

# The Implementation of Assessment Guidelines and Examination Frameworks for Social Sciences CAPS Curriculum Section 4 Amendments in Geography Grade 4-6

Neo Tsotetsi

Department of Curriculum Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

**Email address:**

Tsotetsi.neo471@gmail.com

**To cite this article:**

Neo Tsotetsi. The Implementation of Assessment Guidelines and Examination Frameworks for Social Sciences CAPS Curriculum Section 4 Amendments in Geography Grade 4-6. *Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies*. Vol. 8, No. 4, 2023, pp. 168-175.

doi: 10.11648/j.tecs.20230804.11

**Received:** September 10, 2023; **Accepted:** October 4, 2023; **Published:** October 28, 2023

---

**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to analyse adherence to the assessment guidelines and examination framework pertaining to the Social Sciences Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Section 4 (assessment-related) amendments in Geography in the Intermediate Phase. The research was undertaken with a view to improving the implementation of the aforementioned amendments. To that end, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach involving document analysis, to analyse Geography question papers in the identified phase, with grades 4–6 June examination papers being purposively sampled. Predefined themes stemming from the content analysis were used during the process of analysing the data. The findings reported on in this article, stemmed from an analysis of the implementation of the assessment guidelines and examination framework for the Social Sciences CAPS Section 4 amendments in Geography in the Intermediate Phase. The findings emanating from the study revealed that most of the examination papers did not address the learners' different cognitive levels. In addition, teachers were found not to infuse paragraph writing when setting the question papers, while those who did so, did not use a rubric for assessment purposes. In addition, the weighting and number of questions the learners had to answer did not correspond with what CAPS advocates.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Cognitive Level, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, Outcomes-Based Education, Qualitative Document Analysis

---

## 1. Introduction

The school curriculum in South Africa has undergone numerous changes since the advent of the new democratic dispensation in 1994. The subject of Social Sciences, formerly known as Human Social Sciences, was introduced in Curriculum 2005 (C2005) [9]. According to Pretorius, as a policy, C2005 mainly focused on the assessment of outcomes, rather than content. Outcomes-based education (OBE) was implemented for about ten years [17]. As Gultig et al. explain, that approach was mainly lauded in developed countries such as Australia and Britain, where it achieved a measure of success [8]. By contrast, many South African teachers encountered significant challenges in implementing C2005 as they had not undergone training in implementing the approach, while the ambiguous terminology which the

curriculum contained, created great confusion. In addition, most teachers did not have access to a range of resources, as required by this approach [17]. Despite the numerous challenges inherent in C2005, some teachers were not satisfied with its subsequent iteration, which 'overcrowded' the syllabus without leaving sufficient time for developing in learners effective reading skills, or basic Mathematics and Science concepts. Teachers did admit to being anxious about their duties and roles, which remained badly demarcated and poorly explained. In 2002, Social Sciences – as a combination of both History and Geography, was introduced in the (Revised) National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in the General Education and Training (GET) band from grades R–9; and in the Further Education and Training (FET) band from grades 10–12. Some teachers did not fully understand the proposed new RNCS and NCS curricula. In their view,

the number of days allocated for related training, was insufficient. In addition, the adoption of the RNCS created problems related to a lack of consultation with educators and their limited participation in formulating the curricula, an additional workload for already overburdened educators who had to deal with overcrowded classes, and the paucity of insufficient resources [14]. These problems hampered the successful implementation of RNCS in classrooms across the country [14]. Attempts to address the situation led to the introduction of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in 2011 [4].

Changes in the South African school curriculum clearly indicated to educators that government was committed to meaningful reform, according to Minister Angie Motshekga, who stated:

Curriculum reform is not something that the system takes lightly. My message from the onset of the curriculum review process has been that we need to work against change fatigue in order to build confidence and enthusiasm amongst all our stakeholders. Therefore we are proceeding deliberately and decisively to effect the broad recommendations of the Ministerial Committee. At the same time, we need to deal quickly and efficiently with curriculum implementation challenges and difficulties that do exist [6].

