in Box 1 is question and answer assigned to group members. This was confirmed during the post-observation interview where the teacher claimed that, the questions asked were aimed at finding out learner understanding and progress.

Box 2: Lesson observation summary for teacher ST2

Subject: Social and Environmental Sciences

Topic: Transport

Class: Standard 6

Number of learners: 59

School: S

Teacher: ST2

The teacher introduced the topic that they were going to learn about transport. During the introduction the teacher said "we are going to discuss transport, I think you all know what transport is? All learners responded in chorus saying yes. Then the teacher proceeded asking them what forms of transport they used on that day. Thereafter, learners were asked to be in groups and asked to mention the types of transport and communication. When the teacher found that there was little progress, she advised learners to open a Social studies book on page 109-110 to look for responses. Thereafter, learners presented the material. That marked the end of the lesson. There was no class-based exercise or take-home activity.

Teacher ST2, lesson observation vignette, 20-04.2018, 11am

Box 3: Lesson observation summary for teacher ST1

Subject: Social and Environmental Sciences

Topic: Population

Class: Standard 6

Number of learners: 70

School: S

Teacher: ST1

Lesson summary

The teacher began the lesson by reminding learners that in the previous lesson they discussed physical features. He asked them to define the term physical features. Two learners responded to the question. But when he asked them another question on examples of physical features most learners showed enthusiasm to respond.

He then told learners that they were going to learn about population. He asked the learners to be in groups and discuss the meaning of the term population and population density. During the presentation one group gave the meanings of the two terms. The rest of the group members also gave the same response. The impression was that some group members were just repeating what their friends presented. Finally, the teacher consolidated by repeating the learner's responses. He then highlighted that figures of population were derived from census and gave explanation of the 2019 census in Malawi. Later on, he asked learners to discuss factors influencing high population density in the Southern Region. Learners came up with only two responses and these were; availability of industries and vast space. The teacher then came up with other factors. Finally, he concluded by asking learners the definitions of population and population density and factors resulting into high densities in the Southern Region.

Teacher ST1 lesson observation vignette, 03.10.2018 time 11:15am

In Box 3, the teacher engaged learners in both question and answer and group exercise.

Box 4: Lesson observation summary for teacher LT2

Subject: Social and Environmental Sciences

Topic: HIV/AIDS.

Class: Standard 6

Number of learners: 50

School: L

Teacher LT2

Lesson summary

The teacher introduced the lesson by reminding learners that they were still on the topic of HIV/AIDS. She said that they were to discuss the misconceptions associated with HIV/AIDS. She explained to learners what was meant by the word “misconception”. She then asked learners to explain ways in which HIV/AIDS is transmitted. Learners were just stating. Sparingly, the teacher explained some of the learners’ responses. She then gave an example of misconception of HIV/AIDS and this was (*People think mosquitoes transmit HIV/AIDS*). She asked the learners if this was true. All the learners responded in unison saying Yes. Then some learners gave their responses as well. She then asked learners to discuss the misconception about HIV/AIDS in groups. They were given the books where those misconceptions were written. What learners presented was more or less the same as what they were answering before group work presentation. Then she asked the learners to do a role play on misconceptions. After the role play, the teacher highlighted that they were role playing on the misconception that having sex with a disabled person you cannot get HIV/AIDS. She asked the learners if it was true. There were both Yes’ and Nos responses from the learners in chorus response. Then the teacher said “*Some are saying Yes... Is that true?*” The whole class responded *No*. Then she asked the learners to bring back the textbooks and asked learners to write any two misconceptions of HIV/AIDS. The bell rang and she started another lesson.

Teacher LT2 Lesson observation, 28.05.2018 11:15am

Teacher LT2 in Box 4 used question and answer and class written exercise as continuous assessment tasks given to learners. This was crosschecked during post-observation interview when asked about the forms of continuous assessment the teacher used during lesson presentation.

The lesson observation summary reports in Boxes 1, 2, 3 and 4 by teachers LT1, ST2, ST1 and LT2 represent typical examples of forms of continuous assessment tasks used during teaching and learning process. In all the instances, teachers used question and answer method in trying to know the attainment of learning outcomes in the process of teaching as well as at the end of the lesson.

After lesson observation, I conducted a post observation interview in which I asked the teachers the forms of assessment they used in the lesson. All the eight participating teachers indicated the use of question and answer as a way of assessing progress of the lesson. The only variation among them was the degree to which they used various CA tasks. Teacher BT2 indicated the use of group work presentation as a way of checking learner's progress. *"I use group presentation in order to assess them"* (BT2 post-lesson observation interview). Teacher BT2 highlighted that the overall group presentations enabled her to have an overview on how the lesson was faring, in that if many groups failed to present right answers she considered revising the lesson or coming up with a remedial lesson.

Another form of continuous assessment which was dominantly used by teachers was the formal paper and pencil exams. This was highlighted by participating teachers in all the interviews conducted. These paper and pencil exams were conducted fortnightly or monthly depending on teachers' schedules. The paper and pencil exams which were administered fortnightly or monthly seemed to have the highest priority than other forms of continuous assessment tasks. Teachers valued these because they formed an important component in the grading of learners.

While group assessment is one of the strategies in assessing learners, the major challenge is that it obscures individual diagnosis of learner attainment of learning outcomes. During the lesson observations for teachers, BT2, ST1 and LT2 in selected lesson presentations, I noted that a few learners participated actively in the deliberations. If this situation is widespread, it is likely to result into getting views of clever learners only. In this case, a teacher may get a distorted view of learner attainment of outcomes.

These continuous assessment practices are limited in capturing learners' progress within the diverse learning environment. A variety of continuous assessment tasks is capable of enabling a teacher to take advantage of different learning styles of learners. Hansen (1989), hints that OBE encourage teachers to use different ways of continuously assessing learners such that there is a move from predominantly multiple-choice tests to demonstration, observation, task completion, self-assessment and student projects.

The Teacher's guide for Social studies clearly highlights the focus of assessment. In each topic there are specific areas of focus. For instance, it stipulates specific skills learners have to demonstrate in form of knowledge concepts, specific values and attitudes and skills (MoEST, 2013). In summary, the continuous assessment must focus on knowledge, skills and values reflecting on all the domains of behaviour (MOE & MIE, 2007). However, the continuous assessment practices as portrayed through lesson observations and interviews revealed that teachers only focused on the cognitive aspects of learning. This might be attributed to lack of clear ways of assessing the other aspects including soft skills. Furthermore, the Teacher's guide highlights the importance of using both formal and informal approach of continuous assessment. However, the

findings of the study revealed that teachers dominantly used the formal approaches at the expense of informal aspects.

The impression from the responses was that teachers dominantly assessed learners using periodic short tests. Even though teacher BT3 indicated the use of a variety of continuous assessments tasks such as role play, group work, tests and homework, the teacher conceded that the most common forms of continuous assessments carried out were group work and tests. Such continuous assessment practices therefore provided limited opportunities for learners to demonstrate the achievement of educational outcomes in the way that best suits them. In addition, such tests did not give an opportunity for learners to improve since they were conducted at the end of the topic or unit.

Similarly, limiting continuous assessment to periodical tests limit teachers in understanding the quality of learning thereby hindering the provision of quality support. The curriculum documents demand the use of both formal and informal continuous assessment procedures. To the contrary, the continuous assessment tasks were dominated by formal ones only.

The findings suggest that participating teachers were still experiencing dilemma in shifting to new ways of continuously assessing learners. In addition, the study noted that teachers were influenced by external factors such as MANEB in formulating their continuous assessment tasks. This is similar to the study done by Teddie (2010), who contends that teachers tend to teach to test in order to prepare learners for exams. Limited or lack of multiple continuous assessment strategies does not accommodate

multiple learning opportunities for learners to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes, hence the principle of expanded learning opportunity is compromised (Spady, 1994).

Limited number of continuous assessment tasks participating teachers in the study gave to learners provided limited lens through which to effectively assess learners for meaningful learning. With regard to level of use, the findings of the study revealed that the assessment practices represented the routine level. Participating teachers had not moved beyond the traditional assessment practices. It was noted that once they gave one or two forms of continuous assessment task they got satisfied that they had fulfilled the requirement of continuously assessing learners. This CA practice only served an administrative role than informing learning.

It can therefore be argued that the curriculum reform process focussed much on superficial elements taking for granted critical elements. It was therefore imperative to ground teachers with in-depth information on assessment that would help in achieving the ideals of the curriculum. In this reform, teachers were supposed to be trained on how best to use different assessment tasks towards achieving learning outcomes.

4.3.2 Nature of assessment tasks

Apart from the forms of continuous assessment tasks, the study explored the nature of continuous assessment tasks. The focus was to explore how teachers framed continuous assessment tasks to promote learning in line with the demands of continuous assessment in the PCAR.

4.3.2.1 Nature of questioning

In this study, oral question and answer and formal questioning through periodical tests formed the dominant aspect of teacher CA practices. Analysis of data revealed that questioning was a major strategy which was used by the participating teachers as an assessment tool that informed their teaching and learning process.

During lesson observations, it was noted that teachers mostly used oral questions in what is popularly known as question-and-answer method as a teaching and assessment strategy. This was confirmed by participating teachers during the post-lesson observation interview in which they indicated that the questions asked during class work were aimed at assessing the learning progress. When asked about the forms of assessment used in the lesson observed, teacher LT2 said “*When I was asking them those questions in class I was assessing them*”. A similar response was given by teachers ST1, BT2 BT3, LT2 that when they ask learners questions in class they get to know their capabilities.

Literature supports the idea that questioning is one of the commonly used strategies in order to continuously assess learner’s prior knowledge of the subject matter or gauge whether learning is taking place or not (Burden & Byrd, 2003). Fautly and Savage (2008) contend that most research in education have noted that teachers spend more time on asking questions as a form of teaching and assessing learners during the teaching and learning process.

In this study, three aspects were noted during the lessons observations on how teachers used the questions. First, teachers asked recall-based questions which required short answers and one correct response. Secondly, when teachers asked questions, learners were given the learners' books to look up for responses without engaging them in a meaningful deliberation. Thirdly, more often than not, teachers accepted chorus responses or asked consensus seeking questions that promoted whole class response. Lesson observation summary reports in Boxes 1, 2, 3 and 4 illustrate teacher activity regarding questioning and other aspects related to use of assessment.

The activities conducted by teacher LT1 on a topic "Forest in Malawi" (see Box 1) did not promote critical thinking. Learners did not deliberate the task but rather focused on picking the responses from a given text. The questioning technique by the teacher was recall-based. In addition, the lesson finished without any take-home or class-based continuous assessment task, apart from teacher-questioning. It can be argued then that the nature of questioning as a form of CA by teacher LT1 does not advance critical thinking and consequently affecting the quality of assessment tasks. In this regard, the principle of high expectation is greatly underachieved. The use of short answer responses is typical of behaviourist learning theories which do not give room for open ended questions which have the capability of stretching learners mind (Fautly & Savage 2008).

In another lesson observation for teacher ST2 in Box 2 on the topic of transport, the teacher used questioning style that demanded short answers that did not require learners to think critically. For instance, questions which required learners to explain or provide some detailed information. In addition, when the teacher asked the second question on

the types of transport and communication, learners seemed not to understand. In such a situation, the teacher could have tried to paraphrase or provide some hints instead of just letting learners copy from the textbook. This approach to assessment practice greatly undermines student's potential to stretch their minds towards higher order thinking. In other words, it deters learners to grow towards the attainment of significant learning outcomes as per principle of high expectations (Killen, 2009). In a similar study, it was noted that teachers frequently provided answers or led learners to answers once they failed to respond to the questions (Kitiashvili, 2014).

Another lesson observation was done for teacher ST1 in Social and environmental studies in Box 3 presented earlier. The teacher did not probe the learners on some of the responses which were not clear. For example, three groups indicated that there is high population density in Southern Malawi because there is a lot of space. The teacher could have used this opportunity to clarify whether this response is plausible or not. Without doing this, learners would think that it was the correct response. In addition, teacher ST1 used more recall-based questions as opposed to thought-provoking questions. Even though the group activities were structured in a way that it would stimulate learner explanation on an issue, learners just stated the responses instead of explaining. For instance, asking learners how industries encourage population growth? The teacher did not take advantage of this to motivate learners to explaining issues. Such assessment practices have the ability to retarding intellectual growth of learners. Teachers therefore need to make follow up questions which need to take their learners to next level of thinking. The ability to ask such questions is likely to improve learning.

In addition, when concluding the lesson, the same questions which were asked in the early stages of the lesson were asked again. This gives an impression that the teacher sought to confirm if learners had memorised the responses. This was a common practice among all participating teachers. It could have been better if these questions were asked in different ways. The types of questioning reflected traditional ways of questioning. This suggests that the teacher was interested in getting earlier responses, consequently making the continuous assessment activity recall-based. Furthermore, there was no any opportunity for assessing learners in form of class-based exercise and take-home assignment despite prolonging the lesson into an extra 15 minutes.

Another lesson was observed on teacher LT2: the summary of the lesson is presented in Box 4 on the topic HIV/AIDS. The teacher engaged learners in group work. When learners were presenting their findings, they were simply reading points from the textbooks given to them. The teacher did not further challenge them to clarify their points on misconception about HIV/AIDS other than just accepting the points raised. Such kind of approach could not stretch learners mind to critical thinking. I argue that teachers needed to engage learners in examination of the misconceptions in order for them to understand.

Another key area regarding assessment is that the teacher disregarded learners' prior knowledge on misconception about HIV/AIDS. In the first place, learners demonstrated that they knew most of these misconceptions. However, the activity was repeated through group work where learners just repeated what they had already responded to. Teacher LT2 could have taken the discussion to a higher level by trying to ask learners to explain those misconceptions as to the reason why they do not make sense. Further,

the teacher frequently promoted chorus responses. In this case, it was difficult to take note of those who had problems and those that understood the issues. Effective learning has to take learners from familiarity to novel situation. In this case the teacher failed to take the learners to the next level of understanding issues using the zone of proximal development concept (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, the teacher failed to make use of the baseline assessment which was done to guide her approach to teaching. This in a way demonstrates that teacher LT2 had little knowledge on the use of baseline assessment as demanded by the curriculum (MoEST, 2014).

