



## A content analysis of the alignment between CAP secondary education aims and the LGCSE English language syllabus aims

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### Abstract

Lesotho went through various phases of curriculum implementations and all were never fruitful until in 2009 when the new policy was adopted. The study therefore sought to investigate an extent to which the LGCSE English Language syllabus aims correlate with the secondary education aims. This study adopted a qualitative research orientation involving document analysis as a method of data generation. The relevant aims were purposefully sampled for analysis and interpretation. The findings of the study reveal that there is an alignment between secondary education aims and the English Language Syllabus aims. However, there is a gross misalignment between standards and assessment which is an indication that the teaching of English might not be comprehensive. The study therefore, proposes ways through which the syllabus and curriculum aims can be both horizontally and vertically aligned in order to bring clarity to English language teaching. It is hoped that the study will stimulate critical reflection on English Language syllabus developers, since only two language skills are tested externally while speaking and listening are ignored.

**Keywords:** Curriculum alignment, assessment, standards, English language teaching

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduce the problem

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) published the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022). The policy's intention was to make available education for every learner as well as the social development (MoET, 2009). The curriculum transformation was also obligated by the ordeals created by the HIV/AIDS endemic and other infectious diseases, escalating

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poverty, atmospheric and environmental damage and other requirements brought of globalisation (MoET, 2009). The reform plan was as a result meant to be an elementary document which is produced by the ministry as the plan to equally improve the curriculum and assessment strategies which are commensurate with the public intentions and ambitions. The integrated strategy for the improvement of this novel curriculum modernisation was consequently implemented as a direct retort to the abovementioned difficulties (MoET, 2009). This policy document additionally denotes that school life has to be incorporated with the civic life and day by day experiences of the learners so as to render the curriculum more noteworthy. The curriculum's goal to fight and face the aforesaid encounters is accordingly apparent in the configuration of everyday life trials with school knowledge (MoET, 2009).

This policy document was therefore written and published by the time when Lesotho, like many other countries, was confronting grave economic, environmental and societal challenges (MoET, 2009). As precisely postulated in the document, there were great challenges of high unemployment, environmental deprivation and mounting rates of HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), all of which created a menace for sustainable development in Lesotho (MoET, 2009). The integrated curriculum as offered in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy 2009, thus considers assessment and curriculum as closely entwined and mutually supportive (The NGO Web, 2013; Raselimo & Mahao, 2015; Moea, 2022). In order to attain this goal, continuous assessment has been initiated as a key approach in the discharge of the integrated curriculum (The NGO Web, 2013; Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022; Kuruta, Selialia & Mokhetšengoane, 2022). In the context of English language regarding assessment, the curriculum states that all language skills should be tested equally for effective communication. Therefore, what is taught in class should correlate with what is assessed so that learners' anticipated achievement can be determined (Ziebell & Clarke, 2018). However, given its abrupt implementation, there is a possibility that standards, assessment and instruction might not be commensurate.

## **2. Curriculum reforms in Lesotho**

In an endeavour to render education more appropriate in tackling the national needs, numerous unproductive curriculum improvements were espoused during the 1970s (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). These developments encompassed the curriculum expansion change in 1974 that instigated applied subjects which included amongst others, home economics, technical subjects and agriculture envisaged to encourage self-sufficiency amongst the youth of the country (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Additional modification which was referred to 'the core curriculum reform' was espoused in an effort to propagate the effectiveness of learning by concentrating on the organisation of the school curriculum in relation to subjects with a sturdy hub on Mathematics, English and Science as central subjects (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 1982). During this alteration, the

essential subjects were given new status and raised above the applied subjects and each subject was allotted extra time than others on the time table (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Nevertheless, Ansell (2002) argues that the national meeting review in 1978 called the National Pitso indicated that an over-stress on the examinations proscribed those curriculum reforms from sufficiently attending to the needs of the needs. Mosisili (1981, p.12-13) substantiates Ansell's statement by expressing the following;

“One of the major criticisms of the system of education in Lesotho during the period of interest was that the system was examination oriented. Too much content was expected to be covered by all pupils in time for the final examination: very often teacher and children were in such a hurry to cover ground they neglected the processes were really important in education; the syllabuses were rigid, with no indication of priorities and no allowances for alternatives or local variations...In an attempt to grapple with the problem of examination the government introduced the policy of automatic promotion in schools”.

