Table of Contents

[**Question 1: Alignment of Teaching and Assessment in the Foundation Phase** 3](#_Toc207224641)

[**Question 2: Assessment Activities** 7](#_Toc207224642)

[**Question 3: Conclusion – A Reflective Essay** 8](#_Toc207224643)

[**References:** 10](#_Toc207224644)

# **Question 1: Alignment of Teaching and Assessment in the Foundation Phase**

**1.1 Introduction**

Effective teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase depend mainly on aligning learning and assessment processes. At this stage, learners are acquiring the foundation of literacy skills, and it is the role of the assessments to contribute to learning instead of disruption, so it is very important that teachers prepare good assessments. This task analyses or explores the concept of alignment, issues unique to the South African education context, evaluation of school-based experience and practices noted in the classroom, and the practical solutions that can be recommended to increase alignment in the process of Foundation Phase Education.

**1.2 Understanding Alignment**

Alignment in education is when learning results or outcomes, approach to teaching, and method of assessment are consistent (Utaberta & Hassanpour, 2012). Alignment is the organised relationship among learning outcomes, teaching approaches, and assessment techniques (Biggs et al., 2022). Also, alignment in the foundation phase helps to ensure that what is taught is what is being assessed, and learners are well-supported and precisely measured.

Furthermore, alignment is required as it maintains the focus on learning aims, avoids unfair evaluation, and fosters effective competencies (Biggs et al., 2022). It is essential to have such coherence in order to give clear learning routes and proper feedback concerning learner progress. Misalignment can lead to vagueness, loss of learner motivation, and inaccurate reporting achievement, and also in the absence of alignment, learners can be assessed on content that they have not meaningfully interacted with, which leads to frustration and an incorrect portrayal of their abilities.

Existing research verifies that alignment ensures enhanced academic achievement and supports formative feedback loops and also ensures that teaching remains purposeful and focused **(**Engelbrecht, 2020).

**1.3 Challenges in the South African Context**

As (Mthembu et al., 2023) arques, curriculum-based assessments present major challenge to many teachers of the foundation phase because of lacking content knowledge and ineffective initial teacher education. According to personal experience of teaching practice, additional challenges such as time constraints and administrative overload reduce the possibility of meaningful informal assessment. Also, according to Spaull (2019), the majority of foundation phase educators cannot give assessment that is aligned to the curriculum due to context knowledge deficits and a lack of sufficient initial teacher education.

South Africa faces enormous difficulties in ensuring teaching and assessment alignment. Class overcrowding, inadequate access to quality teaching materials, and time constraints brought about by curriculum overload habitually result in assessments not being related to daily teaching (Spaull, 2019). Foundation Phase teachers are also undertrained in continuous assessment practices, and these existing research studies (Venkat & Spaull, 2015;Spaull & Pretorious, 2019)indicate that there is a continuing gap in the pedagogical content knowledge on the level of mathematics and literacy.

In my personal teaching experience, I found that despite the best intentions of teachers, it was difficult to perform consistent and meaningful assessment because of burdens of administrative responsibilities and the large number of learners that teachers had to deal within a given time. The majority of teachers relied too heavily on summative end-of-term assessments rather than formative assessments that guide instruction.

**1.4 School-Based Discussion and Analysis**

Discussion with teachers in the Foundation Phase at my placement school, I discovered that teachers recognise the necessity of alignment, however a number of barriers were identified. Teachers observed that they usually feel coerced into teaching towards the test and particularly at formal assessment moments. One teacher stated, “We try to align our teaching, but the system pushes us towards results rather than reflection.”

During critical analysis, it was found that as much as teachers believe in alignment, they are often not provided with enough time and support to ensure implementation on a regular basis, this indicates that support and further utilitarian preparation are required. This lack of opportunities for professional development also hinders alignment in a significant way. This inability to link policy with practice means that alignment remains more theory than practice in the majority of South African classrooms.

**1.5 Observation of Informal Assessment in Practice**

**1.5.1 Grade Observed: Grade 3**

In the Grade 3 English First Additional Language classroom where I did my observations, informal assessment was applied actively in the day-to-day learning activities of the four core skills areas. In the case of listening and speaking, the teacher incorporated the morning routine and stories discussions as the means of evaluating the oral language of learners. Learners were encouraged to share their thoughts, respond to questions, and narrate incidents, allowing the teacher to measure vocabulary use, understanding, and sentence construction in a non-formal interactive environment.