In another instance, when learners responded yes and no at the same time, teacher LT2 just repeated the question in an attempt to get an acceptable response. The teacher did not attempt to explain or probe learners why a “no” or “yes” answer was plausible or not. Another interesting feature is that after the lesson, the teacher switched to another lesson in a different subject. This gives an impression on the idea of shortage of staff. In ideal situation, the teacher was supposed to have a break and come back at some other time. This puts to question as to whether they can effectively monitor learner’s performance through diverse continuous assessment tasks.

The selected scenarios above by teacher LT1, LT2, ST1 and ST2, present a problematic picture regarding the use of questioning during the teaching and learning process. The questioning techniques used by the four teachers did not challenge learners during the teaching and learning process. In addition, teacher LT2 who was teaching learners about misconceptions associated with HIV/AIDS did not use her questions to identify learner’s prior knowledge and re-adjust the teaching strategy following the same. One of the purposes of questioning as an assessment tool is to gauge learners’ prior

knowledge (Burden & Byrd, 2003). However, the practice by teacher LT2 seems to suggest that the teacher had inadequate knowledge of it. The teacher could have taken the discussions to higher levels having known that learners had knowledge about the misconception associated with HIV/AIDS. Teacher LT2 therefore failed to re-adjust the teaching strategy following revelations that learners already knew the material.

Furthermore, the lesson vignette points to the fact that learners were not given an opportunity to seriously deliberate the assessment tasks in that the teachers allowed them to just pick the responses from the learners' textbook. Allowing them to use learners' books to get responses raises serious questions about the purpose of the assessment. Learners spent 12 minutes discussing things which required them only to pick names of the forests from the text (in a lesson by teacher LT1). This is an indication of poor questioning and misuse of group activity as the task was too simple to require the given time for discussions. This practice did not test learners' understanding on an issue but rather reading abilities which was not the purpose. Such kind of assessment practice compromises the principle of higher expectations which entails that teachers must expect all learners to achieve outcomes which are significant through tasks which are challenging (Spady, 1994).

Apart from lesson observations, document analysis on the formal continuous assessment tasks revealed typical recall-based questioning. This is illustrated from the learners marked script in figure 3.

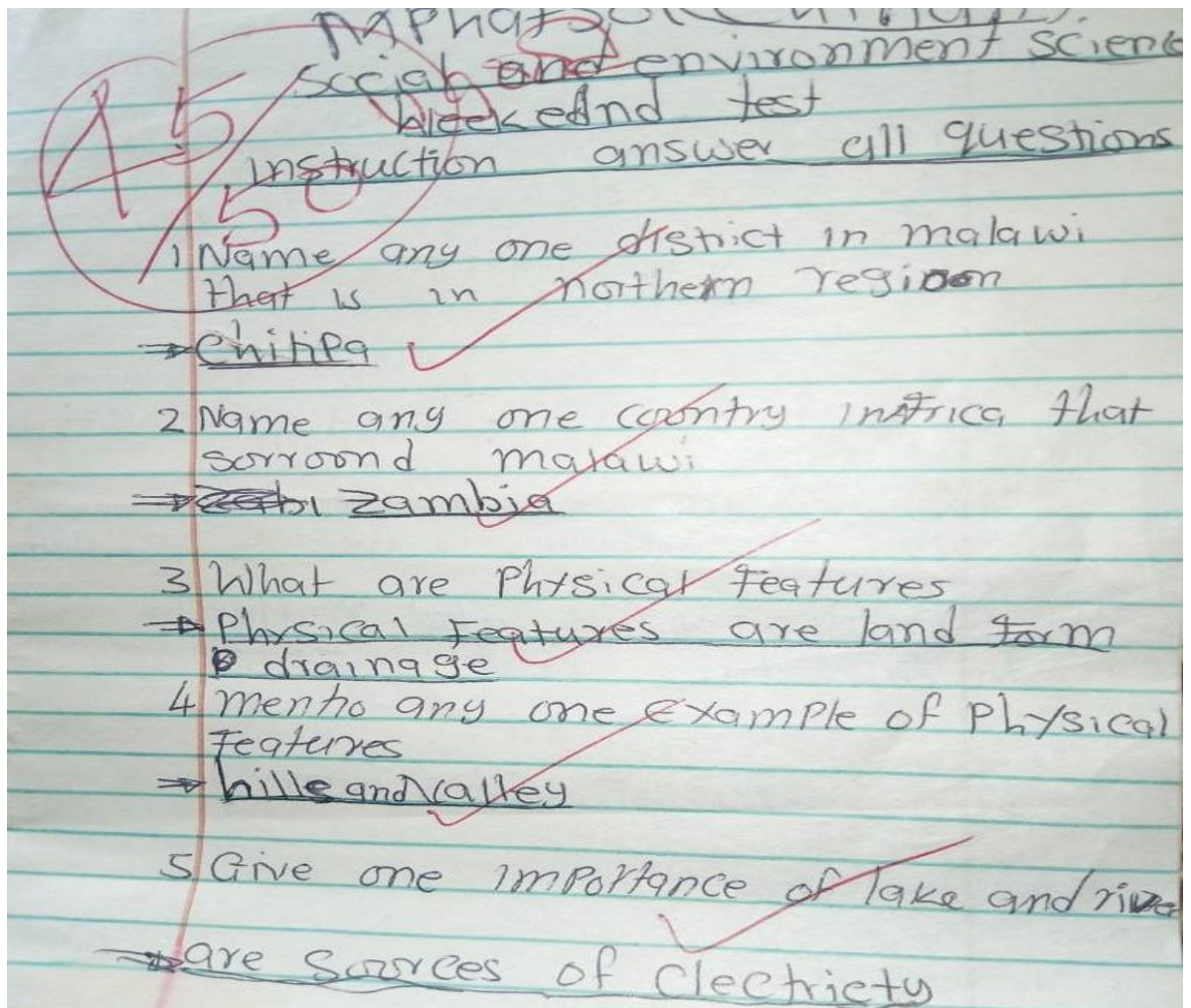


Figure 3: A marked script showing dominant lower order questioning for teacher ST1

Figure 3 above, shows that all the questions are basically low order questions, requiring learners only to recall the correct response. All the questions are in closed format, such questions demand simple responses and generally encourage memorisation. The questions reflect the lower order as per Blooms Taxonomy. This is contrary to the demands of the PCAR. Gromlund (2006) in his studies on assessment, reveals that such type of assessment practices reflects traditional assessment practise grounded on low level questions with low impact on students' academic. It could have been important if teachers asked learners to explain their responses either in an oral assessment or written

work. It is only when learners are engaged in explaining their position that teachers would be able to know that learners understand the material or not.

In this study, teachers might have been using low level questions because such questions are easy to mark. The teacher assessment practices are a departure from the expectations of Social studies. Assessment in Social studies is supposed to further the goal of educating students towards becoming active citizens in democratic society (NCSS, 2004, p. 290). The nature of assessments did not create the platform for active participation.

In addition, the CA practices revealed by teacher LT1, LT2, ST1 and ST2, through lesson observations presented in Boxes 1, 2, 3 and 4 do not support the principle of high expectations. This principle highlights the call for teachers to expect all learners to achieve outcomes which are significant (Killen, 2009). Teachers are encouraged not to give up on learners who are perceived as low achievers. It also postulates that teachers must engage learners in challenging tasks to promote critical thinking (Killen, 2009, Fitzpatrick in Bean, 1995).

Contrary to this view, teacher LT1, LT2, ST1 and ST2 in this study did not provide challenging tasks through their CA practices. As noted earlier on, teachers asked questions which just required short responses with little or no opportunity for learners to make further explanations or justify their responses. In addition, allowing learners to check answers in the books suppressed their ability towards solving problems. This undermined learners' ability to tackle what could be perceived as challenging tasks given proper probing and hints.

The continuous assessment practices by the participating teachers illustrate that they had not moved beyond new assessment requirements espoused in the PCAR. This demonstrate that real change is far from being realised as the participating teachers' assessment literacy reflect the olds ways which focused on recall-based approach with little dimension of critical thinking.

A study done by Chulu (2013), notes that, most teachers in Malawi lack the ability to formulate valid assessment tasks. Similarly, Kellighan and Greaney (2003) note that most of the times teachers use oral questioning in assessing the learners. However, the questions are dominated by recall-based questions with little effect on reflection. Greenstein (2010) points out that the open-ended questioning techniques are important in that they help students to express their ideas. In this regard, William (2011) stresses the need to give students questions that require them to give reasons for their responses.

The PCAR emphasises that learners should be provided with the platform through which they can exercise their minds through problem-based activities or tasks which require a thoughtful process. The inability by teachers to take assessment to a different dimension from the traditional assessment practices signifies some form of rigidity in embracing change. This is in tandem with those at mechanical and routine levels (LoU) who have difficulties in embracing new approach (Hall & Hord, 2001). This signifies that such teachers still operate at mechanical and routine levels as noted. In terms of questioning, the participating teachers have not moved beyond the traditional questioning techniques to techniques promoting deep learning. By focussing on low order questions, learners were denied the opportunity to demonstrate significant learning outcomes as espoused in the curriculum.

The problem of questioning technique is not unique to the findings of this study. In their seminal work on assessment, Black and William (2006), contend that most teachers do not use the kind of continuous assessment that support deep learning. Most of the questions teachers ask require learners to recall facts. While recall-based questions cannot be entirely neglected, all participating teachers with the exception of teacher ST3 did not make an effort to come up with follow up questions to either provoke the learner into further analysis or reflection.

Fautly and Savage (2008) further point out that questioning in itself is not enough but what you do with the answers. Teachers “need to listen to answers, pay attention to, and act upon, what the students tell you” (Fautly & Savage, 2008. p.42). In this study, some teachers like LT1, LT2, BT1, BT2 and ST2 accepted correct answers or simply rejected or ignored wrong answers. Jacobsen, Eggen and Kauchak (2006) note that just ignoring learners who have given a wrong response is demotivating and frustrating experience.

Participating teachers could have attempted to encourage learners to explain issues which required explanation. Questioning formats like, (describe, explain, why, how) are some of the examples that participating teachers could have dominantly been using in their lesson as well as continuous assessment tasks. This suggests that participating teachers were yet to fully embrace a constructivist approach to assessment practices, a factor that Izci (2016) highlights that it hampers the use of formative assessment (FA). This gives an impression that the architects of the curriculum reform and the Ministry of Education did not fully train and educate teachers to embrace new ways of assessing the learners that would anchor the critical elements of the curriculum.

In addition, the participating teachers spent most of their time trying to cover the material. As a result, class-based continuous assessment tasks and homework were rare in all the observed lessons. This is similar to findings in Zambia in which teachers focussed on covering the material instead of providing remedial lessons (Kapambwe, 2010). Assessment tasks and home work are very instrumental in stimulating learning beyond the classroom as per demands of the curriculum.

The Teacher's guide for Social studies highlights the need for class-based exercise and homework which extend learning beyond class time (MoEST, 2013). It was noted that in all the observations made, homework and class-based exercises were rarely administered. If class work exercise was administered then there was little or no time to mark and provide feedback as in teacher LT2. The organisation of continuous assessment activities therefore did not give room for class-based assessment tasks including homework. This might have been attributed to the contextual challenges which teachers highlighted as a major hindrance to effective implementation of CA. These challenges are discussed later in the section under challenges.

4.3.2.1 Chorus responses

Apart from the recall-based questions which participating teachers dominantly used in during the study, teachers frequently tolerated chorus responses. This was particularly prevalent when the teachers wanted to find out whether learners were following or not. Examples of such situations were expressions like "*are we together, is this correct? Do you understand? Is that clear?*" These kinds of consensus seeking questions were regularly asked by teachers BT1, BT2, LT1, LT2 ST1 and ST2. In such situations learners answered in unison by saying yes or no.

Even though this is a quick way of finding out if learners are following, it was noted that it was being overused. Accepting chorus responses did not provide an opportunity for teachers to identify learners who were struggling or were unable to demonstrate the expected outcomes. This practice further subjected low performing students at a disadvantage as other learners overshadowed their visibility in the learning process.

It could have been better if teachers asked learners questions that could elicit responses that demonstrated their understanding of a given concept. As highlighted earlier on, such practices prevented teachers from identifying struggling students as they were overshadowed by clever learners who responded to the questions. In other words, such practice reflected the idea of teaching the class instead of tailoring instruction towards individual learners.

4.3.3 Forms of feed back

Feedback is an important component in the PCAR. Feedback as a continuous assessment practice is an important definer as to whether teachers use CA to inform learning or not. The nature of feedback can either facilitate or deter learning. In this study the participating teachers were asked on forms of feedback they provided to learners.

The findings of this study noted that the major form of feedback provided to learners was dominantly through the use of verbal complement, word of encouragement and grading. During an interview, teacher LT2 said *“I just give them grades ... the comments I give them at the end of the term in their report cards”* When asked further

if teacher BT2 differentiated feedback between those who had attained the outcomes and not, teacher BT2 had this to say “... *for the fast learners I just say good but for the slow learners I just write needs support, or they can do better.*” Teacher BT3 corroborated with BT2 that she provided feedback in form of number grade 4, 3, 2 or 1 depending on the scores made and nothing else, other participants expressed similar practices. Teacher LT 2 said:

After noticing that a learner has done well, I say that learner that they have done a good work. If others have not done well I just say, you have tried hard, keep it up, next time you will do better. I do that to encourage them to do better next time. If you tend to shout at them, next time they will not write the assessment this is the reason I just give polite feedback so that they should not be disappointed (teacher LT2 face-to-face interview, 29.05.2018)

Similarly, another teacher, BT1 said:

iyo wachita makola tikupanga praise. Awo wandichite makola cha nawo tikuwapanga praise kweni praise ya uwo wachita makola na uyo wandachite makola yiwengeko yakupambana kukana kuti umogongowesyerengethu yula. Kweni uti apa wayezgesya wangubudisya waka padoko waka mbwe uzamuwona kuti namachero ute nthe nthe wachicha makola so aaa vilimakola. *Those who have done well, we do praise them but those who have not done very well they receive lukewarm praise so that we should not discourage them, then you will see that next time they can do better* (teacher BT1 face-to-face interview, 20.06.18)

Another participant stressed that giving of grades as feedback was enough. When asked what forms of feedback he gives, teacher ST1 said “*the feedback is after marking the scripts we give them as how they have performed.* When asked further if that was enough ST1 said “*aah it’s just the papers and the grades, so the feedback is the grade that we write on the answer sheet.* The response by teacher ST1 leaves to chance what happens next to a learner after getting the grades.

