

# Importance of Education Officers' Attitudes and Perceptions in Curriculum and Assessment Reform

**Leonard B. M. Nkosana**  
([nkosanal@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:nkosanal@mopipi.ub.bw))  
University of Botswana, Botswana

---

## Abstract

This paper first presents and then discusses the attitudes and perceptions of education officers with regard to the introduction of a school-based continuous assessment of speaking in the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) English as a Second Language (ESL) examinations as provided for in the BGCSE English syllabus in Botswana. Three categories of education officers responsible for developing and evaluating syllabuses, teaching supervision (quality assurance), and assessment of the BGCSE ESL curriculum in senior secondary schools in Botswana were interviewed, using an interview guide. The findings indicate that there are two opposing views held by the various categories of education officers regarding the assessment of speaking in the Botswana situation. While on the one hand Curriculum Development & Evaluation officers (CDEOs) and Senior Education Officers (SEOs) said it would not be too difficult to assess speaking as recommended in the syllabus, Examinations Research and Testing Division officers (ERTDOs) said it would be due to problems such as logistics and resources.

---

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the extent to which various categories of education officers in the Botswana Ministry of Education (MoE), responsible for English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum development, implementation and evaluation teaching quality assurance, and assessment and examination respectively, promote or hinder the implementation of the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) ESL syllabus recommendation to assess speaking in the BGCSE ESL examination.

### 1.2 Description of the context of the study

#### 1.2.1 Senior secondary education

In 1998, the Botswana government took over the running of the Senior Secondary School examinations from the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) in the United Kingdom, which had been running them since the colonial days. The whole senior secondary school curriculum had to be reviewed and subject “task forces” were appointed to review the curriculum. The task force that reviewed the Senior Secondary School English syllabus completed its work in 1997 and developed a syllabus that was believed to be more relevant for the situation in Botswana. The previous Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) English examination

syllabus was an academically oriented syllabus intended to equip students with the academic skills of reading. It was therefore perceived as unsuitable for the ESL linguistic situation of Botswana.

The new Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) English syllabus (henceforth referred to as the teaching syllabus), which was implemented in January 1998, is a skill-oriented ESL syllabus intended to equip students with communicative skills in English, and the teaching methodology recommended is the communicative approach. ESL in the Botswana context only means that English is the official language (used to conduct official business in the government sector and the private sector) and the language of education, but does not imply that it is the language known or spoken by most people after their first language. The communicative approach to language teaching emphasises the use of language for communication, such as using language appropriately in different types of situations, using language to perform different kinds of tasks, and using language for social interaction with other people. The teaching syllabus covers the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thus, unlike the previous syllabus, which only included reading and writing to the neglect of speaking and listening skills, this one provides for the inclusion of all four skills.

The examination syllabus, however, unlike the teaching syllabus, has postponed the assessment of oral/aural skills to the unspecified future, when the facilities for testing those skills will be available (MoE, 2000). Therefore although the teaching syllabus for senior secondary schools has changed with regard to the teaching of speaking skills, the examination syllabus has not. It has been argued that unless the assessment procedures are also changed to test communicative skills, the pedagogy would also remain unchanged in spite of the methodology recommended in the teaching syllabus (Weir, 1993). It has also been argued that in a situation like that of Botswana where there is no congruence between the curriculum and what is tested, it is usually the case that the test replaces the curriculum in that both learners and teachers pay more attention to what is tested than what is not (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992).

It is worth noting that research on curriculum and assessment reform and on how they bring about the desired teaching and learning indicates that there are divergent views. Some suggest that changing a test is possibly the most powerful means to bring about improvements in the learning experiences that go before it (Shohamy, Reves & Bejarano, 1986; Davies, 1990; Shohamy, Donitza-Schmidt & Ferman, 1996; Weir, 1993; Messick, 1996). Yet another group, while appreciating the strong association between curriculum reform and test reform, asserts that tests and exams cannot be singled-out as determinants of teaching practice because of other factors that can contribute to the success or failure of curriculum reform (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Wall & Alderson, 1993; Wall, 1996, 1999, 2000). It is the author's view that for any kind of teaching innovation to be effective curriculum reform should be accompanied by assessment reform.

### *1.2.2 Why this paper focuses on education officers*

In the Botswana educational system, there are subject education officers in both the primary and secondary school system, stationed in MoE, who are supposed to lead and drive any curriculum and assessment reform that is introduced. For the subject of ESL in the senior secondary school system, there are three categories of education officers. These are: Curriculum Development and Evaluation officers (CDEOs), responsible for the development, evaluation and implementation of curriculum; Senior Education Officers (SEOs) in the department of secondary education, responsible for the supervision of ESL teaching; and Examination, Research and Testing Division (ERTDOs) officers, responsible for the examination and assessment of ESL in schools.