Ansell (2002) further asserts that challenges with the curriculum and teaching emanates from somewhat gratuitous importance afforded to the final examinations preparations, which weaken the realisation of certain education aims that are imperative towards the economic growth of the country. These include *inter alia*, creativity and imagination, problem solving, the spirit of collaboration and team work, the practical application of concepts and skills as well as the advancement of a moral and socially cognisant character (ibid, 2002). The researchers' intention was therefore to find out if the new curriculum put undue emphasis on the final examination by forcing teachers not to teach English towards an attainment of communicative competence by students or to train them for final examinations.

Moreover, extra efforts were also made in order to devise means through which education could be made appropriate by forming the “Task Force” so as to assist the government with the manner in which policies aimed at benefiting the country are developed (Khalanyane, 1995; Selepe, 2016). In the end, the preceding curriculum reform to the current one that is under scrutiny was the ‘O’ Level localisation that was a hoary subject in Lesotho from the 1960s since the control of the examinations in Lesotho was in the hands of the University of Cambridge (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015; Selepe, 2016). This matter was pondered on for more than ten years; nevertheless, Lesotho merely legislated the new curriculum reform in 2012 with the view of rendering the examinations pertinent to the country's framework. This localisation improvement chronicled a pathway to a new curriculum reform that was brusquely effected in 2013. The fear can therefore be that secondary education aims and the English language syllabus might be misaligned because of the abrupt implementation that could have been done without comprehensive consultations with other stake holders in the education sector. This study therefore sought to investigate the alignment between secondary aims and the Lesotho

General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) English language syllabus aims, since there are no studies that have been conducted, at least that the researchers are aware of, in the country on the alignment between English language syllabus aims and the secondary education aims. This gap therefore necessitated this inquiry.

### **3. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate an alignment between secondary education aims outlined in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy and the English Syllabus aims. The researchers believe that an alignment between these aforementioned aims is of paramount importance in the teaching of English Language as it will be easier for teachers to disseminate proper information to students. The study therefore sought to make a contribution towards understanding the importance of alignment better, and also the challenges and repercussions of a misaligned curriculum. The findings of misalignment will suggest a gap for further research which will help curriculum developers in addressing the problem of this nature in future.

### **4. Research questions**

1. To what extent are the English language syllabus aims aligned with the secondary curriculum aims?
2. To what extent do the aims and assessment criteria stipulated in the secondary curriculum inform the teaching of English Language?

## **5. Literature review**

### *5.1 Standard-based education*

An educational system is generally made up of three basic elements which are assessment, instruction and standards (Squires, 205; Ziebell & Clarke, 2018). Firstly, standards in this instance are the descriptions in the curriculum and assessment policy which define and elucidate what the learners are supposed to learn and attain as well as the best way through which they are anticipated to master the knowledge and the abilities obtained thereof (Yorke, 1999; Popham, 2003; Ajjawi, Bearman & Boud, 2019). For instance CAP as the policy statement stipulates in the context of English that, students should be taught to communicate effectively through the equal teaching of the four skills; speaking, listening, writing and reading. “Standards are also expected to fulfill a number of purposes which can range from acting as a yardstick to judge the particular output of a student in response to a specific task, and to provide an indication of the level of a particular course or programme” (Ajjawi et.al., 2019, p.729). This suggests that learning outcomes and competencies of learners should reflect how well a subject has been structured in order for them to be able to perform tasks. It further implies that learners can be in a position to perform similar tasks with ease even if they

move to other schools within the same region or even globally. Secondly, teaching ought to afford all learners a chance to realise such knowledge and expertise (Fuhrman, 2001; Raselimo, Irwin & Wilmot, 2013; Raselimo & Thamae). Our understanding is therefore that what is taught must correlate to what the aims of the secondary education as stipulated in CAP regarding English language intend for learners to achieve.