It is very difficult to assess whether learners used the grades to improve their subsequent lessons or in areas they had not done well. Provision of mere grades therefore does not provide useful information to learners on their learning gaps. A study done by Kitiashvili, (2014) show that teachers just gave general evaluation of learners performance without useful information to improve learners performance

Box 5: An extract of a lesson focusing on class-based feedback

Teacher ST2

Teacher: as I have already said, today we are going to discuss on a topic of forest... so have you ever heard about the term forest?

All learners: yes (in unison)

Teacher: do you know a forest?

All learners: yes (in unison)

Teacher: who can define the term forest? Forest not forestry but forest, what is a forest?

Learner 1: where trees and grasses are planted

Teacher: thank you, anyone else with a different definition?... boys what's happening ...anyone

Learner 2: is a place that live animals

Teacher: is a place where animals live (hesitant) Okay thank you for your trial, anyone else

Learner 3: a place where nature lives

Teacher: okay thank you for your idea anyone else ... okay a forest is a large land of trees, the trees can be planted or natural

From the Box 5 above, teacher ST2 did not provide further clarification as to why some learner's response were not appropriate. It is difficult for learners to know the reason why their responses were acceptable or not. In addition, noting the flow of the lesson, teacher ST2 seemed to have an answer she was expecting from learners.

The findings of the study regarding feedback points to the fact that teacher ST2 did not provide expanded learning opportunities as a principle of OBE. All participating teachers highlighted praise and giving of grades as the frequent forms of feedback provided to learners. This does not provide learners with diverse learning opportunities.

Feedback is a very important component that informs learning. As has been highlighted earlier, feedback must be comprehensive enough in a way that it must engage teachers and learners in constant exchange of ideas. In this study, most participating teachers did not provide a forum for engaging learners regarding their performance save for providing them with grades on marked scripts and mere praise. It is therefore noted from participant's continuous assessment practices regarding the feedback provided to learners that it was not rich enough to support learning. This finding raises serious questions about the CA practices as they do not inform learning.

According to Sadler (1989) such feedback does not meet formative assessment goal as it does not intend to fill the existing learning gap. Such teacher continuous assessment practices leave learning to chance. The kind of feedback by participating teachers suggests that the primary interest was on ushering rewards or grades with the belief that learners would be prompted to improve. The use of rewards is typical of behaviourist learning theory which is running in contrast to the contemporary constructivist theories of learning. The use of such general statements in form of praise and assurance did not pay attention to specific problems that learners were experiencing. In terms of level of use, teachers displayed mechanical use of CA which has no regard to meet expectations of learners through provision of meaningful feedback to promote learning.

Even though some teachers did not provide meaningful feedback in their responses during interview, teacher ST3 and BT3 were very unique in expressing explicitly what they did in order to assist learners. In their response, they said that they undertook a variety of steps to assist learners. Teacher ST3 said that she selected more knowledgeable learners to assist their peers and that she invited them for remedial lessons after normal classes. Teacher ST3 had this to say:

...the feedback most of the times we do remedial lessons. This is done after knocking off from school. We ask learners to come back especially those who have not done very well and then those who have done well. We mix these two groups of learners and ask them to help each other. Those who have done very well assist their friends. This help those who have not done very well to learn from their friends. (ST3 face-to-face interview 01.10.2018, 9am)

In line with teacher ST3, Teacher BT3 said;

For example, if you have known that a learner has attained grade one, which signifies needs support. For example, in my class I have 12 learners who are struggling and need support. What I do is that after knocking off, I carry out a remedial lesson for about thirty minutes. Others cannot even read in my class others cannot give a correct answer by using English language. They have mastered in Chitumbuka so at first I help them so that they can understand English and secondly they can read and write English, because most of the subjects are taught in English. So, if the learner cannot understand English, it follows that they cannot understand the subject (BT3 face-to-face interview, 04.10.2018, 10am)

One important element that teacher ST3 hinted at was the provision of remedial lesson in an interactive way to those who were not doing well. The most interesting thing is that the teacher took advantage of using peers to assist each other, a thing that is promoted in the PCAR (MoEST, 2014).

Teacher BT3's response was an indicator of the desire to assist struggling learners achieve learning outcomes by dedicating extra time to learners identified as struggling as a result of CA. This teacher demonstrated the focus on the learner to reap the benefit of learning unlike others who were interested in having their records clean. This is typical of teachers displaying attributes of refinement as the LoU. At this level, users

of an innovation put their effort in order to benefit the consumers. In this case, the interest of the teacher is to see to it that learners reap the benefits of CA and the overall learning process. In addition, teacher BT3 and ST3 were committed to meeting the general principles of OBE which aim at meeting learning outcomes for each and every learner.

The findings of the study revealed that only teacher ST3 and BT3 had an explicit expression of sacrifices they made with regard to CA in order for learners to benefit from it as required by the PCAR. The comments by teacher ST3 and BT3 indicated that they further provided learning opportunities to learners who did not demonstrate their expected learning outcomes. The idea of providing further learning opportunity is underlined in the principle of expanded opportunities which highlight that all learners can succeed if they are given adequate opportunity and time (Killen, 2009).

In addition, teacher ST3 and BT3 demonstrated refinement on levels of use as they used continuous assessment to the benefit of learners despite working within limited time schedules. Other participants such as teacher LT1 and ST2 indicated that they looked for ways on how best to assist learners. However, they did not express the desire in strongest terms as opposed to teachers BT3 and ST3. Teacher LT1 had this to say, *“If they have responded positively I just encourage them if they have failed ... I look for the ways to help those who have failed... May be to revise the task given yes...”*

In their literature, Fautly and Savage (2008) note that giving feedback to learners goes beyond telling them what is it they are doing wrong. They stress that feedback involves

dialogue between the teacher and students. Vu and Dall’Alba (2007) noted that feedback must be accompanied by critical comments and possible suggestions for improvement. Greenstein (2010), adds that provision of feedback must focus on strengths as well as areas which require further improvement.

Fautly and Savage (2008) point out that feedback involves dialogue between the teacher and the learner. As such, feedback must be detailed and comprehensive enough to stimulate student achievement in future. This feedback is often known as feed forward as it has a bearing on learner’s future performance (Fautly & Savage, 2008). The participating teachers could have done better if they were able to provide models illustrating expected way of responding to continuous assessment tasks.

The findings of the study on feedback practices are an indicator that most participating teachers were yet to embrace the paradigm shift which calls for different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment process, particularly the provision of feedback. This might have been attributed to lack of information on how best they can use continuous assessment results. This signifies difficulties associated with change of habits and environmental context of the reform.

I therefore argue that teachers need to use multiple ways of providing feedback to learners so as to address specific challenges they encounter during teaching and learning process. Teachers must move beyond mere use of praise *let alone* giving a grade. Teachers must either engage in an interactive approach particularly for learners who are struggling or learners themselves to assist each other. The shift in continuous assessment practices should alter the way continuous assessment and feedback is

handled. It is therefore, imperative that teachers must be re-educated comprehensively on issue of CA at the same time remove confounding factors affecting effective use of CA.

4.3.4 Frequency of continuous assessment, function of continuous assessment and management of continuous assessment results

Apart from forms of continuous assessment and nature of continuous assessment tasks, the study went further into finding out frequency of assessing learners, function of continuous assessment and how teachers managed continuous assessment results.

4.3.4.1 Frequency of continuous assessment tasks

The findings of the study revealed that frequency of administering CA varied from one teacher to another and in some instances from one school to another. When asked on how they carry out continuous assessment tasks, most teachers focused on formal continuous assessment tasks given once fortnightly or once a month depending on the school's culture and the teachers themselves.

When asked about forms of continuous assessment tasks and frequency of continuous assessment tasks given to learners, teacher LT2 said:

... carrying out assessment in class is difficult most of the times, of course we do but most of the times we just assess them as a class. So, we just assess them may be at the end of the month by giving them a test ...
(Teacher LT2 face-to-face interview, 29.05.2018)

What teacher LT2 said clearly demonstrates that there is limited continuous assessment activity taking place during teaching and learning process. According to teacher LT2, the only possible and practical way of continuously assessing learners was the provision of formal tasks given to learners at the end of the month in form of a test.

Teacher LT2 highlighted that it was difficult to assess learners during the teaching process, this was an indicator that the teacher was finding problems to integrate continuous assessment during the process of teaching. It can be inferred that the dominant aspect during the lesson by teacher LT2 was to cover the material or that the teacher was used to an old habit of summative assessment practices. The teacher therefore felt safer and comfortable by providing weekly tests as opposed to everyday classroom assessment. This shows that the teacher had not progressed beyond routine use of assessment.

Teacher LT2's statement further reveal that he assessed learners collectively as a class using monthly tests. This gives an impression that individual attention is disregarded in favour of the general performance of learners basing on monthly tests. It is therefore difficult for benefits of CA to trickle down to individual learners. In addition, by specifying the period for administering continuous assessment tasks, it gives an impression that continuous assessment is detached from the teaching and learning process. Similar response was provided by BT2 when the teacher was asked about the forms of continuous assessment that they were expected to use. Teacher BT2 had this to say *"mmmm like the type of questions ... for the type of question I usually take the MANEB type... I use the past papers for MANEB."* When asked about frequency, teacher BT2 said *"I give them once per month..."*

In the same vein, ST1 hinted that he administered continuous assessment at the end of the month.

... aah as I have said that we do this at the end of the month so that you see work you have covered ... If you have covered may be four topics then they are supposed to be assessed on those topics in all subjects.
(Teacher ST1 face-to-face interview 20.04.2018, 9am)

The impression that teacher ST1 was giving regarding CA was that he used it as a summative measure on the progress of the work that had been covered after completing a series of topics. The findings regarding the frequency of continuous assessment reveal that participating teachers conceived continuous assessment as a programmed activity aiming at fulfilling the administrative requirement and for summative purpose. This kind of continuous assessment practice was not in tandem with the demands of CA as postulated in the PCAR. Another teacher had similar continuous assessment practices to teacher ST2. This teacher indicated that she did conduct continuous assessment every week. The teacher had this to say:

...aaaah assessment am doing it every week ...Every week am supposed to give an assessment, assessing them what they have learnt. We are told to be assessing learners every week, we are supposed to be doing that.
(Teacher ST2, face-to-face interview, 19.04.2018, 8am)

Even though teacher ST2 conducted CA frequently, her assessment practices just like teacher ST1 and other participating teachers as BT1, BT2, LT1, LT2 was closely tied to summative assessment regime in which the interest was just to gauge how far students had attained expected learning outcome in topics covered. In addition, it was noted that national examinations had a bearing on teacher continuous assessment practices in terms of formulating continuous assessment tasks. Teacher BT2 modelled continuous assessment tasks on MANEB which leaned towards summative approach. The statement by teacher BT2 was a manifestation that national tests still play a significant role in teacher's decision about the nature and design of continuous assessment tasks.

Modelling continuous assessment tasks based on MANEB suggests that external accountability overshadows appropriate use of CA tasks as confirmed by (Izci, 2016). This is not unique to the participating teachers in this study; a related study done by Kurebwa, and Nyaruwata (2013) observe that teachers gave series of tests as continuous assessment following the format for Zimbabwe school examination council (ZIMSEC). In a similar study, national examination standard prevented the use of authentic assessment in Social studies teaching in favour of the recall-based question which can easily be marked (Mathison & Fragnoli in Ross, 2006). It can be noted from the participating teachers, that their focus on continuous assessment activities conducted on specially designated days was tied to summative purpose and as a preparation for national examinations.

Of all the participants, only teacher BT3 indicated that continuous assessment was done in every class. Teacher BT3 had this to say:

In a term we do not have only two assessments. As I have already said that we have a daily assessment we use a checklist and we have a weekly, every week you have to assess every topic that has been covered. For example, the topic you found me teaching today is taught from Monday to Friday, then on Friday you have to make sure learners really know about the differences between flowering and non-flowering plants, are they able to give examples. Are they able to give their uses? So, if the learners are not able you have to teach again that lesson in order to help those who are behind. But if they are able you can go to the other topics. So, assessment happens in each and every week each and every day and in every lesson for it to be effective. (Teacher BT3 face-to-face interview, 04.10.2018, 10am)

Even though teacher BT3 highlighted that continuous assessment was done in every lesson with the intention of helping learners, this is different from how teacher ST1,

Shuichi (2016), notes that in accountability driven culture, there is often tension between classroom assessment and highly visible summative assessment. In this tension, such nationally visible assessment overshadows classroom-based formative assessment. It is not surprising therefore that teacher BT2 tried to align it with the format of national examinations by MANEB when designing or crafting continuous assessment tasks. Such thinking and practice do not give room to informing learning, but rather to preparing learners for national examinations. This calls for a restructuring of the education system in order to align with the current context.

These forms of continuous assessment practices as noted by Cizek (2010) constitute summative assessment as it is administered at the end of the unit, a term or year as a tool to measure achievement among others. This being the case the continuous assessment practices noted from the participating teachers in the study sites was given for recording purposes and not remediation. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Nyambe (2015) in Namibia who found that teachers were not using assessment results to inform learning but only to record marks. This kind of perception and practices divert the purpose of CA from informing and supporting learning to mere accumulation of grades.

This being the case, the essence of CA as espoused in the PCAR was far from being realised by participating teachers as it did not customise their practice to the prevailing learner challenges and opportunities, thereby widening the gap between intention and practice. Participating teachers' interest in this case was to have records for accountability purpose. In this case, the focus was tailored towards ensuring that they had records ready for accountability purposes, instead of focusing on learners or as

meeting a requirement for having at least two CA grades. This being the case, participating teachers saw little or no value in day-to-day regular classroom CA activities.

Even though this was the case, the sentiments by Teacher BT3 could not be overlooked. Teacher BT3's views revealed the impracticability of using checklist as a continuous assessment tool. This view was collaborated by teachers BT1 and BT2. This means that the curriculum reform did not take into consideration the prevailing context in terms of class sizes. It can therefore be argued that it is not enough to introduce new ways and forms of continuous assessment tools in a curriculum without resolving the confounding factors on the ground.