## 2. The Social Sciences Curricula

The main aim of History, as a subject, is to develop learners' interest in, and enjoyment of, learning about the past. Geography, by contrast, aims to stimulate learners' curiosity about world in which they live. CAPS for the Social Sciences [4] stipulates that every teacher who teaches these subjects must ensure that both History and Geography are taught and assessed each term [4]. The topics to be covered are stated, along with the teaching time allotted per topic, to guide teachers in respect of their lesson planning [4].

The Social Sciences CAPS curriculum focuses on content knowledge, skills and concepts related to the two disciplines of Geography and History [4]. The document outlines specific aims for both, yet despite this many educators continue to provide learners with informal and formal tasks that require them to recall knowledge, rather than undertaking and completing activities that will promote critical thinking [15]. CAPS assessment in the Social Sciences (the focus of Section 4 of that document) is about interpreting and analysing information that teachers, parents and other stakeholders can use in making decisions about a learner's progress [4]. (Section 1 focuses on the aims and principles of CAPS; Section 2 on teaching and the outcomes of the subject; and Section 3 on the content requirements) (for the full CAPS document for this phase, see <https://caps123.co.za/the-caps-document-for-the-intermediate-phase/>).

In determining the progress each learner has made, CAPS defines assessment as a continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the

performance of learners, and [it] may take various forms. It involves four steps: generating and collecting evidence of achievement; evaluating this evidence; recording the findings; and using this information. The information is particularly used to understand and thereby assist the learner's development in order to improve the process of learning and teaching [4].

In the Social Sciences, formal exams are written in primary school, in what is known as summative assessment. As Gouws asserts, summative assessment represents a final judgement of a learning programme, and can take the form of either an examination or a test [7].

The DBE expects learners to complete projects in each grade, either in Geography or History [4]. The most recent amendments to CAPS Section 4, which deals specifically with assessment [4], focus mainly on the reduction of formal assessment tasks across all subjects. In this regard, Manana explains that those changes are crucial for reducing the curriculum workload, improving the forms of assessment used in classrooms, and predetermining the marks allocated for each topic [12]. This, in response to educational stakeholders' concerns about the need to free up more time for teaching and formative assessment, a lack of clarity on the weighting of tasks, and calls for improved guidance on the application of assessment for learners at different cognitive levels [4]. The Section 4 amendments were envisaged to strengthen the DBE's efforts to curb the dominance of a single assessment type (e.g., tests only), and the tendency of teachers to resort to tag-on assessment tasks, by offering guidance on how to replace poor-quality learner appraisals with credible assessments [4].

As indicated, changes in the GET band (grades R–9) were effected to relieve the strenuous workload associated with assessment tasks, thus allowing teachers to focus on teaching and learning. For the Social Sciences, although there was no such reduction in tasks, the DBE document provides greater clarity and guidance on mark allocation, percentages and/or weightings, the type/form of assessment, and examination guidelines. So successful did those changes prove to be, that the implementation of the Abridged Version of the Amended Section 4 of CAPS for grades R–12 was promulgated in the *Government Gazette* [5].

Upon closer scrutiny, the examination framework for the Social Sciences requires that paragraph writing be infused in both informal and formal assessment tasks [4]. In particular, the policy requires the structuring of paragraph writing to adhere to the following requirements:

- 1) A topic sentence
- 2) The main point(s)
- 3) A concluding sentence.

Before studying the sampled examination papers, it is important to gain an overview of the DBE's guidelines in respect of paragraph writing, in the different grades under study here [4]. Tables 1 and 2 show the marking guidelines as they pertain to Geography papers, with each accommodating three levels of evidence.