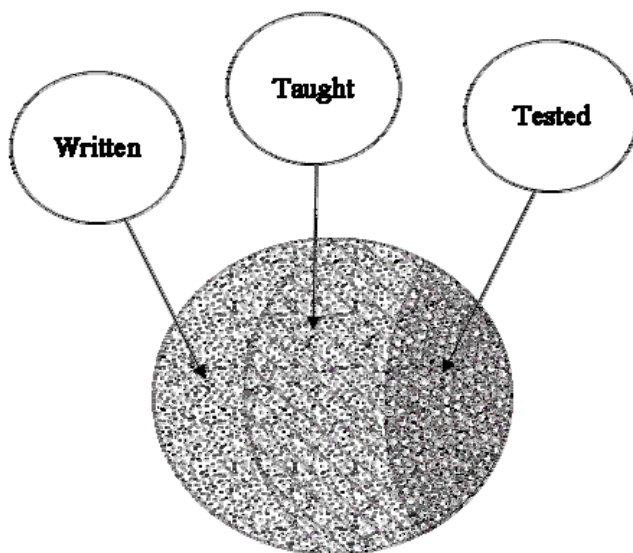
These officers provide leadership to school teachers by supervising the development and evaluation of curricula, production of teaching and assessment materials, and by supervising the implementation of any curriculum and assessment reforms. In the case of an innovation, if these officers fail to provide the required leadership, it cannot take off. Also if one category of education officers for some reason does not support the innovation and therefore does not cooperatively work with the others, the implementation of the innovation cannot succeed. Education officers therefore play a very important role in the implementation and success of any curriculum and as-

assessment reform in Botswana. It was thought that an investigation of the attitudes and perceptions of education officers towards introducing a school-based continuous assessment of speaking in the BGCSE ESL examinations, as provided for in the BGCSE ESL syllabus, would provide some insights as to why it has not taken place eight years after the syllabus was introduced.

## 2 Conceptual framework

Steffy & English (1997) contend that one of the main reasons why it is so difficult for various curricula to converge is that school systems only appear to be internally integrated. In reality, they argue, they are layered and only superficially connected, and the different layers communicate laterally but not necessarily vertically. Steffy and English (1997) have come up with the layered curriculum hypothesis which posits that the various players and stakeholders in school systems have different ideas as to what is important and should be taught from the written curriculum. They further assert that the board of education may adopt goals or rules on other curricular matters while teachers often miss such directives or ignore them altogether. In such a situation two layers of curriculum are the result.

In the Botswana context the various direct players and stakeholders in the curriculum include the following: the teachers, the students, the Curriculum Development and Evaluation education officers (CDEOs) and the Examinations Research and Testing Division education officers (ERTDOs) and the Senior Education Officers (SEOs) in the Department of Secondary Education, responsible for English language education in secondary schools. The groups above can be further divided into three main groups: the teachers and the students, the CDEOs and SEOs, and the ERTDOs. Because of these three groups, the BGCSE English curriculum can be said to have three layers: the first one being what the teachers and students believe is important in the curriculum, the second one being what CDEOs and SEOs believe is important, and the third one being what the ERTDOs believe is important. Figure 1 below shows a diagrammatic representation of the three layers of curriculum as conceived according to the Steffy & English (1997) model.



**Figure 1: Three layers of the curriculum**

It is worthwhile to note that in real life the relationship between the curriculum and teaching is more complex than what the above figure depicts. For instance, much of what is actually taught in

the classroom is not in the written curriculum. In other words, there is an invisible curriculum beside the written one. However the figure does indicate the relationship between the written curriculum and teaching.

Steffy & English (1997) assert that it is this layering that makes it difficult for educational reforms to result in change in teacher behaviour in classrooms. This study therefore attempted to test Steffy & English's (1997) claim that because the curriculum is layered and communication between the layers is largely lateral and not necessarily vertical, these layers obstruct change. Data collected from the different categories of education officers in the MoE, namely CDEOs, SEOs and ERTDOs, were used to test the correctness of this claim.