Furthermore, assessment ought to offer evidence about the manner in which the learners have accomplished the anticipated knowledge and abilities (Bearman, Margaret & Ajjawi & Boud, 2018). The expectation therefore is that when all three components (standards, teaching and assessment) are commensurate; education should be effective and learners will therefore be expected to have an opportunity to best learn what the curriculum intended for them to learn (Biggs, 2003). Alignment will therefore be an ultimate basis for a well-designed educational system based on standards-based and not examination-based (Smith & O'Day, 1990). This means that what is taught should reflect learners' competencies, and all skills in the context of English language will be equally taught for effective communication and not to pass examinations. Furthermore, in every educational system, there are various contributors which include amongst others; those responsible for the articulation of the standards, in this case The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and all the teachers who instructs and then assess the learners to see if standards have been acquired, as well as the ones in charge of constructing all-encompassing assessments. In Lesotho, The Examination Council of Lesotho (ECoL) is the body responsible for the large-scale assessments in the form of external examinations. In order to determine a degree to which the elements (standards, instruction and assessment) correlate, evaluations are there for a necessity (Jackel, Pearce, Radloff & Edwards, 2017). In line with such evaluations, modifications can correspondingly be made in order to enhance the alignment between the elements (Yorke, 1999). In this instance, two elements are usually likened to each other while determining the analyses. For instance, standards are likened to assessments and with teaching as well while teaching compared with assessment (Roach, Niebling & Kurz, 2008; Nasstrom 2008). This means that constant evaluation of the above mentioned components must be done by those responsible in order to improve the alignment between all of them, so that students can acquire the best education. In the context of LGCSE English language syllabus, teaching can be compared with the standards outlined by CAP regarding the manner in which English ought to be taught as well as how it should be assessed.

## 5.2 Curriculum Alignment

Curriculum is defined as the way in which teachers arrange and display content in the classroom (English, 2000; Drake, 2007). This includes, *inter alia*, the type of content taught, how they teach such content as well as how the learning is assessed in the classroom. In the context of this study, it pertains to how English language structures are organised, presented and assessed. Merriam-Webster (2003) thus defines align as “to

bring into line” and alignment as the arrangement of different mechanisms relative to one another so that they function as planned. Alignment is therefore characteristically assumed as the concord amongst an established standards and the type of assessment to be used in measuring the content (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015).

In educational backgrounds, alignment is universally referred to as the harmonisation of all constituents or elements (assessment, teaching and standards) in every country’s education system (Biggs, 2003), in accordance (i.e. Bholal et al., 2003), co-ordinated (i.e. La Marca, 2001) or in harmony (Ananda, 2003; Case & Zucker, 2008). Alignment is therefore simply a harmonisation amongst a small component of one unit in the education structure and one or a combination of components of another unit (Squires, 2005; Watermayer, 2011). For instance, an assessment element may be in line with one or two standards. The outcome of such similarity will just echo the number of the assessment pieces that align with one standard at the least (Acquah & Owusu, 2021). This implies that what is assessed by the LGCSE English language ought to be commensurate with the standards set by CAP. Therefore when designing any form of assessment, it is of paramount importance to consider the items that are aligned (content and instruction), but then again, it does not say anything in regard to how well the entire assessment component measures learners’ realisation of the whole standards (Squires, 2005).

Moreover, participants in an education system can also regulate what students are anticipated to acquire and their ability to perform in all the grades. Teachers are thus expected to teach the learners through the adoption of the curricula that follow the country’s educational standards. Finally, assessments are therefore used to hold the learners and teachers answerable to the standards (Case & Zucker, 2005). This suggests that teachers have to teach learners what CAP set as standards for effective communication, that is, all language skills must be taught equally as well as been assessed likewise, so that students can realise what is expected of them. However, the researchers do not think that it will be easy for teachers to teach all skills if only two; writing and reading are only assessed (Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2015, Raselimo & Thamae, 2018).

As the follow up to the above mentioned definitions of curriculum alignment; the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in the context of Lesotho acts as an umbrella or the major stakeholder that sets standards in relation to what the curriculum should address; bearing in mind the national goals and aspirations (MoET, 2009). In order to properly understand standards, Nasstrom (2008) posits standards especially in education as a term with various meanings in diverse circumstances, countries as well as diverse epochs in history. At times, the denotation of standards is implied while it can be overt at other times. There are three common connotations of standards in education and they are; standards as gauges of quality, standards as explanations and standards in relation

to performance of learners (ibid, 2008). This means that standards are used to measure the quality of education offered to learners.