**Table 1.** Rubric for marking paragraphs in Geography, Grade 4.

Level	Evidence	Marks
1	Uses evidence in an elementary manner (e.g. shows little or no understanding). Uses evidence partially to report on topic, or cannot report on topic	0–1
2	Evidence is mostly relevant and relates to a great extent to the topic. Uses evidence in a very basic manner	1–2
3	Uses relevant evidence (e.g. demonstrates a thorough understanding). Uses evidence very effectively in an organised paragraph that shows an understanding of the topic	1 Total: 4 marks

Source: [4]

**Table 2.** Rubric for marking paragraphs in Geography, grades 5 and 6.

Level	Evidence	Marks
1	Uses evidence in an elementary manner (e.g. shows little or no understanding). Uses evidence partially to report on topic or cannot report on topic	0–1
2	Evidence is mostly relevant and relates to a great extent to the topic. Uses evidence in a very basic manner	2–3
3	Uses relevant evidence (e.g. demonstrates thorough understanding). Uses evidence very effectively in an organised paragraph that shows an understanding of the topic	1 Total: 5 marks

Source: [4]

The DBE document is invaluable for outlining what examination papers should assess during each term, and for specifying exactly how many marks should be allocated to each topic [4]. Tables 3–5 reflect this in detail [4].

**Table 3.** Grade 4 Geography content covered in exams.

Answer all questions			
Question no	Questions should be based on		Marks
1	Definition of concepts, extract/pictures on how people in different places meet their needs	Term 1 content	12
2	Definition of concepts, map reading and interpretation (symbols and keys, alpha-numeric grid references, compass directions, RSA map, globe and map of the world)	Term 2 content	13
Total			25

**Table 4.** Grade 5 Geography content covered in exams.

Answer all questions			
Question no	Questions should be based on		Marks
1	Definition of concepts, map skills, world map, 8 compass directions, Africa, physical map of Africa, images/pictures of Africa	Term 1 content	15
2	Physical map of South Africa and physical features of the country, definition of concepts, a case study on the impact of dams on the physical environment OR a case study on road building and impact on the physical environment	Term 2 content	15
Total			30

**Table 5.** Grade 6 Geography content covered in exams.

Answer all questions			
Question no	Questions should be based on		Marks
1	Definition of concepts, map skills (grid referencing, measuring distance and converting it to ground distance using line scale)	Term 1 content	20
2	Definition of concepts, case study on how resources change value through the manufacturing process, a case study on fair trade and paragraph writing	Term 2 content	20
Total			40

### 3. Problem Statement

Kennedy, Fisher and Ennis indicate that critical thinking is beneficial to children [10], while Beilin et al. [1] assert that critical thinking at primary school level can educate learners to

- 1) develop respect during class discussions
- 2) be open minded, and
- 3) view issues/topics from different perspectives.

It is assumed that learners who are given activities that do not cater for multiple cognitive levels are unlikely to become critical thinkers, or to be able to solve real-world problems.

This statement is supported by Nieman and Pienaar, who aver that although lower-order questions enable learners to recall information, that does not enhance their problem-solving skills and they are likely to be passive rather than critical thinkers. The question that arises, is how teachers and other stakeholders can be guided in differentiating between different cognitive levels [16].

### 4. Theoretical Framework

As indicated in the DBE document, and employed in this article, Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (see

<http://www.odu/llschult/bloomstaxonomy.htm>) provides ‘a common language for teachers to discuss and exchange learning and assessment methods ... and assess learning on a variety of cognitive levels’ [2]. Sivaraman and Krishna outline a number of reasons for adopting Bloom’s taxonomy:

- 1) It enables one to think about the types of questions to be asked in assessments, before they may be answered.
- 2) There is clarity when questions are formulated

appropriately.

- 3) Assessors are in a position to set balanced questions that cater for all cognitive levels [20].

Table 6 reflects Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy, with the verbs deemed appropriate at each level. (Note: some verbs may prove useful at multiple levels, depending on the level of complexity required.)

*Table 6. Bloom’s taxonomy and the six levels of thinking.*

<b>Remember</b>	<b>Understand</b>	<b>Apply</b>	<b>Analyse</b>	<b>Evaluate</b>	<b>Create</b>
<b>Lower order</b>	<b>Middle order</b>			<b>Higher order</b>	
Define					
Identify					
Label	Explain Describe			Evaluate Order	Design Compose
List	Interpret Paraphrase	Change Compute	Analyse Compare	Appraise Judge	Create
Recite	Summarise Classify	Solve	Classify Contrast	Support Compare	Plan
Repeat	Compare Differentiate	Modify Calculate	Differentiate	Recommend Defend	Combine Formulate
Point out Recognise	Discuss Distinguish	Choose	Investigate Organise	Estimate	Invent Hypothesise
Respond Trace	Demonstrate Illustrate	Show	Separate Breakdown	Find errors Measure	Write
Respond Name	Infer	Sketch Complete	Calculate Correlate	Predict	Compile Develop
State	Estimate Define	Predict	Criticise Conclude	Rank	Generalise Integrate
Match Categorise	Give examples	Relate Construct	Deduce Devise	Score	Modify Rearrange
Select	Match	Use		Argue Measure	Adapt
Locate	Translate				
Quote Tabulate					
Copy					