The continuous assessment practice by most participating teachers could be seen as mere administration of formal exercises and tests. The continuous assessment practices of teacher ST2, BT2 and ST1 demonstrated routine level of use as they considered provision of CA as a routine activity spaced over a given time. To them, once they administered the formal CA activities, they had a feeling of satisfaction that they had fulfilled the requirement. These continuous assessment practices presented two major challenges. Firstly, it created a distortion that true continuous assessment is only the formal one. This had resulted into the neglect of the everyday informal continuous assessment taking place in everyday teaching and learning which is equally informative. Secondly, it neglected the idea of what happens after the continuous assessment results.

The findings of the study suggest that most participating teachers did not use the results of continuous assessment to inform learning either through the provision of remediation or enrichment. These classroom Social studies assessment practices did not support the teaching and learning process as expected for a Social studies class (Darling-Hammond, Einbender, Frelow, & Ley-King, 1993). The learner is supposed to be the first beneficiary of CA by getting feedback that promotes understanding and spurs further learning. What it means here is that the interest of a learner is disregarded. Teachers put their own interest to demonstrate that they are doing the job. It should be noted that the PCAR focuses on the learner. Each and every activity of the teacher should aim at promoting the aspiration of the learner. Therefore, any form of continuous assessment should be tailored towards supporting the learner. Even though some teachers hovered around routine and mechanical levels, teacher BT3 attempted to use CA in her everyday teaching and put an effort to use feedback to improve learning which demonstrated a move towards refinement.

4.3.4.2 CA for promotion purposes

Another profound finding is that the participating teachers used continuous assessment results more as a contribution towards promotion of a learner to another class than to inform learning. When asked about how special CA is in the new curriculum, teacher BT2 hinted the focus on making decision for promotion purposes. Teacher BT2 had this to say:

When we are giving learners continuous assessment, the CA grade helps us at the end of the term. For example, in situations where a learner is sick and we have a CA grade then we can know at what level the learner's performance is. So, when we see that some learner's runaway from CA, we

advise them that it is good to write CA (BT2, face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

Interestingly, teacher BT2 gave the same response when asked about the use of CA results. This is a clear demonstration of the altered understating of CA which is a departure from the curriculum expectation.

...for CA as I have already said that some time if someone gets sick at the end of the term and he or she is unable to write end of term tests, the results from the CA available can provide us with information whether to promote the learner to another class or not (Teacher BT2, face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

Other participating teachers expressed similar views about CA which consequently had a bearing on their continuous assessment practices. The following had this to say:

...that each and every month we are supposed to assess them so in situations where a learner does not write end of the term tests as a result of sickness or some problems so we go back to the CA... So that grade from continuous assessment assists us to make to promote that learner from one level to another, so yes, it is good (Teacher ST1, face-to-face interview, 20.04.2018)

....so that they should perform well at the end and CA also help learners who get sick during final exams, we just use the past performance of that learner to decide them move to another class or determine if they have passed or not (Teacher ST2 face-to-face interview, 19.04.2018, 8am)

...but now you find out that by the end of the term you are going to promote learners from one class to another. May be by the end of that term a learner may have not written the exams because of sickness or may have gone somewhere else so through CA we just get the information and we are able to promote learners based on that CA (Teacher LT1, face-to-face interview)

The quotes above indicate that the use of CA results by participating teachers was far from achieving the purpose of informing learning. Similarly, their responses were a manifestation of what participating teachers valued most hence their view. In this case, most participating teachers thought that the data derived from CA was a tool for determining learners' promotion to the other class in the absence of end of term performance results. Based on the responses from the teachers' demonstrating alignment towards summative assessment practices, compromised the purpose of CA in supporting learning process. When this happens, CA ceases to be an integral element in the teaching and learning process. Similar studies revealed that such practices constitute continuous testing meant for summative purposes.

In the study by Susuwele- Banda (2000), it was found out that teachers in Malawi perceived CA as continuous testing, the assessment results were not used to support learning. However, this finding was from a study which was conducted before the integration of continuous assessment in the learning process. It was thus the expectation that teachers would shift these perception 10 years after formalising CA as a crucial component in the teaching and learning process.

Vandeyer and Killen (2009) carried out a study on continuous assessment in an OBE culture and noted that the use of CA was merely used for testing without taking into consideration the basic principles of OBE for teachers believed that continuous assessment was used for accountability purpose. In the same vein, the picture noted on the CA practices by the participating teachers, was similar to Ghanaian teacher CA practices. In their study, Akyeampong *et al.*, (2006), observed that there was a prevailing assessment for marks syndrome in Ghanaian teachers. As a result, CA

practices did not inform the teaching and learning process (Akyeampong *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, in Zambia, Kapambwe (2010), observed that teachers engaged in continuous testing, in which teachers were administering CA monthly instead of regular CA activities.

While giving these CA tasks periodically is important, it should be noted that it is not just for the sake of accumulation of grades for promotion purpose. CA results are supposed to inform learning, by providing useful feedback and support to learners. In addition, CA is supposed to help teachers adjust their teaching approach. In this study, only two participating teachers (ST3 and BT3), highlighted that the results were used to assist learners.

The results therefore indicate that the regular formal CA activity leans more towards summative function of assessment as opposed to formative as expected by the curriculum. Teachers in the case study failed to demonstrate the relationship between summative and formative assessment. The other way round, teachers failed to make a balance between formative and summative assessment as their CA practices seem to align towards summative purpose. Therefore, the findings of this study may signify two things, either teachers were not trained regarding the demands of CA in the new curriculum or did not understand the essence of CA during the training provided to them.

In addition, it may be argued that their personal experiences in schools or pre-service training regarding continuous assessment was dominated by summative view of assessment which is refusing to die. Since any new curriculum requires effort to put in

place to change people's attitude and practices, there is need to interrogate the whole preparation process regarding CA. If this issue is clarified, we would be able to come up with a proper direction on the use of CA. I therefore argue for the need to engage in re-education processes to the existing teachers with similar CA practices, in order for their practices to align with the demands of the curriculum.

4.3.4.3 Management of assessment results

Another important assessment practice regarding CA was on management of continuous assessment results. It was noted that continuous assessment data was poorly managed and that it was prone to loss. During the interviews, the following were responses regarding managing continuous assessment data:

...we carry them with us all the time home and back. We take all the records home because our rooms are not lockable. We also have learners' assessment books which have details of learner's assessment records. For other items we give it back to the owner (Teacher ST2 face-to-face interview, 19.04.2018, 8am)

I have the book and also the carton I put their tests so that if people like you come, you will be able to see, check for the books and check their test. Also, the parents can check. But today I have forgotten the carton at home took the assessment task for marking at home so is didn't finish (Teacher BT2 face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

It is important to keep assessment records. But it depends on the teacher, you will find that other teachers would not keep the records properly and end up losing them. But we try our best to keep the learner's records for future reference (Teacher LT2, face-to-face interview, 29.05.2018)

...actually, the chances are rare to keep the records because we often change classes so may be for example may be three years back it means that the moment, I go into the new class am supposed to have the new records. So, the previous learners' records are difficult to keep, if they go to another class the assessment information has no use. (Teacher face-to-face interview, ST1, 20.04.2019)

Management of continuous assessment data is very important in the PCAR (MOE & MIE, 2007). However, the situation as highlighted by participants above bears a testimony that schools do not have proper information management system regarding management of continuous assessment data for learners. The responses by ST2, BT2, LT2, and ST1 indicate that information about assessment results is at the mercy of the concerned teachers.

In all the schools visited, it was noted that there was no spacious office where all teachers could gather and work. Most teachers were seen sitting outside waiting for their next class, preparing lessons or marking learners' work. There was virtually no visible place or room where teachers kept their records. This gives room for loss of important data which can be used to support learning. The impression given by the teacher assessment practices regarding managing assessment results was that of a one-off activity promising no link to future use of the present continuous assessment data. CA is supposed to be a continuous process where each learner's performance history must be kept for future use. Therefore, it is paramount that learners' information must be properly managed for future reference.

Although there was evidence of continuous assessment records particularly end of term results which include CA progress book, individual subject teachers' continuous

assessment records were kept by teachers. MoEST (2013), emphasises the importance of keeping learners' work as it provides evidence for their growth, learning progress and achievement. Similar challenges were noted in a study by Yashim and Jibrin (2020) that the keeping of students' records remained a challenge in Nigerian schools. This was attributed lack of space and teacher's low morale due to low salary.

In summary, the CA practices emanating from this study could be grouped into pedagogical and administrative CA practices. On one hand, pedagogical CA practices linked with the teaching process. Pedagogical CA practices focussed on the type of question feedback and forms of assessment tasks. On the other hand, administrative CA practices considered CA as a programmed activity, assessment used as a promotion tool and management of assessment results. The CA practices revealed that the participating teachers differed in the way they used CA. Some teachers used CA to support learning while others did not, consequently, working against the requirement of the PCAR.

4.4 Opportunities and challenges CA bring in the teaching of Social studies in primary schools

This section presents findings and analysis of the opportunities and challenges that CA brings in the teaching and learning of Social studies.

4.4.1 Opportunities

4.4.1.1 Learners adapting to the CA

In all the study sites, teachers pointed out that learners were now used to having formal CA written fortnightly or monthly. Enthusiasm to write CA was high. Apart from learners, all teachers had a positive view about CA as it worked to their benefit and the

learners as well. All participating teachers were in favour of CA. This is what they had to say:

... yah actually when we tell learners that they are going to write a test they become very happy. They become inquisitive as to when the test would be administered. When you tell them that it would be after a week they tend to relax. However, if you tell them that it is a few days they work hard. All in all, they receive the news very well (Teacher ST1, face-to-face interview, 20.04.2018, 9am)

Since they know it's like a habit they know that by the end of the month there is a test... there is CA they respond positively there is no problem. Because it's like now they are used to CA. (Teacher LT2 face-to-face interview 29.05.2018)

waliyese wakuti nilembengeko, chifukwa ntchakuti tina portfolio, ngati kala ka portfolio mula nili kuyukamo ma envelope kuti waliyose pepala lake nkhuwika mu portfolio mula sono kufuma pala iyo wapulika kuti kuli assessment wakuyesesa kuti nane nilembeko kuti chikakhale mwenemula mwakuti pala nane nilikuwaphalira kuti uwo waleke kulembako ma results wangadalilanga yala cha chifukwa tizamusazga na yala. So umo bali kupulikira ichi mbwe bakuti ivi navo muzamusazgirako. *Every learner is willing to write assessments. I told them that their results are kept in their portfolio which are added to end of term. So, each learner is eager to write so that they have results to add to end-of-term examinations* (Teacher BT2 face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

In the case of teacher ST1 response, even though the learners were enthusiastic about periodical CA tasks given to them, some elements of fear were present. This might have been attributed to the nature of assessment tasks which were mostly in a test form, according to Chakwera *et al* (2004) tests elicit anxiety. Despite this, Teacher LT2, highlighted that now learners were used as it had become part and parcel of their learning activities. Teacher BT1's response indicated that the motivation to write

assessment by learners is based on the fact that the grades add up to their end of term exams. This therefore shows that learners were motivated by various factors in order to decide whether to participate in formal CA or not. This can be used as an opportunity to make CA become part and parcel of learning.

4.4.1.2 *Desire to maintain CA*

Apart from expressing learners' positive attitude towards CA, all teachers who participated in the study expressed the desire to maintain CA in strongest terms. When asked whether they wished CA to be removed or not, all participating teachers expressed the desire that CA should continue. The following had this to say:

I just encourage my fellow teachers that they should really use CA because it is very helpful to the learner as well as the teacher. For a teacher to know the performance of learners... [Not clear] it is easy because of CA. (Teacher LT2, face-to-face interview 29.05.2018)

Assessment iyo yikhalepo kweni assessment yingafumapo cha chifukwa kuti mwana wayambe kupanga ni assessment yikhalepo kweni panyake wangasintha waka nyengo zinake kuchepesyako kuti yingawa wuli per term chifukwa ukusanga wafumba kawiri iyo yikuwa suzgo (*assessment should continue, may be what they should do is to decide on the reduction of the frequency of assessing learners*) (Teacher BT1, face-to-face interview, 20.06.2018)

What I just want to say is that CA is very good and should not stop. This is so because it helps the learners and also teachers and also the parents. (Teacher BT2, face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

I cannot suggest CA to be removed. Because CA is helping a lot honestly to say the truth. It makes the work easier because I will teach a topic at the end of the topic I will give learners questions to answer from the way they respond or answer help me to know if they have understood the topic or not. This information helps me to decide whether to conduct a remedial

class so that I can teach the areas that the learners have failed, so in anyway this should not go (Teacher ST3 face-to-face interview, 01.10.2018)

It is noted that the participating teachers had a positive view about CA. This presents a great opportunity to curriculum implementation as their views would likely translate to practice given the right support. Learner's adapting to CA is a very important aspect that can enhance the use of CA in the education system. Teacher LT1 demonstrated integration regarding the level of use by attempting to encourage fellow teachers towards using CA. The level of use under integration focuses on team work in pursuit for improving performance. This new culture if well nursed could ensure that the benefits of CA continue as desired by the PCAR.

In addition, some teachers used the assessment tools which were not commonly used in other schools such as learner portfolio. Teacher LT1 for instance indicated that she used portfolio as a tool for assessment. She had this to say:

.... but since I came in, I introduced this portfolio and learners are having those portfolios and am able to trace that this learner is doing ABCD because am checking how they have performed ... per portfolios (Teacher LT1, face-to-face interview, 28.05.2018)

Another teacher at school B, teacher BT2 expressed the same thing. There was a box in a class where learners kept their assessment tasks in form of a portfolio. In the previous curriculum, the use of learner portfolio was non-existent. The use of portfolio has come into prominence in the PCAR. The attempt by some teachers in using learner portfolios which is a new tool associated with the reform was a step in the right direction. Given necessary support and motivation teachers would use the tools meaningfully. According to the findings of the study, the introduction of CA as an integral element in the teaching and learning process seems to have some positive prospects. The findings

of the study revealed that the possibility of its sustainability is high. This emanates from both learners and teachers.

4.5 Challenges of using CA

Despite prevailing opportunities in the use of CA in teaching and learning process, the study noted that participating teachers were facing some challenges that deterred effective use of CA. Some of these were learner absenteeism, high workload and perceived calculations.