In regards to standards as gauges of quality for any education system, English (2000) stipulates that they deal with the regulation of resources, employees in this context teachers and businesses in order to give all learners a chance to achieve what is expected of them as well as dealing with the efficiency of schools and the education system at large. The other meaning of standards, e.g. standards as explanations of what learners are supposed to learn and then what they can do with the acquired knowledge, is the fresh definition of standards in education, and this is because of the educational restructuring which commenced in America in the early 1980s (Fuhrman, 2001). This is evident as well in the new Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy because it advocates for integrated curriculum where attained knowledge from school enables learners to address matters pertinent to the new requirements and challenges of life of the contemporary world, and the emphasis therefore is no longer put on examinations (MoET, 2009). This kind of the reformed education is generally known as the standards-based reform (Nasstrom, 2008). However, one wonders if learners can address issues relating to new demands as well as communicating effectively if there is no alignment between standards, assessment and classroom instruction.

A strong correlation between assessment and standards is of paramount importance in the educational system of any country, and it can also serve as an indication that most of the standards are assessed as well as creating a nexus between the assessment items as well as standards, e.g. a well-built connection (Squires, 2005). This nexus can persuade teachers to instruct all the prescribed standards, that is, the instruction will be aligned directly to the assessment and standards. For instance, the standards prescribed by CAP as the national policy document stipulate in the context of English language teaching that students should be taught to communicate effectively through the enhancement of the four language skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking. The expectation will therefore be that learners will be assessed all the four skills and not only two. My synthesis is therefore that failure to align assessment with standards will render the curriculum examination-based, which is what CAP is running away from. With a high degree of correlation of the three elements, an assessment will also evaluate the learners' realisation of most of the anticipated knowledge and abilities that will propel them to communicate effectively. The learners are thus presented with a chance to accomplish all standards, and their knowledge will also be expected to be much higher (Linn, 1994; Raselimo & Thamae, 2018).

Consequently, the education will be well-organised since the grades from the assessment will also provide a feed-back of how well learners achieve the anticipated knowledge and expertise. This will form a good base for accountability in relation to

every decision taken and for a well-balanced information to learners as well as the stakeholders. However, Nkhi and Lebona (2023) found that teachers were disgruntled with the way the syllabus is organised. This is because teachers stated that only two skills; reading and writing are tested externally, and therefore it becomes difficult for them to teach the other skills. In short, what learners should know is not consistent with what they are taught because speaking and listening are ignored, and this means that assessment will not define their heights of attainment (Watermeyer, 2011; Ziebell & Clarke, 2018). This therefore suggests that the syllabus is still examination-based and does not espouse the standard-based education that advocates for learner autonomy (Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2015). This finding further pokes holes between the secondary education's aims and the LGCSE English language syllabus. It should also be a cause for concern because there is no alignment between standards and assessment as revealed by English language teachers.

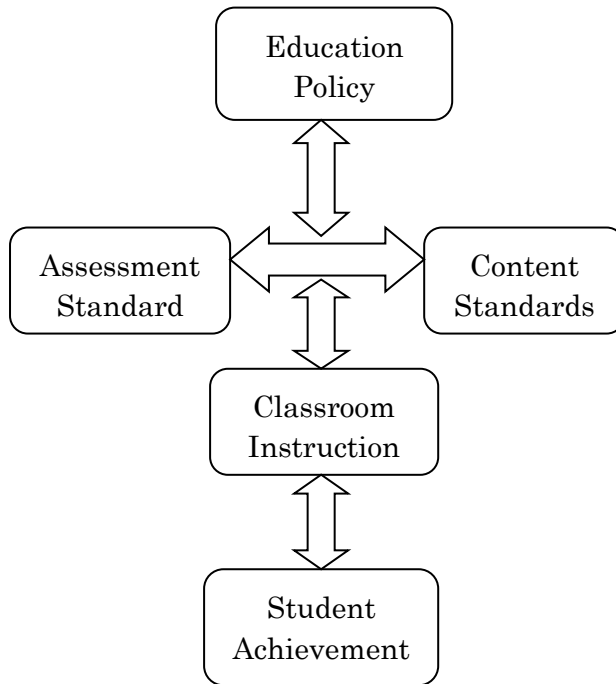
Moreover, there are two ways in which curriculum can be aligned. According to Case and Zucker (2005) alignment can either be vertical or horizontal. Vertical alignment on the one hand occurs when a diverse elements of the whole education system in the form of curricula, textbook content, stakeholders' views, classroom instruction and the learners' attainment out-come are aligned (Webb, 1997b; Porter, 2002; Case & Zucker, 2005). On the other hand, horizontal alignment transpires when the robustly correlated standards and assessments bring about transparency to the whole education system by delivering a comprehensible set of prospects for learners and teachers (Case & Zucker, 2005). However, horizontal alignment is highly unlikely given Nkhi's (2018) findings on teachers' complaints about the syllabus. Figure 1 below shows the relations between the policy, assessment standards, content standards and classroom instruction. In the context of Lesotho secondary education system, CAP serves as the national policy wherein content and assessment standards as well as classroom instruction are laid out. These standards will in turn determine the level of students' achievement (Webb, 1997b; Case & Zucker, 2005; Ziebell & Clarke, 2018). In the context of English language, CAP stipulates that;