Source: [4]

When it comes to cognition, Bloom’s classification differentiates between thinking on six levels of ever-increasing complexity, namely remembering, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creativity. Before proceeding, it seems appropriate to take a closer look at the three orders of cognition.

#### *Lower-order levels of cognition*

As Nieman and Pienaar indicate, lower-order questions enable learners to recall information [16]. Rotterdam points out that action verbs that require learners to recall, include “list”, “name” and “state”, noting that when educators formulate questions to test for lower-order thinking, they should employ words/phrases such as: “Where ...?”, “Who ...?”, “How much ...?”, “What is ...?” and “What ...?” [18].

#### *Middle-order levels of cognition*

This level of cognition enables learners to understand information, and to give evidence using their own words [16]. As Nieman and Pienaar indicate, key words for questions at this level of cognition, are: “Why ...?”, “Compare ...”, “Explain ...”, “Distinguish ...”, “Rearrange ...” and “Describe ...” [16].

#### *Higher-order levels of cognition*

At this level, learners should be able to solve problems, and think creatively and imaginatively. To do so, they should be sufficiently competent to identify and then analyse the problem presented to them [16].

## 5. Aims/Objectives

The aim of this study was to analyse the implementation of

the assessment guidelines and examination framework pertaining to the Social Sciences curriculum taught in South Africa, and in particular, how the curriculum statement Section 4 amendments are implemented in Geography classrooms in the Intermediate Phase.

The objectives were to examine the cognitive levels which teachers cover in the examinations; to investigate how they implement the requirement for paragraph writing in Geography; and to understand how Geography question papers are structured, when compared to the DBE’s guidelines [4].

## 6. Methodology

The researcher used a qualitative approach, analysing the contents of written and published documents. According to MacMillan and Schumacher, document review is a strategy for collecting data without interacting with study participants [13]. Rule and John indicate that document review entails perusing documents in order to arrive at a thorough understanding of substantive content [19]. Official documents, such as the DBE’s CAPS document and Geography Intermediate Phase examination question papers, were studied to collect data, in an effort to determine how teachers implement the assessment guidelines and examination framework spelled out in the first-mentioned text [4].

### 6.1. Sampling of Documents

Geography grades 4–6 June examination papers were

purposely sampled. Grade 4 is known as the entrance grade for the Intermediate Phase, while Grade 6 is the exit grade for that phase. One question paper was sampled from each grade at three separate schools, named A, B and C, for the sake of anonymity. Prior to scrutinising these documents, the researcher sought and received permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct this research.

## 6.2. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using content analysis, which Cohen, Manion and Morrison describe as a process whereby data are summarised and reported. Predefined themes

emanating from the content analysis, were used [3].

## 7. Results and Discussion

From School A, the researcher obtained the Grade 4 question paper, from school B the Grade 5 paper, and from School C the Grade 6 paper, referred to here. Table 7 reflects the examination questions asked, as well as the mark allocation for each. Note that, for the sake of brevity, the questions are not given in their totality – case studies or scenarios have been omitted, and not all questions are therefore contextualised.