For reading and phonics, students took turns to read from leveled readers during small group reading. The teacher listened for fluency, pronunciation, and decoding ability, and gave immediate corrective feedback. These reading classes allowed for individual attention and relaxed progress monitoring. For writing and handwriting, students kept everyday journals where they copied short texts based on instructions.

The instructor roamed the room to offer verbal comments and focused on sentence structure spelling, and punctuation as soon as possible. Handwriting was monitored through copywork exercises, where the instructor guided students to develop letter formation and spacing. Lastly, Language use and thinking were assessed while learners did group work and retelling stories. Learners were prompted to defend responses, discuss characters’ actions, or predict a story’s ending, such that the instructor could observe their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and critical thinking.

Generally, there was alignment among instruction and assessment in listening, speaking, and reading activities where assessment strategies followed the instructional content and were cohesively integrated into the learning process. In the case of writing, though the learners wrote often, follow up actions like reversion or one-on-one conferencing were not frequent. Therefore, some examples of learners reflecting and revising in response to feedback were lost. This suggests that informal assessment was generally well done, but more deliberate methods could be used in writing to strengthen the linkage between instruction and assessment.

**1.6 Solutions for the Future**

If I were appointed as Minister of Education, I would prioritise a series of strategic interventions to tighten the alignment between learning and assessment in the Foundation Phase. Firstly, I would create rigorous teacher development programs that provide teachers with hands-on competencies to conduct formative assessments closely mapped to curriculum objectives. These practices sessions would seek to integrate assessment into everyday teaching practice and not as a segregated or anxiety-laden activity.

Secondly, I would seek to reduce the administrative load on teachers so that they have more time available for good planning, observation, and learner support. To help teachers further, I would have streamlined systems of assessment tracking that allow for the linking of everyday teaching to specific learning goals and easier tracking of student progress.

Mentoring schemes would also be established, allowing experienced teachers to help and work together with others toward developing integrated and experiential assessment techniques. Lastly, I would encourage the implementation of thematic and integrated approaches to teaching, which naturally facilitate alignment through content, skill, and assessment task integration.

**1.7 Conclusion**

Teaching and assessment alignment is crucial within the Foundation Phase so that learners can be supported and evaluated in a way that reflects their learning journey. While South African teachers know of its value, systemic problems such as insufficient funding, time factors, and absence of training on its implementation hinder this from taking place. Classsroom observations and teacher discourse report a cry for specific assistance, professional development, and reasonable expectations. By means of teacher-focused, action-oriented interventions, alignment can be more than a policy goal, but an in-classroom reality that enables the learning of every Foundation Phase student.

# **Question 2: Assessment Activities**

2.1 Listening and Speaking

2.2 Reading and Phonics

2.3 Writing

# **Question 3: Conclusion – A Reflective Essay**

**3.1 Reflective Essay on Differentiation and Grade Appropriateness**

The need to design grade-appropriate and differentiated assessment activity is vital towards the achievement of equitable and sensible learning in a Foundation Phase English First Additional Language (FAL) classroom. At this development level, learners are building basic literacy and communication skills while acquiring a second language. The learners also exhibit a broad spectrum of cognitive, emotional and language-development variabilities and thus a blanket assessment is ineffective and may be harmful.

Grade-appropriate assessment can simply be defined as the test that correlates with the learning level, language proficiency and curriculum on a grade level. Too difficult tests intimidate students, and too simple ones fail to challenge their capabilities or reveal true understanding. An example would be asking Grade 1 students to write paragraphs in another language that they have never learned and are not even in the beginning stages of literacy yet. On the same note, exclusively administering oral assessment to Garde 3 learners may not work because these learners are improving on their writing and structured form of expression of ideas. The study by (Chasokela & Hlongwane, 2025) propose that assessment should lead learners” where they are” developmentally and get them to more sophisticated thinking and proficiency in skills. Grade appropriateness also makes the CAPS curriculum effectively delivered and learning outcomes are meaningfully assessed.

The other aspect is individualising, which entails the focus on assessment tasks that suit different learning needs, language proficiencies and learning styles. Learners in the Foundation Phase learning environment may have multilingual backgrounds, learn cognitively at different rates, and can be multimodal on their signification of understanding. Some learners are auditory processors, performing well on oral instructions, but others perform better on visual or kinesthetic instructions. Without differentiated evaluations, students can fail not because they are unaware, but because the assessment modality does not suit their abilities.