“In order to meet the life challenges and cope with different experiences, communication is important as a means to express ideas and feelings. Thus the learners should have the ability to communicate effectively in words, symbols, colours, signs, sound, media (print, electronic) and actions. Therefore, learners should be helped to develop the following skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading” (MoET, 2009).

The above statement from CAP clearly states that all skills should be incorporated for effective communication, and therefore failure to teach them as such might render the



content, assessment and instruction misaligned which in turn will not determine learners' attainment of the set objectives.



**Figure 1.** Horizontal and vertical alignment within an education system (based on Webb, 1997b) adapted from (Case & Zucker, 2005).

- In light of the above reviewed literature on alignment and standards, the study ought to shift its focus to the kind of alignment that will be adopted thenceforth given the fact that the curriculum in view or the centre of alignment is the subject curriculum. CAP seeks to align itself with the mandated standards and testing objectives therefore, the study is subjected to external alignment as one of different types of curriculum alignment. According to Drake and Burns (2005) external alignment “occurs when the curriculum aligns with the mandated standards and testing objectives.” This type of alignment concerns what is actually being taught to students. To further shed some more light and for more comprehension on this matter, Drake and Burns (2005) go on to define internal alignment as when instructional strategies or approaches and classroom assessments echo the language and purpose of standards. Learners are therefore supposed to be taught the content in ways that mirror the full meaning of the intended standard. In this way, what learners learn or do in class is also aligned with the standards (Raselimo & Thamae, 2018). We therefore believe that in order for their teaching to be completely aligned with the standards, teachers have to pay attention to how they teach as well as what they teach. This makes it more vital that they master a

variety of teaching techniques so that they can give their students the right tools to succeed.

- The Curriculum and Assessment Policy claims to embrace learner-centred approach which is a staunch proponent of constructivism (Raselimo & Thamae, 2018). Biggs uses the term constructivism to mean a theory of learning, and it resonates with my understanding of constructivism with its significance on what the students ought to do, rather than on how they epitomise knowledge (Biggs, 2003). Biggs (2003) defines constructive alignment as, what the learner does, which is to make meaning through pertinent learning activities. The ‘alignment’ part denotes what the teacher does, which is to devise a learning environment that backs the learning activities suitable for achieving the anticipated learning outcomes (Ibid, 2003). The key is therefore that all the mechanisms in the instructional process, especially the teaching approaches employed and the assessment tasks are aligned to the learning activities expected in the envisioned outcomes (Biggs, 2003). The learner will be ‘trapped’ according to Biggs (2003), and cannot escape without learning what is intended if all the skills are equally taught. That is, learners cannot afford to be communicatively ineffective if they are exposed to all aspects of language. However, it will be a challenge we believe for teachers to create a learning atmosphere that permits learners to achieve the intended goals if the syllabus forces them to teach for exams by focusing on the skills that are only examined as found by Nkhi (2018). Learners will also epitomise knowledge rather than what they ought to do if the syllabus is examination oriented. Learners will never discover meaning themselves, but they will become piggy-banks wherein information is deposited and then withdrawn during exams (Freire, 2014).

## 6. Method

This study meant to find out if there is an alignment between the Secondary education curriculum aims and the LGCSE English language syllabus aims. The study also endeavoured to understand the challenges that the education system might encounter if the misalignment of aims continues to hover between the policy and the teaching of expected outcomes. When conducting this inquiry, it was indispensable to comprehend its logical nature (Polit & Beck, 2017). It is out of research that one can broaden their understanding and further contribute constructive discernment to the current organisation of knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This can thus be accomplished by a carefully and orderly selecting the different approaches to the enquiry (Bell 2005). The study therefore adopted the qualitative approach as the method of data collection. Qualitative research entails the exploration and description of the phenomena of concern, and the manner in which people recognise and comprehend the world (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### *6.1 Research design*

Qualitative approach consists of various research designs and the convenience of every design lies on the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After meticulous deliberation of other research designs, the researchers thus found it suitable to use a content analysis design for this project.