In Botswana, there are three categories of education officers who perform different functions. Some are responsible for developing and evaluating syllabuses, some for teaching supervision (quality assurance), and others for the assessment of the BGCSE ESL curriculum in senior secondary schools. CDEOs are responsible for the development and implementation of the BGCSE English syllabuses, SEOs in the department of secondary education are responsible for the supervision of the teaching of English in senior secondary school ESL classes (quality assurance), and the ERTDOs are responsible for the development, administration and processing of the BGCSE English examinations. Two of the categories, CDEOs and SEOs (ESL) have basically the same objective – to ensure that the BGCSE ESL syllabus is followed as closely as possible in the teaching and assessment of ESL in senior secondary schools. On the other hand, the main objective of the ERTDOs is to make sure that teachers and students prepare for the examination, which according to them should mainly be used for selection for further education, training or employment. It is worth noting that the departments to which the three categories of education officers belong are of the same rank, and therefore they are not in a subordinate-to-superior relationship in which communication is vertical. Communication between them is lateral and collaboration among them is dependent on mutual interest and goodwill. This then implies that any disagreement between them becomes a problem and may hinder the implementation of projects in which they need to work together.

In Japan, Akiyama (2004), in a study on the feasibility of introducing speaking tests in the senior high school entrance examination, found that various stakeholders groups were resistant to the introduction of the test. The concerns of the Education Board had to do mainly with the practicality of test administration (the time required for administering and rating speaking tests) and rater reliability. They thought that the introduction of speaking tests would compromise the reliability of the examination and therefore its fairness as a selection exam. Their main concern was rater reliability and this made them more comfortable with the status quo even though they ideally would have liked to see oral/aural skills assessed (Akiyama, 2004). Akiyama demonstrated in his study that though the practical concerns about administrative feasibility and reliability could be overcome, there were deeper objections reflecting deeply held cultural values in relation to education. He found that the cultural values of meritocracy and egalitarianism originating in Confucianism are expressed in a merit-based system of competitive examinations: candidates are differentiated purely according to test scores. Examinations are considered to be effective instruments that enable candidates to demonstrate diligence and hard work, valued attributes in the Japanese culture, along with ability in the subject area. McNamara and Roever (2006), commenting on Akiyama's study, contend that the actual content of the Japanese high school entrance examination and its validity in terms of conformity with the curriculum guidelines (which stress spoken communication skills) were found to be not the central issue. What was important was found to be that the test should be difficult and play the role of selecting for character attributes of diligence and effort. This study was therefore also intended to investigate the issues that might be behind the failure of education officers in Botswana, especially ERTDOs who are responsible for ESL examination and assessment, to implement the ESL syllabus recommendation to assess speaking in the BGCSE ESL examination.

### **3 Research methodology**

Senior education officers in MoE who were charged with the responsibilities of ESL curriculum development and evaluation, overseeing the teaching of ESL (quality assurance), and organising and administering ESL examinations respectively were interviewed in order to give them the latitude to answer the research questions freely and in as much detail as they wanted.

#### **3.1 Research question**

The research question that this study intended to address was to what extent Steffy & English's (1997) concept of a layered curriculum is reflected in the lateral communication between the various players in the Botswana educational system. It also sought to examine how the concept helps explain how change in terms of implementing the syllabus provision to test speaking in the BGCSE English examination is obstructed in senior secondary schools.

#### **3.2 Research instrument**

An interview guide for the education officers was developed, based on the aims and research questions of the study. It included questions relating to: 1) the factors that were delaying or hindering the implementation of the BGCSE English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking; 2) the preparations that were being made to implement the recommendation if any; 3) and whether they thought the implementation of this recommendation was feasible or not. Questions relating to the education officers' perceptions, views and opinions regarding the importance of speaking as compared to reading or writing were also included (see the interview guide in Appendix A).

#### **3.3 Demographic data**

There are eight education officers responsible for English language education and assessment at the policy-making level in senior secondary school education. The plan was to interview all of them but one of them was sick in hospital at the time of the research and could not be interviewed. The seven officers consisted of three Curriculum Development and Evaluation Officers (CDEOs) responsible for English, two Examinations, Research and Testing Division Officers (ERTDOs) responsible for English examinations, and two Senior Education Officers (SEOs) responsible for English in the Department of Secondary Education. The participants were recruited and interviewed by the researcher.

All education officers who participated in the study are well qualified. Six of them have master's degrees in either education or in English language teaching, while one of them has only a Bachelor of Education degree. All but one of the education officers are females.

