

Some comments on the Kha Ri Gude Learner Assessment Portfolios (LAPs)

Introduction

The Learner Assessment Portfolios (LAPs) used as a form of, and record of, continuous assessment in the Kha Ri Gude adult literacy campaign, were originally designed by Professor Veronica McKay, the Chief Executive Officer of the campaign from 2008 to 2012. They were a major innovation in the field of mass adult literacy provision and they enabled the campaign to initiate another major innovation using the completed LAPs for a national moderation and assessment verification exercise conducted by an external body (the South African Qualification Authority) (See Adler *et al*, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and Aitchison, 2012).

Undoubtedly the LAPs present a model of how assessment, previously rarely done in mass literacy campaigns can be done effectively and efficiently. UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong has expressed great interest in them as a model.

Are there any problems or necessary revisions for the Kha Ri Gude LAPs?

The SAQA verification reports (Adler *et al*, 2012, 2013 and 2014) recommended certain revisions to the LAPs. These are itemised and discussed below.

Changing the content of some of the questions

This relates to the fact that identical questions have been used for six years.

It must be remembered, however, that the LAPs are open book assessments. Learners can easily see and record what the next set of questions are and, if they so decide, get answers from sources other than their own work. Similarly educators can easily provide lists of right answers. There is no way to prevent this, even if questions are changed regularly. All one can do by changing the questions is make it a bit more tedious for learners or educators to cheat.

Also, in responding to this issue there is a need to disaggregate three types of questions:

- standard form filling types questions where there is no need to change
- free response questions (letter writing, descriptive writing) where while it might be good to change topics occasionally it is not crucial
- short "right answer" questions (particularly in numeracy) where it would be correct to change them regularly.

Although SAQA made these requests nothing appears to have been done by the current CEO, Dr Ramarumo, to do so.

Activities where it would have been very simple to make changes were:

- Activity 3B: change some of the simple words
- Activity 7: change some of the comprehension questions
- Activity 8: change some of the comprehension questions
- Activity 12: change the number of pictures of fruit in the rows
- Activity 13: first page, change the number of items in each row; second page, change position of blank numbers
- Activity 14: change the numbers in all sums
- Activity 15: change the numbers in sums on first page
- Activity 16: change numbers in sums on first page

Changing the way the assessment scores are entered

This recommendation was about the way the assessment scores are entered where the actual raw marks have to be transposed by the marker into a score on a five point scale according to certain criteria. It is this scale score that is then recorded on the marks record near the front of the LAP.

The SAQA query here was based on two issues, firstly it was clear that in the last couple of years there were signs that poorly trained markers were not always transposing the scale mark but sometimes the raw mark to the marks record, and second, it was more difficult to make statistical correlations using the scale mark.

In response, it is important to understand that there are two reasons for using this type of mark scaling:

- for convenience in tallying the results of different types of tests so that all the components of a battery of tests are equally weighted (in the case of the LAPs there are twenty activities all weighted at 5 marks with a grand total of 100 marks). It is therefore easy for the educator to track the progress and competence of the learner. [The alternative is to record the varying raw marks for each activity and computer scale them later – which is an extra layer of work and cost and provides no timeous feedback to educator or learner.]
- the criteria based scaling enables the educator to provide simple diagnostic feedback to the learners on how well they are doing.

On balance, having this kind of scaling system that makes for convenient marking and simple diagnostic feedback is better than the alternative.

However, there are ways in which the LAPs can be improved to typographically help avoid some confusion in transposing marks from raw score to scale score and to marks record.

Similarly, some errors in the existing scale instructions must be corrected.

The placement of the instructions for scaling

Currently where the raw score is to be written is indicated by a pencil shaped cartouche preceded by the legend “Total number of ticks” (In Activities 2, 3, 5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20). [In Activities 1, 7, 8, 9, 10 there is no obvious need for it as the raw score is out of five or done directly into the scale.] Activity 4 does have a raw score (achieved by doing a calculation but is not highlighted as being the raw score as there is no ‘pencil’ cartouche. For Activity 6 there is no raw score cartouche at all

Where the raw score is made up from marks (ticks) on two pages there is a warning note “REMEMBER to count all the ticks on both pages.”

The placement of the raw score cartouche in some Activities is above (but to the right of) the scale box (Activities 2, 3, 5) but in others (Activities 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20) at the bottom right. In this last position, confusingly, it looks as if it is the ‘final mark’ which it is not.

We would recommend that the raw score be placed in all Activities where it is appropriate (including Activity 6) **above** the scale box and ideally have **some kind of pointer or arrow** indicating downward to the scale box showing that the raw score has to now be moved into the scale process.

Correction of errors in the scale criteria

The 2013 report also stated:

In Activities 14, 15 and 16 the (total) numbers given in the Criteria scale are wrong.

In Activity 14 the total is 15 not 12

In Activity 15 it is 12 not 16

In Activity 16 it is 16 not 15.

These must be corrected. It is unclear why they were not corrected because it was drawn to Dr Ramurumo’s attention.

Another typographical omission

In Activity 1 the word “Date:” is missing from a box.

References

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2009. *SAQA's role in the pilot implementation of the Ka ri gude adult literacy campaign*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2010. *Ascertaining the integrity of the marking of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios Year Two: 2009*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2011. *Ascertaining the integrity of the marking of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios Year Three: 2010*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2012. *Ascertaining the integrity of the marking of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios Year Four: 2011*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2013. *Ascertaining the integrity of the marking of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios Year Five: 2012*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2014. *Ascertaining the integrity of the marking of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios Year Five: 2013*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Adler, D., Aitchison, J.J.W. and French, E. 2015. *Ascertaining the integrity of the marking of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios Year Five: 2014*. Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority

Aitchison, J.J.W. 2012. *Literacy en mass – verifying assessment in the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign*. Paper presented at the Umalusi 2012 Conference, “Standards in Education and Training: The Challenge”, Johannesburg, 10-12 May 2012