### *6.2 Content analysis*

In order to understand the secondary curriculum aims and their alignment with the English Syllabus, the study was subjected to the content analysis. According to Leedey (2005, p.142), “content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases.” Bordens and Abbott (2011, p.246-247) continue to assert that;

“A researcher uses content analysis when analysing written or spoken record (or other meaningful matter) for the occurrence of specific categories or events (such pauses in a speech)...Content analysis have been conducted on a wide range of material such as mock juror deliberations, the content of television dramas and the content of literature”.

Data collection method was through document analysis as purported by the study and the population was the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), and the sample was the English Language Syllabus aims and Secondary education aims. The researchers used purposive sampling because the focus was mainly on aims, which were the ones that carried the most information of the topic under investigation (Leedey & Ormrod, 2005). No consent was therefore necessary, since the documents analysed are public documents which can be accessed by everyone. After the analysis and interpretation of findings, the researchers went through the findings together before they sought the thoughts of their peers in order to conclude whether they approved or disapproved of their interpretations and the conclusions made from the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). This was done in order to ascertain the credibility of the findings as suggested by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2010; Whitemore et al., 2001; Cypress, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017).

### *6.3 Results*

This section analyses and interprets the findings on analysed data and then provides conclusion and recommendations. To understand the issue of alignment more; parts of CAP were analysed, especially the secondary education aims which serve as a quintessential prototype for syllabus development. The syllabus aims were compared with Secondary education aims in order to explore alignment between the two. Other aspects of the curriculum such as effective communication and learning areas and

assessment were also explored. It should be noted that the authors only focused on the areas pertaining to English language and not other subjects.

The table 1 below depicts the extracted secondary education aims from the CAP and the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) English Language syllabus. The secondary aims according to CAP should be reflected in the LGCE English Language syllabus because CAP is the National Educational Policy. The English syllabus aims are only based on two skills which are writing and reading, and other skills; speaking and listening are not externally or summatively assessed, but they are expected to be continuously or formatively assessed as per the syllabus.

**TABLE 1:** Secondary curriculum aims the English Language Syllabus aims.

SECONDARY EDUCATION AIMS	ENGLISH SYLLABUS AIMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promoting advanced skills in literacy and numeracy for effective communication in all areas of life.</li>   <li>▪ Providing opportunities for learners to participate in activities promoting democratic principles, human rights and emerging issues in a society</li> </ul>	<p><b>SECTION A: Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communicate appropriately, with a clear awareness of purpose, audience and register.</li> <li>▪ Communicate clearly and develop ideas coherently, at word level, at sentence level and at whole text level.</li> <li>▪ Use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> <li>▪ Communicate creatively, using a varied range of vocabulary, sentence structures and linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p><b>SECTION B: Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scan and analyse text by identifying and summarising the required information, such as similarities and differences, or advantages and disadvantages, or problems and solutions, or causes and effects, or actions and consequences, or main ideas and supporting details.</li> <li>▪ Identify and respond to main ideas of a text, such as follow a sequence or argument, identify conclusion, distinguish fact from opinion, and give</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Equipping learners with knowledge, attitudes and skills which enable them to respond to socio-economic and technological challenges.</li> </ul>	<p>a personal response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand explicit meanings, through literal and vocabulary questions.</li> <li>▪ Present evidence in support of a point made in an argument.</li> <li>▪ Resource support material for points made, where appropriate by, for example, use of the internet.</li> </ul>
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Sources: MoET (2009, p.12-13), LGCSE-English Language Syllabus

The curriculum aims from the table above are compared with only two skills which are assessed externally. This means that there is no provision of speaking and listening in the LGCSE English language syllabus. Furthermore, the following areas were extracted from the curriculum aims for analysis.

### 6.3.1 Linguistic and Literacy

“This learning area according to CAP basically focuses on the foundations of language and its usage. It is a medium through which all learning areas can be adequately and effectively delivered. It promotes effective communication in all its forms” (MoET, 2009, p.18).