**Table 7.** Examination questions, School A, Grade 4.

Q1 Write down the correct word for each description 1.1 Something that stands out in the area. (1) 1.2 A place that protects us from the sun, wind and rain. (1) 1.3 Something made by humans (1)	Q2 Read the case study ... and answer the questions that follow: 2.1 Identify one basic need in the story above. (1) 2.2 Explain the difference between a need and a want. (2)
Q3 Look at the pictures .... and answer the questions that follow: 3.1 Identify the type of settlement seen in picture A. (1) 3.2 Name the settlement seen in picture B. (1) 3.3 Compare the two settlements shown above, by filling in the missing information on the table 8	Q4 Answer the questions below: 4.1 Look at the side view of the apple below. Draw a plan view of it, in the block. (1) 4.2 Discuss why we use a plan view when drawing maps, instead of a side view. (2)
Q5 5.1 Fill in the missing words, to make to the statement true (2)	Q6 Use the compass below, to answer the questions: 6.1 Fill the missing compass points at A and B. (2) 6.2 What are the main compass points known as? (1)
Q7 Study Map A and the key provided on the next page, to answer the questions below: 7.1 Which city is this map of? (1) 7.2 Explain why it is important that we can read a grid on a map. (1) 7.3 Identify the symbol found in the following block: (1) 7.4 In which square can we find the following: (2) 7.5 There is a hotel in square D4. Draw the missing symbol. (1)	Q8 Answer the following questions about the Map of South Africa: 8.1 Give the name of the province labelled A. (1) 8.2 Identify one landlocked country within the South African borders. (1) 8.3 Which province is the furthest south on the map? (1) 8.4 Which ocean lies to the east of South Africa? (1) 8.5 The neighbouring country which lies north-east of Mpumalanga, is called _____. (1) Total: 35 marks

### Document analysis for School A

#### Analysis of sub-question 1

How did this teacher cover the cognitive levels in the examination paper?

#### Findings:

Guided by Table 6, which shows the six levels of thinking outlined in Bloom's taxonomy, Table 7 indicates that the educator did not address an array of cognitive levels, as most of the questions could be categorised as lower- or middle-order. The findings show that the recommendations of Sivaraman and Krishna were not adhered to, as the teacher did not set a balanced question paper that catered for all cognitive levels [20].

#### Analysis of sub-question 2

How did this teacher implement paragraph writing in Geography?

#### Findings:

As Table 7 indicates, this teacher of Geography in the Intermediate Phase did not assess learners on structured paragraph writing. This decision is counter to the recommendations of the DBE, which notes that paragraph writing should be infused in both informal and formal assessment tasks. Furthermore, the policy requires the

structure of a paragraph to accommodate a topic sentence, main point(s) and a concluding sentence – something the learners had no opportunity to practise during this assessment [4].

#### Analysis of sub-question 3

How did the teacher structure the Grade 4 Geography examination question paper?

#### Findings:

Table 3, which is extracted from CAPS indicates that the Geography Grade 4 question paper should consist of two questions, the weighting being 12 and 13 marks respectively, for a total of 25 marks. Furthermore, as Table 3 indicates, Question 1 should cover term 1 content, and Question 2 term 2 content. The findings shown in Table 7 are not in line with what CAPS advocates: it appears that the teacher from School A did not follow the correct structure in setting the Grade 4 Geography question paper, used the wrong mark allocation (setting the paper out of 35, instead of 25). Furthermore, the paper was supposed to consist of two questions, yet the teacher posed eight questions. Despite adhering to the incorrect structure, the teacher was able to include term 1 and 2 content in this assessment. Answering this many questions may possibly have been too onerous for

Grade 4 learners, who are only at the entry stage of the Intermediate Phase.

**Table 8.** Examination paper, School B, Grade 5.

Q1	Q2
1.1 Study Source A and answer 1.1.1 and 1.1.2: 1.1.1 What object is to the west of the compass? (1) 1.1.2 What object is to the north of the compass? (1) 1.2 Study source B, then choose from the words below and fill in the correct answer: 1.2.1 The ocean to the west of Africa is the _____. (2) 1.2.2 The sea to the north of Africa is the _____. (2) 1.2.3 The Indian Ocean is to the _____ of Africa. (2) 1.3 Define the following words: Island (1) Border (1)	2.1 Explain 3 (three) reasons that cause people to live in high mountain areas. 2.1.1 Topic sentence: _____. (1) Main points: Few people live in high mountain areas because _____. (3) Conclusion: I think or believe that _____. (1) 2.2 Source D 2.2.1 Study Source D. Complete the table below and write down the names of two rivers, two mountains and three coastal areas. (8) 2.2.2 Define the term: Coastal plain. (1) 2.3 Organise the following physical areas into the correct columns: (6) Total: 30 marks

#### *Analysis of sub-question 1*

How did the teacher cover the cognitive levels in the examination paper?