4.5.1 Learners' absenteeism

Even though earlier on participating teachers hailed learners on their positive attitude towards CA, ironically when it comes to challenges, all participating teachers reported that learner absenteeism posed a major problem in carrying out CA and the provision of assistance. The following were the responses from the participants:

But as a teacher on factors discouraging CA, I can talk of absenteeism of learners. You will find that today a learner is not coming, tomorrow he comes. Learners sometimes absent themselves from classes and desert from writing tests. Sometimes learners run away from an exam for continuous assessment, they pretend to be sick. When you ask some of them as to why they run away from test they just say the test was tough. So, it is a challenge in that you need to capture learners' grade at the end of every month. (Teacher LT2, face-to-face interview, 29.05.2018)

Absenteeism you find that learners because ana ena amajomba ma continuous assessment onse osalembako. Ati mulembenge CA they don't come. So vikupangitsa kuti may be end of term alembengeso yai panyake 2 subject then kuti ndibwere ku assessment uku ndiye ndimpatsa ma mark anji? Ndiye zimatisokoneza and also (*learners absent themselves from*

tests, so I have difficulties in assigning a grade to such learners at the end)
(Teacher BT2, face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018)

Since I have already said that the learners are not always happy when asking them questions... Will see some will move out from class some will not write. So, for you to trace the grade for them because they have not written the test it's difficult...they like writing the end of term test only but not the continuous assessments we are giving them (Teacher LT1, face-to-face interview, 28.05.2018)

We do not tell them the exact date when they are going to write assessment fearing that they would run away. You know most of the times these learners fear exams. So, we just tell them that next week you are going to write an assessment. Sometime learners may pretend writing and they say please may I go out, so when we allow them to go out, you find out that they have gone for good, not coming back (Teacher ST3, face-to-face interview, 04.10.2018)

Even though on a positive note it was highlighted that learners were getting used to CA, all participating teachers mentioned absenteeism as a major challenge in carrying out CA. In his findings, Kapambwe (2010) observes that learner absenteeism affected the implementation of CA in Zambia. However, in the case of participating teachers in this study, the major concern was not about absence of the results to support learning but on deciding whether to promote such learners to another class or giving a learner a grade. This is revealed in the quotes of all the three participants above, teacher LT1, BT2 and LT2 whose interest is just to capture the marks scored by learners. This signifies that the participating teachers operated under limited understanding of the concept of CA hence its use was restricted to routine use of continuous assessment and not taking them beyond, where learners reap its benefit through appropriate support.

This scenario presents the skewed purpose of continuous assessment as opposed to the requirement of the curriculum. Another interesting feature is the prevailing traditional forms of continuous assessment. It is noted that continuous assessment is predominantly in form of tests or exams. Studies have shown that generally exams or tests bring a lot of anxiety to learners (Chakwera *et al.*, 2004). It is not a surprise that some learners became apprehensive thereby resorting to absenting themselves. This is a revelation that participating teachers had not yet embraced other forms of continuous assessment tasks apart from the traditional paper and pencil tests.

4.5.2 High workload and large classes

The findings of the study revealed that high workload hampered teachers from effectively carrying out CA. It was noted that some teachers were assigned almost the whole class teaching five to six subjects in the same class. For instance, teacher BT3 at school B had almost all the subjects for one class allocated to her. This information is in Table 4. A number of teachers commented on this as follows:

As I have said that here in primary schools you find someone teaching ten subjects... nine someone having the whole class and also taking some subjects somewhere like me here in Standard 7 I have got my own class and there are over 70 learners so it's a tiresome work to a teacher. This is because of shortage of teachers. (Teacher ST1, face-to-face interview, 20.01.2018)

We have large classes; in addition, the learner's books are not enough. Had it been that we had enough books that could be better. When learners go home they cannot read the assigned works because they do not have books. (Teacher ST2 face-to-face interview 19.04.2018, 8am)

.... on factors that discourage the use of CA is lack of resources in classes apart from that other factors discouraging CA. I can talk of large classes. I have a class of 120 learners and I cannot manage. I said that for one to

implement CA properly there is need to have a few learners. The other reason is that we are assigned many subjects. Sometimes we are assigned ten subjects this is so due to understaffing. These are the factors that indeed discourage the use of CA. (Teacher LT1, face-to-face interview, 10.04.18)

During classroom observation, I noted two teachers connecting one lesson to the other. When I was conducting a lesson observation for teacher BT3 who started teaching Social and environmental sciences subject which was meant for my study, after the bell rang for the next lesson, she started teaching English. Again, the bell rang, she started teaching Chichewa until break time and yet after break time she was to continue with the same class in the other subjects.

This similar experience happened when observing teacher LT1 and ST1. This situation presents enough evidence that participating teachers were working under strenuous situations. In Australia, teachers perceived additional workload due to additional demands in record keeping associated with CA (Donnelly, 2007). Such type of working conditions could not provide appropriate opportunity for proper implementation of CA. Muskin (2017) contends that meaningful interaction and feedback can be effective if extrinsic factors on student to teacher ratio are addressed. It is not a surprise that one of the participants indicated that they sometimes guess the grades for learners if they have not administered any CA. She had this to say:

Challenges iyo yikuwapo. Naumo tayowoyera kuti nyengo zinyake kuti pala tilembenge ma terminal test ma assessment yose ayo tapangisya so tiyambe kusazga tilute uku mbwe nyengo yamala mbwe vikukwanilisika cha kuti vipangikenge. Na ma subject unandi uyu wafumba uyu wafumbe mbwe ukuzasanga kuti ma subject ukapangapo assess yawiri nikuti kusazga upangenge waka yawiri nikuti kunyake upangenge waka mwana uyu pala

wakakhoza nthe apa vikwenera kuti wali nthe sono nikuti iyo yikuwa challenge

The challenge is that when we administer end of term test and assessment it is difficult to assess all the subjects. You find that you just assess twice. In other areas we just guess that if this learner gets this grade in this other test [the test does not exist but a grade is created for the learner] he can score like this, so that becomes the challenge (Teacher BT1, face-to-face interview, 20.06.2018)

Similar sentiments were echoed by Teacher BT3 when asked about her experiences with CA. In her response, there were some elements that CA assists them to create grades for learners who miss examination for one reason or another. Teacher BT3 had this to say:

These assessments are assisting a teacher in such a way that a learner can get sick or may be not able to sit for end of exams, the continuous assessment grade can help you to find out the level of performance of the learner. In this case we use the CA grade to grade the learner in the absence of an exam grade (Teacher BT3 face-to-face interview, 04.10.2018)

Although most participants did not explicitly talk about the trend of creating grades, the fact that they were using CA to decide learners' promotion to another level when they missed end of term exams, meant that grades for end of term examinations were created based on learners' CA performance. This action by teachers does not benefit the learner but it aims at giving impression to supervisors that they are doing the work. This is typical of teachers within the mechanical and routine level of use. At these two stages, teachers' interest is not focused on the learner benefiting from CA, but to impress their supervisors that they have CA grades. This experience is not unique to Malawi. In their study in Ghana, it was revealed that teachers came up with grades

based on guess work in order for them to have the required number of CA results administered. This was known as computation (Akyeampong *et al.* 2006). In Zimbabwe teachers created marks without giving assessments just to impress supervisors (Kurebwa, & Nyaruwata, 2013). This kind of assessment practice does not support learning at all.

4.5.3 Calculations

In the current curriculum teachers are required to come up with a consolidated grade in each learning area based on a series of continuous assessments and end of term exams. Teachers have to come up with one grade emanating from a series of CA grades to add on to the final exams. This process is associated with calculations in order to come up with an integrated grade at the end of the term. The finding of the study revealed that some teachers experienced challenges in dealing with such calculations, one teacher said:

Yes, this CA it is a good thing ...yah it's a good thing as I said that it helps learners to work hard... learners know that one day they will have a test and they work hard. However, like I said there are a lot of calculations in tabulating learner's grades. This work becomes a problem when a school has few teachers and many learners. (ST1, face-to-face interview, 20.04.2018, 9am)

While teacher ST1 attributed this to high work load, teacher LT2, highlighted that the process itself was difficult. This is a demonstration that the participating teachers had a varying competence in handling issues to do with calculations. Teacher LT2 of school L seem to have problems in coming up with integrated scores. Available literature tends to support the challenges expressed by teacher ST1 and LT2 that teachers tend to conceive CA as too complicated and time consuming (Popham, 2011

& Teras, 2007). Even though teacher ST1 and LT2 complained about the problem of calculations, the other teachers did not feature this as a major problem.

4.6 Coping strategies

The findings of the study revealed that teachers had different ways of coping with challenges they encountered in the use of CA. Teachers were asked to point out how they dealt with challenges they experienced or if they attempted to make any modification in view of challenges they encountered.

Teacher ST3, hinted how she deals with the pressure of marking learners' scripts and lack of resources. She pointed out that she sacrifices her free time to do school work. In addition, she uses her own resources to support learners who lack some basic resources. In addition, the teacher takes her time to discuss with parents on how their children can be supported. She had this to say:

As of now on marking I do not have any option, to me teaching is a calling. I work throughout the night to mark students work. I sacrifice my sleep to do that. I need to make a lot of sacrifice in order to help those learners so it's up to me. I also use personal resources to help learners use for assessment tasks. I offer to buy some of the notebooks to those learners whom I feel cannot find a notebook. But some parents are difficult in nature they do not provide the learners with books. So, I call them and discuss with them. Then you see tomorrow the learner brings a book (Teacher ST3 face-to-face interview, 01.10.2018, 8am)

Similarly, another teacher pointed out that, despite large classes and high workload, she manages to identify learners who need support and are supported accordingly. She had this to say:

For example, you have known that this and that one is under grade one, the learners that needs support. For myself in my class I have 12 learners who after knocking off we knock off at 1:45 pm. From 1:45 to 3:20pm I have another class for the learners that are not able. In my class some learners cannot even read and others cannot give a correct answer in English Language as they are not proficient. They have mastered the local language which is Chitumbuka, so at first, I help them so that they can understand English and secondly, they can read and write English, because most of the subjects are taught in English. So, if the learner cannot understand English, he or she cannot understand the subject (Teacher BT3, face-to-face interview, 04.10.2018)

The above quotations from an interview with teacher ST3 and BT3 is a revelation about their passion towards the success of learners. Even though teacher ST3 described the use of CA as a challenging experience, the teacher did not give up or seek other ways of covering up. To the contrary, the teacher committed herself to assisting learners by using her personal resources and even collaborated with parents to support their children as required. This is a clear demonstration of refinement stage on the level of use where the interest of the learner is at the heart of teaching and learning process. At this level, teachers strive to use an innovation to the benefit of the students. The focus shifts from the self to the client.

Regarding making modification in view of the challenges, the study revealed that most participants were unwilling to make modification or changes in view of large class sizes and high workloads. When asked if they had attempted to make some changes teacher ST1 said;

No, I cannot make any changes, may be my friends but not me. Actually, we are supposed to follow the procedures. I cannot make any changes and I have not made any changes. I am just doing what I am supposed to do,

assess them, mark each and every assessment work to see how they are progressing (Teacher ST1: face-to-face interview, 20.04.2018)

When asked as to why he was unwilling to make some changes, ST1 said *actually because of uniformity you see that you are doing this and your friend is not doing that so just want to do this uniformly with your colleagues*. Sentiments for teacher ST1 signifies someone who is unwilling to tread outside the established tradition. Other participants had the following to say:

We were given the guidelines these are there so that we follow them because it is the policy. We cannot change it is a policy, but we still use other ways like aaaah everyday assessment observation we use checklist and sometimes we use their portfolios yaah in other areas mmm (Teacher ST2 face-to-face interview 19.04.2018, 8am)

Teacher ST2 response is similar to teacher ST1, who adheres to the policy and is unwilling to make some modification to suit the context. Even though some participants tread in the established ways some participants had a different thinking and LT2 had this to say;

aah as of now I have not tried ... it is like... I was of the view that may be if we can use ABDC but I am just looking into that but I have not come up with it. But am looking into it (Teacher LT2 face-to-face interview, 28.05.2018)

Even though teacher LT2 had not tried to make any changes, the teacher seemed to have a faint idea on the type of changes that would be made to fit the context. When probed further the teacher expressed the need to work on the best way of calculating CA and making integrated score.

the idea is like the way it's like CA is about 40% while termly its 60 % so it's like it is disturbing 60, 40. So if it's possible why not making that CA should be 100 termly 100 so that from there we see the way we can do it because we look at the calculations because teachers we do shun away from CA because of the calculations mathematically to come up with CA integrated score its difficult so am looking into that. I have not finalised but I will think on how best we can do. (Teacher LT2 face-to-face interview, 29.05.2018)

Even though his statement hints on the challenges faced by teachers in coming up with integrated score, teacher LT2 still contemplated finding a better strategy to cope with the challenges in dealing with the issue of calculation. However, the response by teacher LT2 shows that the teacher falls short of numerical skills.

With regard to collaboration as one way of dealing with challenges associated with CA, the finding of this study revealed that on individual basis most participants had not attempted to initiate such interactions with fellow teachers. When asked what they had done to promote the use of CA in relation to collaboration, the following were the responses:

As I have already said the first time I was giving them CA more learners used to run away. I tried to give them advice on advantages of CA. The learners understood and started writing assessment tasks, they are used now. When I gave them the last assessment they did not fear. I have not shared experiences with my fellow teachers on how we can deal with the challenge of large class sizes in dealing with how best to assess learners (Teacher BT2 face-to-face interview, 21.06.2018):

At first in my class there were no rubric portfolios for the learners which was difficult for me to trace..... the learner... Individually.... but since I came in I introduced this portfolio and learners they are having those portfolios and am able to trace that this learner is doing ABCD because I'm checking on their performance ... per portfolios (Teacher ST1, face-to-face interview, 20.04.2018)

...yaah to myself am just doing what am supposed to do like assessing the learners. Assess them mark each and every assessment task. I just assess them on how they progress. May be the learners really understand what am teaching them (Teacher LT1 face-to-face interview, 20.04,2018, 9am):

...as for me I have personally managed to keep records which I am having. When I find out that some learners have not written CA at the end of the month, I call all those learners to write the test, so that each and every one should have a grade on CA. I emphasise that each and every learner must write CA. I tell them the importance of writing CA because they have to know the benefit of writing CA. (Teacher LT2 face-to-face interview, 29.05.2018)

...regarding assessment am doing it every week ...every week am supposed to give an assessment. I assess them to find out what they have learnt. I do that every week. This is what we are told to be doing. Every week we are supposed to assess the learners. (Teacher ST2 face-to-face interview,19.04.2018, 8am)

The above responses indicate that teachers BT2, LT1, LT2, ST1, and ST2 were interested in their individual effort in the implementation of CA. What they said focused so much on what they did as individuals. Attempts were made to ask them whether they found time to share meaningful experiences with others in order to enhance the use of CA but each one only expressed what he or she felt was doing right and in conformity to the demands of CA in the PCAR. It could be assumed that each one of them did not

want to expose his or her weaknesses to the other. In this way the only safety was to remain closed.