This area should develop:

- Acquisition and understanding of linguistic skills necessary for effective communication in different contexts ;
- Application of linguistic, creative and other skills in promoting literary works for socio-economic development ; and
- Positive attitude and values necessary for effective communication.

Learners should therefore be helped to:

- Communicate effectively through listening, speaking, reading and writing in formal and informal situations; and
- “Use and select appropriate words, colours, signs, graphics, symbols and media to communicate and interpret scientific, social, economic, technological, and political information” (MoET, 2009, p.18 ).

This learning area stipulates that all the four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing should be equally enhanced for effective communication. However, it is unlikely

that the four skills are all enhanced given that the syllabus clearly states that only reading and writing should be emphasised for examination purposes.

### *6.3.2 Effective communication*

“In order to meet the life challenges and cope with different experiences, communication is important as a means to express ideas and feelings. Thus the learner should have the ability to communicate effectively in words, symbols, colours, signs, sound, media (print, electronic), and actions. Therefore, learners should be helped to develop the following skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading” (MoET, 2009, p.16).

This curriculum aspect reiterates the importance of equally enhancing the four skills for effective communication. The curriculum does divide the four skills, but it encourages the combination of all skills for better communication. However, the syllabus stipulates that only the two skills; reading and writing shall be assessed externally while the other two will be continuously assessed in the classroom.

### *6.3.3 Assessment*

Assessment will focus on the attainment of educational and curriculum aims of educational programmes at all levels. Assessment will fulfil different purposes such as:

- Formative (diagnostic and continuous assessment)
- Monitoring of educational progress
- Summative (Selection and Certification)

The assessment part stipulates that three forms of assessment in the teaching of English mentioned above should be adopted in the classroom in order to monitor learners' progress in the four language skills. It is unlikely that teachers use the two forms of assessment; formative and monitoring given that their focus might be on the last one which summative so that learners can pass examinations.

In conclusion, the two aspects of the curriculum accentuate the importance of effective communication, and this according to CAP can only be achieved through the enhancement of all the four language skills; listening, speaking, writing and reading. Another aspect in the form of assessment also highlights the importance of assessing all the four skills equally in three forms of assessments mentioned above.

## **7. Discussion**

From the table above, it can be seen that three out of nine secondary education aims are reflected in the syllabus. The syllabus aims properly align with the reflected secondary education aims. There are 51 aims in an English Language Syllabus and 36 of

these aims, which make up 71%, are collegial with the three secondary education aims reflected therein. The aforementioned percentage depicts the correlation between secondary aims and syllabus aims. One of the questions that the study wanted to answer was to know and find out an extent to which the aims depicted in the syllabus align with those stipulated in the curriculum. It is true that only three out of nine aims from the secondary aims align with the syllabus aims, but it is not enough given the number of aims that the syllabus has. However, the problem is that the syllabus leaves out two skills being listening and speaking, which forms the core part of second language acquisition (Ekanjume, 2015; Nkhi, 2018). Only two skills; reading and writing are the main focus. This focus is made evident in table one above that most of the cited aims are mainly on writing and only a few expresses speaking skills. To be precise, of the nine cited syllabus aims, only two reflect speaking while six of them are basically on writing.

OurThe researchers' understanding is therefore that teachers cannot develop the skills (speaking and listening) that are not assessed in the final examination. In that case, students' communicative competence in English language cannot be enhanced. One might think that perhaps teachers can assess the two skills continuously as suggested in the syllabus, but Nkhi and Lebona (2023) found that teachers only focused on reading and writing because they are assessed externally. Teachers complained that the syllabus is too congested and therefore they cannot waste time on skills that were not the focus of the examiners. Subsequently, Ekanjume-Ilongo (2015) and Nkhi (2018) found that most students have a poor command of English because teachers' focus is solely on reading and writing. This means that students' motivation to learn English will be extrinsic because their main goal will be to pass examinations. This will therefore be in contrast with the second aim of the secondary aims which stipulates that teachers ought to help learners by "providing opportunities for them to participate in activities promoting democratic principles, human rights and emerging issues in a society" (MoET, 2009, p.12). This cannot be possible if students are only exposed to reading and writing as per the syllabus aims.