##### *Findings:*

Table 8 indicates that the teacher in School B did not set a balanced question paper, using only lower- and middle-order questions. No higher-order questions were posed. Wilen et al. state that while recalling information is a necessity, it is not sufficient to solely base a test or an examination paper on this skill [21]. The questions reflected in Table 8 do not match what Bloom's (1956) taxonomy and the related theory advocate, namely that all cognitive levels must be addressed in setting question papers.

#### *Analysis of sub-question 2*

How did the teacher implement paragraph writing in the question paper?

##### *Findings:*

Table 8 suggest that while the teacher who taught Geography at School B did assess the Grade 5 learners on

paragraph writing, the question was not accompanied by a rubric. As Table 8 shows, the teacher employed paragraph structuring, thereby adhering to the requirements of CAPS that paragraphs be structured as a topic sentence, main point(s) and concluding sentence [4].

#### *Analysis of sub-question 3*

How did the teacher structure the Grade 5 Geography examination question paper?

##### *Findings:*

As Table 8 shows, the paper in question was compiled in line with what CAPS advocates, which means the teacher at School B adhered to the correct formatting in setting the Geography paper for Grade 5s. In addition, s/he used the correct mark allocation for the paper, setting it out of 30 marks, and posing two questions. A closer scrutiny of the topics covered, revealed that the teacher was able to infuse both term 1 and term 2 content in the question paper.

**Table 9.** Geography Grade 6 paper set at School C.

Q1 Answer the following questions using Map A below: 1.1) Label the prime meridian, and use a blue pencil to draw a line along it. (1) 1.2) Label the Equator and use a green pencil to draw a line along it. (1) 1.3) Africa lies in three hemispheres. Name the hemispheres. (3) 1.4) Define how many degrees of longitude the Earth is divided into. Use the blocks to help you with a calculation, if needed. (2) 1.5) What imaginary line would we find at 23 degrees South? (1)	Q2 Investigate the places indicated on Map B and decide on the correct answers in the options supplied: 2.1) The correct co-ordinates for Rabat, are _____. (1) 2.2) The correct co-ordinates for Luanda, are _____. (1) 2.3) Which city can be found at the following co-ordinates? (1) 2.4) Which city can be found at the following co-ordinates? (1)
Q3 Study the contents page of the atlas, as shown below, and answer the questions that follow: 3.1) Why is it important for an atlas to have a contents page? (1) 3.2) Explain to someone where you would find a contents page in an atlas. (1) 3.3) Indicate on what page would you find information about the moon. (1) 3.4) Identify what you would find on page 15. (1)	Q4 Study the map South Africa and answer the questions that follow: 4.1) Identify the two different scales seen in Map C. (2) 4.2) If you travelled for 1 600 km on the ground, how many centimetres would the straight-line distance be? (Show your calculations) (2) 4.3) Select a map and show more information: (1)
Q5 Match column A to column B, by writing the correct number in column C. (5)	Q6 The below picture is of a man trading goods for money. 6.1) Before money existed, people often bartered. Supply two reasons why this was not always effective. (2) 6.2) What was one of the first forms of currency introduced in 500 BC? (1)
Q7 Give examples of two goods South Africa imports and two goods South Africa exports, using Map D. (4)	Q8 Arrange the steps of getting gold out of a rock, in the correct order. The first and last one have been done for you. (3)
Q9	Q10

Read Case Study 1 below and discuss why this success story is an example of a good fairtrade project in Ghana. Using the information from your writing, formulate a paragraph, taking into account the questions below, to indicate why this is a good example of a fairtrade success story. (5)

- What did farmers grow in the above case study?
- How were the farmers treated badly?
- What is the organisation called that helps farmers in developing areas?
- What did this organisation do to help farmers when selling their harvest?
- How could farmers use the resources mentioned in (d), to help develop their communities?

