

Realising the potential of school-based assessment

Clive Long

IEB, South Africa

Teachers and learners, quite understandably, respond to circumstances that affect them. As a consequence teachers teach to the test and learners are motivated to study for these events, especially if it is a high stakes examination. However it is, today, for many reasons, widely recognized that tests and examinations need to be complemented by alternative ways of assessing what learners know and can do. School Based Assessment (SBA) offers an opportunity to introduce these alternative ways. However to achieve this purpose, SBA must be, and must be seen to be, of major relevance to the outcome of the high stakes assessment. On the other hand examination boards and quality assurance bodies cannot allow SBA to affect the examination result significantly unless they can be confident that it is valid, fair and reliable. This paper looks at steps that have been taken by the IEB, an examination board that serves mostly well-resourced schools across South Africa, to make SBA relevant and significant. These steps cover aspects like changing teacher perceptions, broadening the types of tasks used in SBA to ensure that assessment complements examinations and tests, moderation processes and the management of these processes using the internet. Examples are taken from the subject Physical Science.