Drawing examples from the reviewed literature on external alignment, Drake and Burns (2005) state that external alignment occurs when the curriculum aligns with the mandated standards and testing objectives. They continue to assert that this type of alignment concerns what is actually being taught to students; however it is not the case looking at the first aim of the secondary education aim, which put much emphasis on one of the four language competences in a form of effective communication (Drake & Burns, 2005). How can learners communicate effectively if they are only taught and assessed only in reading and writing? This further suggests that the LGCSE English language syllabus is not externally aligned because there is no nexus between the content, instruction and assessment. According to Khati and Khati (2009) speaking is one of the most important components of language acquisition and therefore much emphasis should be put because therein lies a big challenge. Failure to incorporate the above mentioned

skills might be detrimental to the education system of the country, especially the teaching of English language which is still a failing subject in my view even though CAP says it is no more a failing subject. The researchers therefore stand firm by their statement because students are denied entry in most tertiary institutions in the country if they did not get a credit in English at high school level even though the CAP claims that English is no longer a failing subject, that is, learners can no longer be denied entry to institutions of higher learning because they have failed English language. However, some have even increased entry requirements from just a pass (D) to a credit (C) in English if a student wishes to major in Science related courses which was never a case before; an indication that students' level of English is low as a result of the misalignment between content, instruction and assessment (Raselimo & Thamae, 2018). Therefore, this implies that the teaching of English language will not be effective if teachers do not teach other skills because they are not assessed externally. It also says that learners' focus will not be on other skills as well, but to those that will ultimately make them pass an examination.

The findings of this study have practical implications for syllabus developers.

It was stated in the introduction that there are currently no studies in Lesotho on the alignment between secondary aims and the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) English language syllabus aims, so the findings of this study can help the syllabus developers to revise the manner in which the assessment is structured. That is, all the four skills should be equally assessed externally so that teachers can focus on all the skills in the classroom. Furthermore, there should be frequent trainings for teachers in order to help them to teach learners towards effective communicative and not to pass examinations. In that way, the researchers believe that the curriculum will be standards-based and not examinations-based as it is currently. The syllabus developers can bench-mark their assessment against the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) and learn how all language skills are equally assessed continuously and summatively.

## **8. Conclusions**

It can be concluded from the aforesaid interpretation that the syllabus aims are congruent with the Secondary education aims. This correlation means that national needs are met and that learning out-comes, teaching and learning experiences and assessment tasks as stipulated by Biggs (1999) are properly aligned. Drawing examples from the reviewed literature, the conclusion can further be substantiated by Porter (2002) that teaching that is purposefully structured and logically sequenced is in such way that learners are learning the knowledge and skills that will progressively prepare them for more challenging, higher-level work. This simply means that when the curriculum is aligned learners will be able to progress from one level to the other



smoothly. However, the study found that the LGCSE English language syllabus is not externally aligned because there is no node between the content, instruction and assessment as stipulated by CAP as a national policy document. This therefore leaves a gap for further research as there is a discord in the teaching of two skills leaving out other two with one being the most important because speaking encompasses broader base than others. For example, most interviews are conducted through oral communication, so it is of paramount importance to incorporate this skill in the teaching of English language.

Despite the conspicuous elements of proportionality between the secondary aims of education and the syllabus aims, there is an imperceptible gap in that CAP (2009) stipulates that “learners should be helped to communicate effectively through listening, speaking, reading, and writing in formal and informal situations”; but only two competences, writing and reading are the only ones tested. This means that teachers are highly likely to ignore speaking and listening since they are not externally assessed. This further implies that there is a misalignment between standards, teaching and assessment; additionally, this suggests that students will not attain what is expected of them as stipulated by CAP.

The inclusion of all competences in external assessment is of paramount importance, therefore, the study recommends that all four language competences be given an equal preference as they are all important and also be equally assessed. It is therefore recommended that teachers be equipped with teaching strategies that will enable them to teach all the four skills equally even though others may not be externally assessed. However, the researchers still believe that the best option is to assess all the four skills externally because they are equally important.

However, this study has some limitations. Only one method of data generation was used in the study, and it was not reflective of the teachers’ opinions since they are the ones who implement the curriculum in the classroom. This therefore suggests further research where teachers’ interviews can be incorporated in order to comprehensively investigate the alignment between CAP and syllabus aims as well as the challenges that they encounter while implementing the curriculum.

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