Read Case Study 2 and answer the questions that follow:

10.1) After reading about the conditions under which Isaak S and his family were living, what conclusion can you make about his employer's character? (1)

10.2) If you were Isaak S's employer, name one thing you could do to help him and his family. (1)

10.3) In your opinion, was Dino M's complaint justified? Explain your answer. (2)

Total: 45 marks

### *Document analysis for School C*

#### *Analysis for sub-question 1*

How did the teacher cover the three cognitive levels in the examination paper?

Findings:

Table 9 indicates that the teacher in School C tested a variety of cognitive levels, when drawing up the paper for Grade 6 learners. Several questions enhanced the learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, including the following:

- 9.1 Using the information from your writing, formulate a paragraph ....
- 10.1 After reading about [...], what conclusion can you make ...?

As a comparison with Table 9 shows, Bloom's taxonomy was well represented, with the teacher having set a question paper that caters for all cognitive levels.

#### *Analysis for sub-question 2*

How did the teacher implement paragraph writing in the question paper?

Findings:

Table 9 suggests that the teacher who taught Geography in School C assessed the learners on paragraph writing, and the question was accompanied by a rubric (as reflected in Table 2). However, the paragraph requirements were not structured in accordance with that of the DBE, which indicates that paragraphs should be structured as a topic sentence, main point(s) and concluding sentence [4].

#### *Analysis for sub-question 3*

How did the teacher structure the Grade 6 Geography examination question paper?

Findings:

As Table 9 shows, the teacher at School C did not adhere to the recommended structuring in setting the Grade 6 Geography question paper. The mark allocation was incorrect, totalling 45 rather than the recommended 40. The teacher did, however, cover content from both terms 1 and 2.

## **8. General Observations**

It is evident that the teachers at schools A and C used the wrong mark allocation when drafting the respective question papers. The recommendation is that the papers consist of two questions, yet one teacher posed up to ten questions. Across the board, the teachers at all three schools managed to infuse term 1 and term 2 content in their examination papers, thereby covering the designated topics.

The DBE (2011) asserts that teachers should compile

question papers featuring lower, middle- and higher-order questions, to cater for learners of all cognitive levels. More specifically, lower-order questions should constitute 30 per cent of the paper, middle-order questions 50 per cent, and higher-order questions 20 per cent (DBE 2011). Khan and Inamullah indicate that high-order questions enable learners to critically analyse and evaluate ideas and concepts, which means teachers should employ the applicable action verbs reflected in Table 6, if they want to nurture critical thinking in the learner cohort [11].

Paragraph writing should form an integral part of both informal and formal assessment tasks, as stipulated in the CAPS policy. More specifically, the structuring of a paragraph, at the Intermediate Phase level, should include a topic sentence, the main point(s) and a concluding sentence.

The recommendation is that a question paper should comprise two questions, with Question 1 covering term 1 content, and Question 2 covering content taught in the second term. The mark allocation should correspond to the DBE's (2011) recommendations.

## **9. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings reported on in this article, stemmed from an analysis of the implementation of the assessment guidelines and examination framework for the Social Sciences CAPS Section 4 amendments in Geography in the Intermediate Phase [4]. The researcher achieved the stated aim and objectives by collected data by means of document analysis. Content analysis was subsequently employed to analyse the data. As the findings indicate, two of the teachers at the schools under study did not employ structured paragraph writing when setting question papers, nor were paragraph-type questions accompanied by a rubric. Those teachers did not accommodate different cognitive levels when setting their Geography papers, nor did they adhere to the correct structure in setting them, as the weightings did not correlate with what CAPS advocates in relation to mark allocation. A failure to introduce learners to paragraph writing does not bode well for their future academic careers, as those learners will, in all likelihood, have to answer similar or even essay-type questions, in which structuring will play a vital role. It is crucial, in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, to guide learners towards critical thinking, and for that reason, the use of higher-order questions is imperative.

The suggestion is that the heads of department at the respective schools assist teachers in drafting examination papers, so that the questions posed reflect Bloom's taxonomy

and adhere to the grade-specific stipulations outlined in CAPS (DBE 2011), so that all learners are sufficiently and equally prepared to progress to the next phase in their scholastic journey.