Only teacher ST3 demonstrated the zeal to share experiences with others. This teacher had this to say:

Of course, with colleagues. In Standard 5, 6 and 7 we do CA. So, what I do is to ask my fellow Standard 7 teachers to meet. After meeting how do you see the performance of our learners? Okay fine because it is like most of the times you can give.... I have said continuous assessment is 20 marks so it's up to you, you can give 4 questions five marks each, you can give 10 questions 2marks each according to how you think you can do it but as Standard 7 teacher we discuss and we say as Standard 7 learners these are grown-ups they are getting ready for Standard 8 what if we can give them 1 ,1 mark question and we give them thought-provoking question where by a child has to express his or her own feeling, "can you explain", yah those types of questions their thought have to be provoked they have to think deep. (Teacher ST3, face-to-face interview, 01.10.2018)

Teacher ST3 demonstrated spirit of collaboration as the teacher took an initiative to interact with her colleagues in an effort to improve performance of the learners. Her interest was to see her learners succeeding. Her practices displayed high expectations for her students by giving them more work which was challenging in nature. According to levels of use, a shift from teacher to learner interest and collaboration reflects refinement and integration attribute (Hall & Hord, 2001). In addition, she had high expectations of the learners' capabilities with regard to challenging questions she prepared for them. However, at school level, the findings of the study point to the fact

that some head teachers conducted interval meetings to discuss CA. The following had this to say:

In other days we have CPD meetings, where we teach each other on how, we can use the assessment tools. That is how at school level we are doing. But most of the time it is an individual teacher, you and your learners (Teacher BT3 face-to-face interview, 04.10.18, 10am)

We are having the checklist at the office and... The section head teacher goes through all the classes checking the way the learners are performing. If there is the class where by the learners are not maybe good they are not having good performance they call us and we sit down they ask what are the problems and we discuss the way forward until the learners are improving (Teacher LT1, face-to-face interview, 28.05.2018)

We discuss per term two times. The first day of school the first week of starting and the last week of end of term. We discuss the strength of the CA and the areas where we are not doing very well. For the areas we are not doing very well, we find how best we can assist each other. we discuss as a school then as an individual. (Teacher BT1 face-to-face interview, 20.06.2018)

From the sentiments above, it can be concluded that in as far as CA and the teaching and learning is concerned, the schools display limited building of social capital to share experiences. Social capital entails, collaboration, team work, mutual support and all forms of collaboration. It was noted that collaboration was done at school level during staff meetings. However, discussions in such meetings were dominated by preparation and evaluation of teaching and learning at the beginning and end of the term respectively.

There was weak evidence as to whether there were deliberate efforts by individual teachers to collaborate in a special way in order to promote the use of CA except for a limited few. Rault (2001) argues for the need in transformation of assessment thinking. He underscores the importance of teachers to discuss and debate about assessment in the staffroom. It can therefore be concluded that the use of CA to integration level is generally weak in all the participating teachers. The participating schools therefore, did not provide a viable context for collaboration regarding the use of CA, a highly collaborative context would have provided room to rethink on the use of CA towards supporting learning. In addition, most participating teachers did not initiate the assessment debate in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of CA and resolve some challenges they encountered. I therefore argue that efforts must be made to ensure that sharing of ideas and experiences must be promoted in order to have a common understanding of what CA entails.

4.7 Chapter summary

The chapter has discussed key findings of the study. It has been revealed through participating teacher assessment practices that it did not support the teaching and learning process as envisaged by the principles of OBE enshrined in the PCAR. Secondly, the majority of teachers concentrated on administering formal assessment tasks in form of tests at the expense of other formal and informal tasks that could generate vital data to support everyday learning.

The use of assessment by teachers reflects routine and mechanical use and showed weak alignment to OBE principles. The routine and mechanical level of use attributes reflects a kind of behaviour where teachers put to use any new concept in education in a way

that whatever they do, does not intend to benefit the learners (Hall & Hord, 2001). At these levels of use, teachers are interested in making clean records so that supervisors appreciate that they are doing a good job (Hall & Hord, 2001). In addition, such teachers avoid exploring new ways of improving an innovation. The finding is a revelation that the implementation of CA in the PCAR remains problematic considering the prevailing context in the schools under study. The study has exposed some gaps in teacher understanding of CA in relation to the demands of the curriculum. It has also exposed the contextual challenges in terms of resources, class sizes and work load.

It is therefore not enough to assume that the introduction of CA in the PCAR would immediately translate to an improvement in the teaching and learning process. The use of CA is not enough to bring about change; and it has to be associated with contextual reforms to ensure that CA bears fruits. In view of the findings, it can be concluded that the integration of assessment into the teaching and learning as practiced by teachers in the study area expose gaps in the implementation of CA. Teachers' CA practices in the selected primary schools weakly supported the demands of the PCAR. Such findings are likely to be experienced in other primary schools in Malawi.

The findings demonstrate that it is not enough simply to change emphasis of assessment from summative to formative in form of CA, but help practitioners understand the essence of CA. Despite the gap existing between the expectations of CA and practice, it is noted that CA remains a viable approach to improve performance if practitioners are provided with the necessary support.

I therefore argue that effective use of CA requires important skills that teachers must attain in order to effectively make use of it in line with the demands of the curriculum. Critical issues to consider are planning for CA, skill in observing and generating data on learning, analytical and interpretation skill of CA data, provision of feedback and provision of learning support. These skills cannot be merely attained as a result of telling teachers what to do, supervision or inspection, but it calls for radical re-education to bring about transformation in teacher practices within a supportive teaching and learning environment.

MIE and MoEST therefore need to address the prevailing contextual factors like class sizes and teaching staff for the learners to reap the benefit of CA. It is therefore important that any change that is to be introduced into the school system must be associated with contextual changes that are likely to support the effective implementation of that particular change.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter overview

This study sought to explore primary school teachers' use of continuous assessment in the context of OBE in Malawian primary schools. In trying to achieve this, the study sought to understand if the use of continuous assessment supports the principles of OBE as embedded in the PCAR. The main research question guiding the study was, how do teachers use continuous assessment in order to realise learning outcomes in Social studies? In responding to the main research question the following were specific research questions which guided the study: What are the teacher's practices of CA in the teaching of Social studies in the context of OBE? How are prevailing assessment practices supporting principles of OBE? What opportunities and challenges does CA bring in the teaching of Social studies in primary schools? How do teachers cope with challenges associated with CA practices in Social studies? This chapter provides the conclusion of the findings and their implication.

5.2 Teacher continuous assessment practices

Continuous assessment practices in this study involved a wide spectrum of events. It involved teacher perceptions about continuous assessment, their test planning, and construction to grading continuous assessment tasks and use of continuous assessment results as well as management. The findings of the study revealed that participating primary school teachers consider assessment as an important component in the teaching

and learning process. All teachers in the study were aware of CA as an important requirement in the implementation of the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform. However, it was observed that the major form of CA tasks provided to learners was dominated by formal assessment tasks in form of tests administered fortnightly or monthly. These CA tasks were not meant to inform learning but to gather marks for summative purposes. These CA tasks could be best described as continuous testing as it was not used to improve learning rather than accumulation of grades for administrative purposes.

In addition, the overreliance on paper and pencil exams deprived some learners of other opportunities to demonstrate their learning if they were assessed using a variety of strategies or approaches. Furthermore, the questions used in assessing learners were mainly recall-based which gave learners little or no opportunity for critical thinking. Such CA practices did not support OBE principles in which the curriculum is operating. Principles like high expectations and expanded opportunities were not supported by the teacher CA practices.

In terms of level of use, the findings of the study revealed that participating teachers were operating at different levels. Most participating teachers displayed level of use III (mechanical) and level of use IVA (routine) (BT1, BT2, LT1, LT2, ST1, ST2) with the exception of BT3 and ST3 who showed the level of use under refinement. This had implication on their continuous assessment practices (Hall & Hord, 2001). Routine and mechanical levels of use pay little attention to the interest of the learners as the practitioners are interested in being on the safe zone by appearing to be adhering to standards put in place. This is as a result of having deficient knowledge of the

innovation namely CA. For Teachers who demonstrated integration and refinement as level of use, for instance, BT3 and ST3, they managed to focus their CA practice toward assisting learners to improve on their performance.

According to the findings, the paramount interest of the participating teachers was to have updated records on CA and an attempt to administer tests for the purpose of having grades available for learners. All these practices were at the expense of improving practice through proper provision of feedback, proper use of continuous assessment results and proper formulation of continuous assessment tasks that reflect higher level tasks.

5.3 Continuous assessment practices not supporting OBE principles

It is envisaged that continuous assessment practices in the PCAR should support principles of OBE, among others. First, continuous assessment should support higher order thinking through the use of thought-provoking assessment tasks. Secondly, teachers must use a variety of continuous assessment tasks to expand learning opportunities for learners and thirdly, learners must be provided with support to ensure that they attain expected learning outcomes (Killen, 2009).

The study findings reveal that teacher assessment practices for teachers BT1, BT2, BT2 LT1, LT2, ST1, and ST2 weakly supported the principles of OBE. It was noted that the CA tasks did not cultivate high level abilities as they were dominated by lower order tasks which were mostly recall-based. The CA tasks concentrated on knowledge at lower level. In addition, the overreliance on formal tests as forms of continuous assessment prevented learners from demonstrating their abilities through other forms

of CA tasks. Furthermore, there was little evidence for learner support emanating from CA conducted by the teachers.

The main thrust of the formal CA tasks only served to contribute towards the final grading of the learners as opposed to supporting learning. I therefore argue that teachers need to be re-educated on the theoretical assumptions on which the PCAR is based so as to ensure that CA practices support such assumptions. For instance, what are the demands of OBE in the implementation of PCAR? Once these are unbundled then there is need to think of how teacher CA practices support such principles.

5.4 Opportunities and challenges

The study found out that the use of CA in primary school has on one hand opportunities, and on the other hand, the use of CA is riddled with a number of challenges.

5.4.1 Opportunities

In terms of opportunities, the study found out that CA is beginning to be accepted by both learners and teachers. In the first place, according to participating teachers; learners were beginning to see the value of CA in their learning process. Given an environment to nurture learner's interest, it is envisaged that the intention of CA might be realised in the curriculum.

Secondly, the study findings indicate that participating teachers had a positive view towards the use of CA. Generally, they acknowledged the important role of CA in teaching and learning process. This situation made them to incorporate CA in their teaching and learning process. Given proper support, the participating teachers and even

others displaying similar CA practices are likely to improve their CA practices. Even though this gives an optimistic picture in the use of CA, the implementation has been riddled with a number of challenges.

5.4.2 Challenges

The study findings revealed three major barriers to effective use of CA and these were, learner absenteeism, high work load and challenges in calculating scores.

5.4.2.1 Learner absenteeism

It emerged from the findings that some learners tended to be absent from class during the days' teachers administered CA tasks. It was also reported that some learners actually run away from class when these CA were being administered. This situation, according to the study participants, prevented teachers from knowing learning gaps as a result they failed to provide necessary support. Apparently, overreliance on formal tests may be the cause of this absenteeism as it is associated with fear as highlighted in the literature review (Chakwera, Khembo, and Sireci, 2004). Participating teachers therefore needed to use a variety of ways for assessing learners continuously in order to get data on learners' performance.

5.4.2.2 High workload and large classes

The study findings revealed that teachers failed to come to terms with high workload in terms of number of subjects allocated to them. In some cases, teachers like BT1, LT2, ST2, and ST3, taught more than four subjects in one class. In addition, some classes were large as opposed to recommended teacher to pupil ratio of 1:60. This according to the participants prevented them from effectively monitoring learners'

performance and administer CA tasks frequently hence reliance on periodical tests given to learners. This shows that the operating context made participating teachers only to use tests as the easiest ways of assessing learners.

5.4.2.3 Challenges in calculating scores

The new CA regime requires teachers to come up with a series of CA grades which are converted to two major segments of 40% CA and 60% final examinations. The findings of the study revealed that all teachers except LT2 found it challenging to make calculations as well as a burden to do the calculation for large classes. This scenario reveals gaps in analysing basic statistical data required in analysing assessment data as evidenced by teacher LT2 in the study.

5.5 Coping mechanism

The findings of the study reveal that teachers reacted differently to the challenges associated with CA. In this regard, there were two groups of teachers. The first group are those teachers who were just interested in delivery of the lesson and collection of learners' grades. The second group of teachers are those who were interested in seeing the learners succeed.

The first group of teachers (BT2, LT1, LT2, ST1 and ST2) whose interest was to gather grades accepted the challenges associated with CA as they were. These teachers expressed hopeless situation by lamenting that they could not do otherwise but to follow the policy as it were. These teachers felt satisfied having administered two CA grades as required. However, they did not use the information on CA to improve learning.

The other teachers (BT1, BT3 and ST3) who were interested in the success of learners attempted to collaborate with their colleagues on how best they could use CA to the benefit of learners. These teachers valued teamwork as a recipe for success. In addition, these teachers organised remedial lesson outside normal teaching hours to provide extra support to learners who had problems as a result of CA results.

5.6 Implications

The findings of the study provide a revelation that it is not enough to advocate for the use of CA in the curriculum reform without addressing the contextual factors which directly affect the implementation process. The findings have revealed that the prevailing contextual factors in the study area are incompatible with the principles of OBE through the use of CA.