Assessment tasks can be differentiated in many respects to support the diversity of learners. In the case of less-skilled learners, teachers can utilise sentence starters, visual aids, or bilingual scaffolding. Differentiation does not only refer to varying contents as Tomlinson (2017) reckons but also to provide learners with multiple ways of expressing their learning to achieve a sense of equality and inclusiveness.

Strategy differentiation in accordance with the learning style contributes to the effectiveness of assessment as well. Visual learners benefit from activities with pictures, graphic organisers, and sequencing exercises that make abstract language rules concrete. As an example, it is possible to match pictures with words or to draw scenes of the story and write some descriptive sentences to support comprehension and expression (Cochrane, 2014). Auditory learners respond to oral storytelling and conversation, song, and singing, where understanding can be verified through retelling or interpreting song lyrics, thus consolidating language in context (Engelbrecht, 2020). Kinesthetic learners excel at kinesthetic activities like performing role-plays, acting out of the verbs, or classrooms scavenger hunts, which incorporate fine motor skills and encourage focused attention, which is critical for young children who are still developing these competencies (Sadaruddin et al., 2022)This diversity of strategies also makes sure that the chosen methods within which learners perform best get the due respect in the framework of assessment, which helps improve the motivational level as well as their accuracy in determining the progress level.

To differentiate successfully, teachers should also consider ongoing informal assessment strategies such as anecdotal records, checklists, and learner portfolios. These will enable a more comprehensive picture to be developed of the progress of a learner over time and across contexts. Technology, where available, can also support differentiation through interactive software that adjusts task difficulty according to learner feedback.

In conclusion, it is important to design assessment activities that are grade-level but also differentiated to ensure that classrooms are accommodating and responsive within the Foundation Phase. These assessments recognise and honor the developmental, language, and cognitive diversity found in South African classrooms. Adopting the idea of diverse assessment techniques that employ the knowledge and strengths of learners, teachers ensure compliance with the educational policies, stimulating learner success rates in English FAL classrooms, becoming more confident and engaged participants of the process.

# **References:**

1. Biggs, J., Tang, C. and Kennedy, G., 2022. Teaching for quality learning at university 5e. McGraw-hill education (UK).
2. Chasokela, D. and Hlongwane, J., 2025. Assessing Higher-Order and Critical Skills in the Era of Artificial Intelligence. In Educational Assessments in the Age of Generative AI (pp. 285-314). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
3. Cochrane, V., 2014. Extending children's vocabulary and comprehension through oral and visual literacy. Practically Primary, *19*(1), pp.22-24.
4. Engelbrecht, P., 2020. Inclusive education: Developments and challenges in South Africa. Prospects, 49(3), pp.219-232.
5. Mthembu, T., Kanjee, A. and Hill, M.F., 2023. Exploring the Effects of an Assessment Course on Student Teachers’ Formative Assessment Knowledge and Understanding. Journal of EducationalStudies, *22*(4), pp.115-139.
6. Sadaruddin, S., Intisari, I., Hajerah, H., Amri, N.A. and Mariyani, M., 2022, April. Kinesthetic learning development methods to train fine motors for early childhood. In 1st World Conference on Socialand Humanities Research (W-SHARE 2021) (pp. 229-234). Atlantis Press.
7. Spaull, N. and Pretorius, E., 2019. Still falling at the first hurdle: Examining early grade reading in South Africa. In South African schooling: The enigma of inequality: A study of the present situationand future possibilities (pp. 147-168). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
8. Spaull, N., 2019. Priorities for education reform in South Africa. URL: https://nicspaull. files*.* wordpress.com/2019/01/spaull-priorities-for-educ-reform-treasury-19-jan-2019*.* pdf.
9. Tomlinson, C.A., 2017. How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms. Ascd.
10. Utaberta, N. and Hassanpour, B., 2012. Aligning assessment with learning outcomes. Procedia-Social and BehavioralSciences, 60, pp.228-235.
11. Venkat, H. and Spaull, N., 2015. What do we know about primary teachers’ mathematical content knowledge in South Africa? An analysis of SACMEQ 2007. International journal of educationaldevelopment, 41, pp.121-130.