#### **3.4 Data analysis**

As soon as each interview was over, data analysis began in the sense that a contact summary form, in which all the themes and the salient points that emerged were recorded, was created as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). The process of creating the contact summary form involves analysis because deciding which theme is relevant or which point is salient entails data analysis. The contact summary forms were used to come up with a summary of the education officers' responses which was a synthesis of all the themes and salient points recorded in the seven contact forms. Because of the manageable data set that was generated from the seven respondents interviewed, it was not necessary to use any qualitative data analysis software. A sample of the data (contact summary forms) is included in Appendix B.

## 4 Findings

To address the above research question, the education officers were asked 11 sub-questions. From the analysis of their responses, the following three major themes emerged: the implementation of speaking assessment; clash of values or interests; and the feasibility of assessing speaking.

### 4.1 *Implementation of speaking assessment*

#### 4.1.1 *Logistics*

One of the reasons advanced by both CDEOs/SEOs and ERTDOs as to why the recommendation to assess speaking had not been implemented was that the logistics of assessing it was too great in view of the large number of students involved. CDEOs and SEOs gave the following responses:

From our meeting with ERTDOs, the logistics of testing speaking would be too demanding, given the large numbers in the schools. (CDEO 1)

Also the logistics of assessing speaking present a great challenge and lot of planning will need to be done for implementation to be successful. (SEO 2)

The assessment of speaking is just as important as that of reading and writing – the only problem is the logistics of assessing it. (SEO 1)

ERTDOs also gave the following responses:

Also the logistics of such tests would be so difficult, because of large number of students involved. (ERTDO 2)

Testing speaking is difficult and the logistics of administering such a test would almost be impossible. (ERTDO 1)

Both categories of education officers identified the potential logistical problem as one of the factors that has delayed the implementation of speaking assessment. The difficult logistics refers to challenges associated with embarking on such a huge project involving large numbers of not only students but teachers as well, since the assessment as recommended in the syllabus would be done as part of course work by class teachers.

The logistical and administrative challenges for such a project are indeed daunting. Akiyama (2004) in a study of the feasibility of introducing speaking tests in the Japanese senior high school entrance examination also found that some stakeholders were found to have practicality concerns, namely the Education Board (those responsible for the test development and administration) and senior high school teachers (those who would have to rate the speaking exam). He found that the main reasons why senior high school teachers did not want speaking tests introduced included the difficulty of selecting the scoring criteria (i.e. what scoring criteria should be used) and the practicality of assessing speaking, including time schedules and the shortage of administrators.

The Education Board was mainly concerned with the time that would be required for administering and rating speaking tests. Both categories of education officers acknowledge the logistical challenges of assessing speaking through the mode suggested in the BGCSE English syllabus. However, while ERTDOs officers tended to think that the challenges were insurmountable, CDEOs and SEOs tended to think that, with teacher training and good planning, they could be overcome. It is worth noting that Akiyama (2004), in his thesis, demonstrated the practical feasibility of such tests.

## 4.1.2 *Lack of resources*

### 4.1.2.1 *Human resources*

With regard to the human resources, both ERTDOs/CDEOs and SEOs gave the following responses:

It is lack of human resources. It would be too costly to assess speaking. (ERTDO 1)

There is no experience in the country of assessing speaking. For instance, there is no person in ERTD who has specialized in speaking assessment. (ERTDO 2)

No personnel have been trained. Both teachers and education officers need to be trained in speaking assessment. (CDEO 3)

ERTDOs lacks the expertise and the experience of assessing speaking. They need to ask for help. (SEO 2)

The responses of the two categories of education officers above indicate that both acknowledge the lack of trained human resources as militating against the successful implementation of speaking assessment. However, whereas CDEOs and SEOs indicate in their responses that the human resources could be made available by training relevant officers and seeking help, there is no such indication in the responses of the ERTDOs. They do not suggest a solution to the lack of human resources. It seems that though they recognize the problems that are making it difficult to implement speaking assessment, CDEOs and SEOs do not say that the problems are too huge to be overcome, as ERTDOs officers seemed to indicate by statements like "it would be too costly to assess speaking."

With regard to whether teachers would cope with speaking assessment, if it was introduced, CDEOs and SEOs said teachers could cope, provided they were trained. They gave the following responses:

With proper training and planning they could. The large numbers of students would present a problem, but once a framework has been worked out like group testing, it can be done. (SEO 2)

Yes, if teachers are trained through short regional workshops and equipment is provided. (CDEO 3)

Large numbers could make it more difficult, but it could be done. The important thing is to make sure that teachers are trained to cope with speaking assessment and that the testing mechanisms are available and clear for every teacher to be able to use them. Also the marking criteria and rating procedures need to be clear and easy to follow. (CDEO 1)

CDEOs and SEOs thought that although the large numbers of students involved would be a challenge, through the adoption of certain procedures such as group testing, teachers would cope with speaking assessment, if trained and the implementation was well organized and planned for.