It can therefore be concluded that little attention was given to contextual factors in implementing the reform. Just like OBE in South Africa, the reform failed to make strides because of the immediate social political environment which was already fragmented as such the reform was operating in a challenging context (Schmidt, 2017). It can therefore be argued that for CA to achieve the aspiration of the reform, there is need to resolve the impeding factors. In view of the findings, the study noted the following implications.

5.6.1 Teacher continuous assessment practices

The study findings reveal that CA is a vital element in teaching and learning process. The participants clearly indicated that CA is beneficial both to them and the learners. However, it was noted that teachers emphasised on formal CA tasks which were limited

to test and dominated with recall-based questions. In all these CA practices, the primary interest was to obtain data to meet the administrative requirements with little or no feedback. The implication of such practices was that limited assessment task did not provide diverse learning opportunities. The participating teachers needed to recognise that classrooms have diverse learners and need to be provided with diverse tasks to meet the needs of each learner.

In addition, the use of recall-based questions deprived learners an opportunity for critical thinking and problem solving as espoused by the curriculum. Furthermore, lack of feedback did not provide room to offer the necessary support in order to inform learning. The implication of this is that learners did not improve learning as a result of CA activities.

In view of this, the implication to MIE and MoEST is that they need to advance CA literacy programs in schools so that the implementers in the classroom are conversant with the demand of the curriculum regarding continuous assessment. Assessment literacy programs should focus on the development of quality assessment tasks, what CA really is as opposed to tests given fortnightly and also on management of assessment results.

In addition, teacher education institutions need to emphasise assessment literacy in their teacher education programs to ensure that prospective teachers are well grounded in matters of assessment, both continuous and summative.

5.6.2 Learner's information management system

Another critical issue is on information management system. The findings of the study revealed that there was lack of coordination in managing learner performance records. Participating teachers were the chief custodian of learner performance record and as such, once a learner got the results at the end of the term that data became of no use.

The implication is that the school loses the history of learner performance which provide vital reference point for assistance in future. Poor or informal record keeping create dearth of learner performance data acting as evidence or benchmark for proper decision making. In this reform, it is important to have data on learners' performance for future reference. This scenario calls for the need to put in place mechanism to ensure that information about the learners' performance is properly kept for future reference. This can be done by establishing learners' information system whereby their continuous assessment records are kept both electronically and manually.

5.6.3 Workload and class size

The findings of the study reveal that there is high workload in terms of number of learners in class and subjects allocated to teachers. The implication is that the situation impedes the administration of a variety of CA tasks. This climate diverted teachers from providing the necessary support to learners as they are tempted to cover content. Continuous assessment was therefore viewed as a secondary activity. The overall effect of large class sizes was that few or not all learners benefitted from individual support that was expected as a result of CA. This implies that there is need to deploy adequate teachers in an effort to reduce teacher class size.

5.6.4 Support system

The finding of the study has noted that the support system is limited to school-based supervision by head teacher and periodical staff meetings. Critically analysing the kind of support, it is noted that participating teachers were merely encouraged to give learners CA. The implication of this is that participating teachers provided CA in form of tests only to satisfy the requirement for the sake of records without necessarily using CA to support learning. Apart from this, the finding revealed that there was little networking among teachers regarding the use of CA. Absence or lack of networking made teachers not to learn from each other thereby stifling improvement in practice.

The study suggests that support should move beyond administrative control. Teachers need to be motivated to cultivate networking culture among themselves. Deliberate peer networking is very crucial in sharing experiences on how to resolve some of the challenges they are experiencing. The system should provide a framework to support teacher long-term learning for any new idea introduced as Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) argue, otherwise the absence of such efforts tends to reinforce the status quo. Schools should therefore facilitate meetings that could provide an avenue for interaction among teachers from the same school and other schools.

5.7 Contributions of the study

The world education system is awash with CA in form of formative assessment as an important tool supporting learning in what is known as assessment for learning. This represents a shift of focus from summative assessment branded under assessment of learning. It is believed that once learners are assessed continuously and the results are used to support the learning gaps, learners would benefit from education as opposed to

summative assessment which does not give learners and teachers an opportunity to improve and change strategies of teaching respectively. This study contributes to the knowledge on CA as practiced by Malawian primary school participating teachers. A rich and detailed CA practices by case study teachers has revealed the gaps existing between what is being implemented and what is expected to be implemented.

The eight case study teachers provide an illustration of how teachers vary in enacting the expectations of the curriculum. The study has also revealed how contextual factors play an important role in constraining teachers to embrace the paradigm shift in terms of CA practices based on the reform. The study has also exposed infrastructure, accountability and systemic gaps to support the implementation of CA. This information is important particularly to teacher education institutions and policy makers. The two need to devise ways in preparing and supporting teachers for the reform respectively.

My thesis therefore makes a contribution towards understanding teacher CA practices as portrayed by teachers in the study in Malawian primary schools. The study has unveiled important role of contextual factors impeding assessment for learning as propagated by CA. It is therefore not enough to assume that the introduction of CA in the PCAR would automatically translate into an improvement in the teaching and learning process. The use of CA is not enough to bring about change, but it has to be associated with contextual reforms to ensure that CA bears fruits. Comprehensive teacher re-education in CA would result in narrowing the gap between the intended and the actual implementation of the education reform in Malawi

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide for teachers

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

I am a Doctorate student with University of Malawi Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study on the use of continuous assessment in the context of outcomes-based education in Malawian primary schools. The finding serves as an academic requirement for my study.

I therefore want to get your views regarding the use of CA in your everyday teaching. I assure you that the information gathered from you will be confidential. Your name will be concealed in the research report. You have the right to withdraw your participation in the study if you feel like doing so.

I appreciate your cooperation in advance

Background information

- i. What are your education qualifications?
- ii. Which training institution did you go to?
- iii. What are your teaching subjects and teaching load per week?
- iv. How long have you been teaching?/When did you join teaching in primary school?
- v. How long have you used CA as an integral element in teaching and learning?

The following specific research questions with probing questions

i. What are the teacher's practices on continuous assessment in the context of OBE?

- a. In what way is your teaching influenced with the curriculum reform to OBE
- b. What is unique with the current assessment practices?
- c. What changes have you made to ensure successful use of CA in your classroom?
- d. As a school, how do you work on issues of assessment?
- e. What have you personally done to promote the use of CA at your school?
- f. How do you manage your data on CA as an individual, in class?

ii. What forms of CA are used in the teaching of Social studies?

- a. Can you tell me more about continuous assessment based on your experience and understanding?
- b. What forms of CA tasks are you expected to use in class according to curriculum documents?
- c. What forms of CA do you use in class and why?
- d. How do you structure your CA in class?
- e. Do you encourage students to assess and provide feedback to each other?
- f. In what way do you assist learners organise self and peer assessment

iii. How do CA practices in schools support principles of OBE?

- a. When planning assessment task how do you consider learner's diversity in your class?

- b. How do you structure assessment to suit both slow and fast learners?
- c. How does assessment influence your pace of teaching?
- d. How do learning outcomes influence your assessment tasks?
- e. How do you frame assessment tasks in order to support higher order thinking?
- f. What is your view on asking higher order assessment tasks to learners perceived as low ability?
- g. Do you clarify the assessment tasks to learners, if so why?
- h. What forms of feedback do you give fast and slow learners?
- i. How do you use feedback in your teaching and learning process?

iv. What opportunities and challenges does CA bring in the teaching of Social studies in primary schools?

- a. How does CA promote curiosity in learners to participate?
- b. How do learners react to assessment tasks?
- c. How does the use of CA help you as a teacher in Social studies?
- d. What are the benefits you experience when using CA?
- e. What factors do you think promote the use of CA in your class?
- f. What are the challenges you experience in using CA?
- g. How do you deal with the challenges?

Appendix 2: lesson Observation tool checklist

Background information

- Education qualifications for the participant
- The training institution where the participant attained the qualifications
- Teaching experience

Some aspects to be noted during class observation

Subject

Topic

Class size

- i. Description of the classroom and number of learners
- ii. What forms CA are used in class?
- iii. Major ways in which assessment activities are structured in class
- iv. Forms of feedback is given to learners
- v. How does feedback influence the pace of teaching?
- vi. How do the teachers use questions/ teacher probing learners to explain and clarify responses?
- vii. How does teacher use questioning technique to promote higher order thinking and problem solving?
- viii. Are the tests/assessment addressing the learning outcomes?
- ix. Does the teacher clarify the focus of assessment?
- x. How does CA activate curiosity in learners to participate?
- xi. How do learners react to form of assessment?
- xii. How do teachers keep track of learner records?
- xiii. What are the possible impediments of CA?

Appendix 3: Approval letter



PRINCIPAL
Richard Tambulasi, B.A (Pub Admin), BPA (Hons),
MPA, Ph.D

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE
P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi
Telephone: (265) 01524222
Fax: (265) 01524 046
Email: principal@cc.ac.mw

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

3 October 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

CLEARANCE TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA: MR WEZZIE CHIZIWA

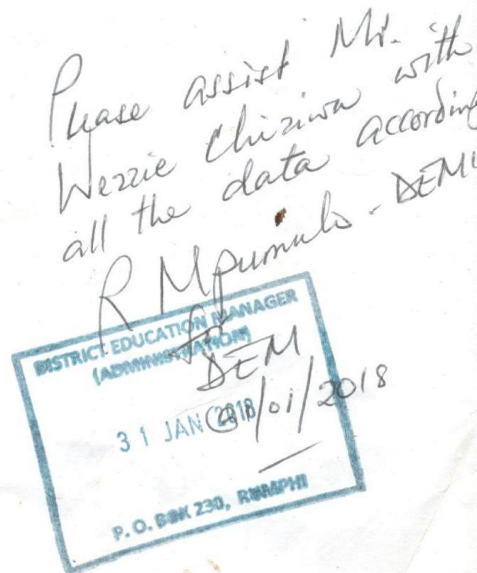
Mr Wezzie Chiziwa is a Doctorate student registered in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching Studies at Chancellor College, university of Malawi. He is now doing his research year and would like to collect data in primary schools. We shall be grateful if you could provide him permission to visit the schools and interview teachers.

Your support will be greatly appreciated. If you need further details on this request please contact me on email: ekunkwenzu@cc.ac.mw; or mobile: +265993425995.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "E.D Kunkwenzu".

Dr E.D Kunkwenzu
Postgraduate coordinator,
Curriculum and Teaching Studies Department
Chancellor College
University of Malawi



Appendix 4: Document analysis checklist

The document to be analysed include

Lesson plan and schemes and record of work

- a. Check comments regarding
 - Comments of learner regarding CA
 - Check for planned action regarding CA results
 - Comment by supervisors regarding CA
- b. Teacher assessment tasks document
 - Forms of assessment tasks
 - Frequency of assessment tasks
 - Knowledge levels of assessment task
- c. Learner assessment scripts and exercise books
 - Check forms of assessment
 - Check frequency of assessment
 - Forms of teacher feedback
 - The knowledge level of assessment
 - Check for remedial activities
 - Is enrichment given
- d. Syllabus, teacher's guides, orientation manuals other policy documents
 - Literature on assessment policy and expected practices

Appendix 5: Informed consent letter

Dear Participant,

I am Wezzie Chiziwa, currently working with University of Livingstonia as a Lecturer in the Department of Education and Teaching Studies. I am a PhD student with Chancellor College. I am conducting a study on the use of continuous assessment (CA) in primary school following the curriculum reform. I am therefore requesting you to be one of the participants for the study.

I request you to be honest as we will be interacting with each other. The information solicited as a result of our interaction will solely be used for academic purpose. Your identity will be concealed and your name shall not be mentioned in the write up.

I can be glad if you accept this request to participate in the study.

Wezzie Chiziwa

0888334021

0999465980

wezziechiziwa@yahoo.com

Appendix 6: Interview with teacher LT2 Livingstonia

DATE TIME

Researcher: welcome. am wezzie chiziwa a lecturer at UNILIA and student chancellor college currently am doing research on use of CA in the context of OBE remember we have curriculum reform known as PCR in primary school, which has covered almost ten years now. Curriculum the main focus is on assessment plus learner-centred activities what I want to find out from you is your practices in the everyday use of CA. so the information which you are doing to give me are entirely for academics no name will be revealed. Tell me your background in terms of academic qualifications

LT2:yaa thank you very much I am Akim Mhango am a teacher here at Livingstonia and am also assistant coordinator for the PEA aah it's like I attended my education at LINIA sec in the year from 2002 up to 2006 there after I
... wrote the ...the primary school I can say colleges which is TTC and I passed I went there 2008 and I finished 2010 and thereafter I joined ahh teaching

Researcher: what grade are you?

LT2: it's we call TL. But it's like the grade when you are having MSCE you start with TL, yahh they T2 but when you are having JCE they say T3

Researcher: which training institution did you go to?

LT2: I went to Karonga TTC

Researcher: at the moment what are your teaching subjects

LT2: I teach social and environmental sciences aaah science and technology and mathematics in std 7 and 8

Researcher: what is the load per week?

LT2: it's like am having 36 period per week

Researcher: is it not much

LT2: it's much but we look at staffing if the staffing is not quite alright that's why we have such a load because it's a must you cannot leave learners

Researcher: what is the minimum?

LT2: the minimum to my side it's like maybe you can have 15 periods per week it may be better

Researcher: how long have you been teaching?

LT2: it's now 6 aah six years

Researcher: how long have you used CA in teaching?

LT2: I have used for three years now

Researcher: how has your teaching been influenced by the curriculum reform to OBE

LT2: yaah it's like it has influenced me because in terms of passing to the learners it is determined by that. since CA it is based on the I can say monthly I can say it's like monthly assessment so it means through that ah it has influenced OBE because most of the learner they are on the par or I can say on the pass rate we can determine them because it is been done monthly so CA has influenced me because OBE I can outcomes-based education to the learner I can say it's just quite alright it's just okay

Researcher: what is special with assessment practices?

LT2 :yaa the current assessment it's like aah it has aah it has helped a lot because you find that ahh before this current assessment teachers were just based on the ... termly they say by the end of the term we just assess the learners ... but now you find that by the end of the term you are going to promote learners from this class to this class maybe that term by the end of the term you will find that learners has not attended may be because he is sick or may has gone somewhere else so through throu...gh that we just we just get we just the information because he was just writing monthly so through that I can say CA we are able to promote that learner based on that CA which he was writing he or she was writing yaah

Researcher: what changes have you made to ensure successful use of CA in your classroom?