## References

- [1] Beilin, S., R. Case, J. R., Coombs and L. B. Daniels. 1999. Conceptualizing Critical Thinking. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 31 (3): 285–302.
- [2] Bloom, H. 1956. Taxonomy. Available online: <http://www.odu/llschult/blooms/taxonomy/htm> (accessed on 30 August 2023).
- [3] Cohen, L., L. Manion and K. Morrison. 2007. Observation. *Research Methods in Education* 6: 396–412.
- [4] Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2011. *National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Intermediate Design*. Pretoria: DBE. Available online: <file:///C:/Users/admin/Desktop/Intermediate%20Phase-CAPS%20Amendments.pdf> (accessed on 30 August 2023).
- [5] Department of Basic Education. 2019. Implementation of the Abridged Version of the Amended Section 4 of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Grade R–12. *Government Gazette* vol. 1429, no. 42829. [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201911/42829gon1429.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201911/42829gon1429.pdf)
- [6] Department of Education (DoE). 2010. Improving the Quality of Learning and Teaching. *Curriculum News*. Pretoria: DoE.
- [7] Gouws, F. E. 2014. Assessment in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. In *The Educator as Assessor*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by J. M. Dreyer. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- [8] Gultig, J., U. Hoadley and J. Jansen, eds. 2002. *Curriculum: From Plans to Practices*. Cape Town: Saide & Oxford University Press.
- [9] Harley, K. and V. Wedekind. 2004. Political Change, Curriculum Change and Social Formation, 1990–2002. In *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-apartheid South Africa*, edited by L. Chisholm. Pretoria: HSRC Press, pp. 195–220. Available online: <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/234116457> (accessed on 25 September 2022).
- [10] Kennedy, M., M. B. Fisher and R. H. Ennis. 1991. Critical Thinking: Literature Review and Needed Research. In *Educational Values and Cognitive Instruction: Implications for Reform*, edited by L. Idol and B. F. Jones. Oxford and New York: Taylor & Francis, 11–40. Available online: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315044392-2/critical-thinking-mellen-kennedy-michelle-fisher-robert-ennis> (accessed on 3 June 2023).
- [11] Khan, W. B. and H. M. Inamullah. 2011. A Study of Lower-order and Higher-order Questions at Secondary Level. *Asian Social Science* 7 (9): 149.
- [12] Manana, P. 2020. Abridged Chapter 4 of CAPS: Visual Arts Grade 10 and 11 [Roadshow presentation]. Available online: <http://wcedportal.co.za/eresource/135926> (accessed on 10 November 2021).
- [13] McMillan, J. H. and S. Schumacher. 2014. *Research in Education: Evidence-based Inquiry*, 7<sup>th</sup> int. ed. London: Pearson Education.
- [14] Moodley, G. 2013. Implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements: Challenges and Implications for Teaching and Learning. Master's dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- [15] Ndashe, T. S. 2016. How Heads of Departments Manage the Teaching of Social Sciences in the Intermediate Phase. Mini dissertation, University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- [16] Nieman, M. M. and G. E. Pienaar. 2014. The Role of the Learning Process, Learning Styles and Learner Differences in the Mediation of Learning. In *The Educator as Mediator of Learning*, edited by M. M. Nieman and R. B. Monyai. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- [17] Pretorius, S. G. F. 2010. Themes in South African Education for the Comparative Educationist. In *The South African education system*, edited by E. M. Lemmer and J. N. van Wyk. Johannesburg and London: Pearson: pp. 117–38.
- [18] Rotterdam, H. 2000. The Taxonomy of Cognitive Objective and the Theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability. Available online: <http://www.icelp.org/files/> (accessed on 12 September 2022).
- [19] Rule, P. and V. John. 2011. *Your Guide to Case Study Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- [20] Sivaraman, S. I. and D. Krishna. 2015. Bloom's Taxonomy-application in Exam Papers Assessment. *Chemical Engineering (VITU)* 12 (12): 32.
- [21] Wilen, W., M. I. Boose, J. Hutchison and R. Kindsvatter. 2004. *Dynamics of Effective Secondary Teaching*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Pearson.