LT2: that changes which I have made it's like I have done as a class aaahh records eeh those records aaahh which they have the whole information because you know CA is also based on teachers how do you understand that CA because its difficult others they don't understand CA. because CA to implement it aahh on the paper its just okay but on the ground its difficult aahh so the change its like I can say go just direct to the school ... as a school CA needs few learners if one has about 120 learners It means you will have problems aah so the changes may be to my side its due to the introduction of dividing the classes a few learner are we have changed because now we have been influenced to do that now and then since learners have few in class. So, this is what I can say

Researcher: so, what you are trying to say is that you have large classes but you split them into small groups?

LT2: yaah due to this CA because CA need few learners in class because for each and every because you do calculate each and every learner on its own page yah that how it is so through that it was a challenge but now it seems that challenge now due to splitting of classes aah it is now working

Researcher: as a school how do you work on issues of assessment?

LT2 : what we do is that there is a timetable there is a plan which ahhh which aah our school aah monthly it a must that each and every teacher has to assess learners in class so that to have come have the CA or to implement the CA program because if the school does not have that plan it's difficult to implement CA works better or well when you assess learners monthly so a school we have a timetable which stipulates that monthly it a must that each and every teacher has to asses in class so that to have CA so that we implement the CA program. Because if the school does not have that plan it's difficult to implement CA works better or well when you asses learners monthly so as a school there is a timetable which stipulate that a teacher must assess his or her learners

Researcher: what else?

LT2: aah as a school there is monitoring, as ahead teacher plus section head teacher we do monitor now and again teacher how do they assess learners how do they enter is it implemented on the ground or maybe they are just talking so it's like there is monitoring now and then so as I can say teachers they are implementing CA in their classes

Researcher: what have you done personally to promote CA at your school or at the classroom level?

LT2: aah as of now personally what I have done it's like the records which am having or ... ahh which are there are stipulates that it is working as ah in terms of CA

Researcher: any effort you put in place to promote the use of CA

LT2: effort it's like the class or as a class teacher what I do for instance if may be to day this is the end of the month if may be few learners have not may be come up or have not may be write the test what I do is that I also do call those learners and write so that I have to capture each and every one using CA. so effort it's like each and every learner I emphasise that it's a must to write CA and also tell them the importance of having writing monthly to the learners because they have to know what is the benefit of CA to them.

Researcher: how do you manage your data on CA?

LT2: yaah ah as an individual I do manage I divide time because you know the way load work which we are having at primary school it very,,, its huge yah so I do manage oi have time special time aah may be during aah I can say afternoon hours...ah to record each and every learner yaah so .. Ah in notebooks

Researcher: are you able to retrieve that data after some years?

LT2: ahh what we do is I can say its true ahh each and every year those records they are kept in the office. so aah those records it's like we do assess... because learner if has been promoted to another class to another class that teacher who is there aah will also share those records aaah to that teacher

has to know what was the performance of this learner into that class so it's like those records it's like the go continuous from class to class

Researcher: So, you do not lose information at a certain point

LT2: yaa it happens now a day it depends on the teacher aaah how do they I can say keep those records but all in all is that emphasis there is that these records be kept I can say in good place so that we have to each and every learner on how he or she is performing but another problem I can say is like you find that some teachers.. you can do that may be in your class but in other class you find that they will not be serious so in that way I can say that they may be lost aah based on how in that class how that teacher is doing or keeping his or her records but we do try our best to keep those records safe for future reference.

Researcher: any way the school keeps information?

LT2: aahh I can say it's like I it's there as i can say as the office or as the school we do that and it's kept in the office as I have said so that may be for future to use or the incoming teachers maybe if you are out of that class to use that information it's there this is what I can say

Researcher: apart from compiling grades what else do you use the assessment data

LT2: aah this information about their grades we also use this information when they are going for transfers we write there say that this one may be is ...ah there is a comment which we put on the performance of the learner when he or she is moving out of this school, going out to somewhere else and also is also if that learner is moving out of that school all the records which is having at the school we give him or her to say so that these are your records go with them so that if when he goes at that school it's very easy to know that this learners performance is below average or this is good or is excellent yahh so it's not we also use we do use in grading and may be on transfer and also in addition it's like we use that may be supposed that learner is in standard 8 and fails that examination may be has not done well if the parents comes if ask about the learner as a teacher can you tell us more about this learner as teacher we use so that if you want to take the learner to such and such a school and take him is doing well in this this so it just okay based on the data. If the learner is not doing very well we say you going to get him or her but according to the performance he is not doing very we so it means helps in that way for the parents themselves

Researcher: what else?

LT2: as of now that all

Researcher: what is your understanding on CA?

LT2 :yaah aahhhh on CA on my understanding it's like this is you way of promoting learning learners from another class to another class based on the CA due to some of the problems which may be can occur during the end of the term

what we do is as I have highlighted you find that there is a very intelligent learner in that class but in due course may be its about two days to write exams may be that one fall sick means he is not going to write the exams but at the end of that year to be promoted to another class so through CA we will be able as a teacher to promote that one based on the CA which we have been doing for the past because CA it's like from term one term two and term CA because CA it's like when on CA its 60% while termly it might be 40% lower classes while upper class its CA its 40% aah termly its 60% so this is how it is so through that it helps to my side for them to be promoted from another class to the other based on the problems which may occur in the due course about to rite exams

Researcher: what forms of assessment are you expected to use

LT2: in class there is.....they say...mmmmm.. there is performance there is a performance because CA as it is ion its own it also depends on the performance a performance when you record the marks of the learner from there you take that you go to on CA in class I don't know what you mean

Researcher: activities

LT2: aahh in class as such we do use but it is difficult in the process of teaching of course we use that but mostly what we use is that we do just asses as a class may be at the end of the month we do that but it also helps but we can also do that in some subjects but maybe we do right away in the class may be can you do this may be can you weave a basket as. We can use as a group to give them marks using the group the way that one has been made can you do this ... because expressive arts needs some sorts of practical's to the learners

Researcher: how do you structure your CA in class what else apart from group work

LT2: we use in pairs or as an individual because if you go may be lower classes as in standard one they use individual right away there if the learner respond they put a mark 3, 2 like that yaah

Researcher: are you able to carry out all tasks on CA in class?

LT2 : yaah am CA there are some of the activities which are really difficult aah for instance as I said that it depends on the class you are having because if you are having a class because of about 20 you can use individual CA right away in the class you can use that because 20 you can easy to detect because the number is few and also aaah in terms of ahhh assessing each and every learner at the end of the month it's easier whereas...as I said if the class is large because these needs calculation, there are calculations which you do per learner on each and every page so that you have to come up with integrated score for that learner aah so the challenges they are based on the enrolment in that class how many learners are there and also the staffing itself are you how many are you at the school so here at Livingstonia the staff is just okay challenges might be there but not as expected from other schools and also in addition some of the challenges is

like deserting of I can say deserting test some if the learners due to the paper which you have set they run away they say me they just pretend that they are sick but they are not sick they go there . You ask them they say they just deserted the classes because the test was tough so these are some of the problems the challenges because CA you have to capture each and every learner the marks how much has he scored per month so that t.....

Researcher: how do you deal with these learners who run away from tests?

LT2: yaah the thing is as I said that aahh... a learner is a learner ... you can tell them more you can tell them importance of CA but by the end of the day they say they will run so after coming back you probe more some of the problems they explain the... before they attend classes they have to write the test from there you guide and counsel about what he did for that previous day

Researcher: what are the principles of OBE you know?

LT2: the principles mmmmmm...aaahhhhh... Can you pardon the question?

Researcher: ...clarified

LT2: yaah am aware of the principles aaah the thing is on that it's like aaahh when you are in class I can say like that... learners have that expectations from you that you are going to deliver to them I can say the matter which you have to the learners so that by the end the day or a month or a year so that whenever they go from point A to point B may be this is what I can say

Researcher how does assessment influence the pace of teaching

LT2: aah assessment aahh helps a lot ahh because... because if you assess a learner you know where those learners are so if may be ...be you have assessed those learners you find that may be the half of the class or three quarters are not doing very well it means you start asking am I teaching at the correct pace may be am I fast or am I not fast so its rely true CA if you assess monthly or the others assess weekly whatsoever it helps to know where those learners are so if may be you are teaching very fast it means if you asses them learners are not doing well in class it means now you change the mode of teaching if you were just teaching may be in pairs in whatever on experimenter or question and answer you say what is the problem and you change the mode of what teaching you switch from x you go to y. so it's really true that CA influences make's you may be to change how you teach. and also, in that in CA if you find maybe you have I can set a test you find that may be the whole class is doing well you say may be to my side ohh am doing well as teachers so you just continue say okay if all the learners are doing well say let me just the way am teaching just continue.. So, if they fail you ask yourself why learners are not doing very well so you look at both ways

Researcher: from your experienced how has it influenced your pace?

LT2: to my side on the term of pace I have adjusted because... Because I want each and every learner to understand when am teaching... because we are looking at CA so that this learner has to be on the same boat

Researcher: do you clarify assessment tasks

LT2: yaah ah if i give task to learner aa they write I mark thereafter I give them feedback on may be some of the areas they have not done very well so that they should be on the same boat

Researcher: how does the task support high order thinking?

LT2: aa yaah I see what I do is I give that higher order thinking to the learner because it needs somewhere for them to think what I have given to them

Researcher: what form of questions do you ask?

LT2: mmm it like what I do is just on the level I can say 50 a.... it's like aah for them may be know they know already ...what I do is they have to think just to use their knowledge what is it?

Researcher: how do you come up with such questions which require higher order question?

LT2: what I do is before may be giving them as teacher when I do teach I asses those learners maybe you can ask questions in class on thinking question. What do you think this can may be my learners are doing that they are answering on their own I know that these learners if I can give this they can respond

Researcher: what forms of feedback do you give to learners?

LT2: aaa aaa. What I do is after doing well you find that others they are doing well others have not done well so you say you have tried hard keep it up next time you will do what .. You will do better so that to encourage them because if you if you tend to should at them next time they will not write those things ... so what I do is I give them just polite feedback for them by the end of that assessment yaa

Researcher: any other form of feedback apart from those comments?

LT2: aahh...ahaah no

Researcher: how do use the feedback in your teaching and learning process in this case looking at the

LT2: aah what I do may be is that you have given them a task as you said... There are two ways in class is what I do is you come up with feedback they place in a class thereafter we explain to the class may be as group leader what you have done... thereafter ahh as a teacher because what the learners have responded to them they think that its correct but as a teacher you know that fine in this way it's not correct but what we do is that you have tried like

that but as a teacher you say thank you very much for your trial for the good work. Thereafter what you do is that you highlight or consolidate the activity which those learners were doing. And you find that some because they think a lot you find that may be the expected questions may be as a teacher you have you have added another one from the class. So that information you have gathered, new information from the learners is used in another lesson.

Researcher: how has continuous assessment promoted learner participation?

LT2: that has promoted because most of the learners are able to attempt the monthly assessment for the teachers and they are able to now the importance of CA

Researcher: how do they react when you tell them that they are going to write a test as a form of assessment?

LT2: aas it is since they know it's like a habit they know that by the end of the month there is a test there is CA they respond positively there is no problem. Because it's like now they are used about CA

Researcher: what about class-based activities on CA how do them react

LT2: and you know is that may experience is that learners are in class they become very happy if you give them task to do in class. Because it one way of interacting with each other in class. So as in class thy respond positively in the activities right away in the class. If you give them activities, they become very happy and there is no any problem on that

Researcher: what are the benefits of using CA from your experience?

LT2: the benefits as you have said on using CA are teachers are able to promote aah based on the tests which they have been assessed what I mean it's like CA you find that as I said if you give them termly you can find that some of the learners they can do better termly but Ca they will not do well. So, what we do is like benefit is like we are able to promote exact learners to go into another class. Then able learners to go into another class.... **Interruption**

Researcher: what do you think are the factors which promote CA in your class?

LT2: factors I can say one I can talk of ...attainment of learners to task given two I can talk of aah resources availability of resources in that class. Other factors discouraging CA I can talk of large classes. Because if the class is large 120 you cannot manage, because as I said these need few learners in class for you as a teacher to implement this CA. another one it's you talk of aahh... staff eeh what I mean is that if you are having many subjects this one is difficult. May be a teacher you can have may be ten subjects other they have ten subjects, so ten subjects as an individual for you to do that aah it's difficult. Aah the other one is that I can talk of understaffing it's a factor which discourage this CA

Researcher a: but you earlier on you said you have enough staff.

LT2: yaah of course here am talking as generally. But as a teacher on factors discouraging CA I can talk of absenteeism of learners. Today not coming tomorrow he comes but to the staffing there is no problem. But I can talk of absenteeism and deserting of the tests by the learners. They don't come to attend those tests.

Researcher: are there any other ways which you think can make CA effective? Or have you tried other new ways of using CA

LT2: aah as of now I have not tried ... it's like I was of the view that that may be if we can use ABDC but I am just looking into that but I have not come up with it. But am looking into it

Researcher: what ideas are you thinking about?

LT2: the idea is like the way it's like CA is about 40% while termly its 60 % so it's like it is disturbing 60, 40. So, if it's possible why not making that CA should be 100 termly 100 so that from there we see the way we can do it because we look at the calculations because teachers we do shun away from CA because of the calculations mathematically to come up with CA integrated score its difficult so am looking into that. I have not finalised but I think on how best can we do.

Researcher: what about assessment procedures do you think of new ways of procedures of carrying out assessment?

LT2: as of now I can say no I have not come up with that

Researcher: any final comment about implementation of CA

LT2: this implementation I can say CA mmm I just want to ask a question. I don't know it seems it's like here in primary school we are using CA while during MANEB examination standard eight they don't use CA. this is my worry that why it's happening like that.

Researcher: So, your desire is CA should contribute to MANEB exams

LT2: yes because it's a 50 50 campaign we do this they also have to do that. But I don't know if it can be implemented because others say you can have negative attitude towards that learner You can see that this CA was brought far back but you can see that very few teachers are doing CA because as I said CA need more teachers at school but doubt if other schools are doing it. It only here at Livingstonia that we are doing and a few selected schools within our zone

Researcher: thank you so much for responding to a call

End of interview