ERTDOs gave the following responses:

No, they would not cope because they are not trained to assess speaking and the numbers are too great. (ERTDO 1)

Teachers do not have experience in assessing speaking. (ERTDO 2)

ERTDOs said teachers would not be able to cope with the assessment of speaking. Once again, while the ERTDOs were dismissive of the ability of the teachers to cope with speaking assessment, CDEOs and SEOs said that with proper training, the provision of necessary equipment and proper planning, teachers would cope with speaking assessment in the schools. While CDEOs and SEOs

appreciate the challenges in terms of the logistical problems imposed by the large numbers of the students involved, the training to be provided to the teachers, and the resources to be provided to make the assessment of speaking successful, they also seem to believe that it is possible to assess speaking with adequate planning and investment. On the other hand, ERTDOs seem to believe that the status quo is best and that the assessment of speaking is not worth the huge investment that it is likely to call for.

#### **4.1.2.2 *Material resources***

With regard to material resources, all categories of education officers acknowledged their shortage.

ERTDOs gave the following responses:

The country is not ready to undertake speaking assessment since the required resources are not in place. (ERTDO 1)

It would be too costly to assess speaking. (ERTDO 2)

CDEOs and SEOs gave the following responses:

Resources have not been put in place. ERTDOs should request for these from the government. (CDEO 2)

It will also demand a lot of resources, but these could be supplied if requested for. (SEO 1)

The education officers were further asked about the availability of resources such as audio/video equipment in the schools and the readiness of teachers to assess speaking.

CDEOs had this to say with regard to the resources in schools:

They are not adequate at the moment but more could be made available if requested. All the government needs is a good justification by the responsible education officers for the resources that are requested. (CDEO 2)

On the other hand, ERTDOs had this to say on the same issue:

At the moment, the resources are not available and currently the Ministry of Education is trying to cut down on costs and is taking very few new projects. So, at the moment, the resources could not be provided even if requested. (ERTDO 3)

While CDEOs and SEOs said the available resources were not adequate, though more could be secured if requested with a convincing justification, ERTDOs said that the resources were not only unavailable, but they could not be provided even if requested for. It seems that the position of ERTDOs is that nothing has been done and nothing can be done at all towards the assessment of speaking. ERTDOs, as the department which is supposed to implement the syllabus provision to assess speaking, did not seem to consider the idea of assessing speaking by coursework as something that can work. They are less positive about the feasibility of assessing speaking. The reason for this could be that in the event it was decided to assess speaking, ERTDOs would have to bear the brunt of the burden, since assessment and examinations are their responsibilities. The CDEOs' and SEOs' position that basic facilities are already available and that more resources could be supplied, if requested, indicates that they consider the assessment of speaking as something which is achievable, provided certain things are put in place.



### 4.1.3 *Commitment to speaking assessment*

One of the factors mentioned by the CDEOs when asked to indicate some of the factors that were delaying the implementation of speaking assessment, was the ERTDOs' lack of commitment to it. The account below captures their views:

It is also the lack of commitment to the implementation of this particular syllabus recommendation on the part of ERTDOs. (CDEO 2)

The issue of commitment to speaking assessment was also raised by the two categories of education officers when responding to questions relating to the government of Botswana's commitment.

CDEOs' and SEOs' responses indicate that they believe that the government is committed to the assessment of speaking, and that it is the ERTDOs who are not committed to it. Consider the following response:

Yes, but ERTDOs who are responsible for the implementation of the recommendation to assess speaking are not committed to it. (CDEO 3)

In their view, ERTDOs seemed to be afraid of starting or even just attempting to assess speaking, as they seem to regard the problems associated with assessing speaking as insurmountable. This view is captured in the following response:

ERTDOs seems to fear to start or even try. They seem to regard the problems to be overwhelming. Perhaps they lack implementation capacity, as there is no one in their department who specialized in the testing of speaking. I think they should ask for help, if they don't have the required expertise instead of just shelving the whole thing away. (SEO 2)

They further indicated that they believed that the government is committed to the assessment of speaking skills, as provided for in the syllabus. Consider the following response:

Yes, the government is committed to any project as long as it is shown the need for it and it is clearly justified. (CDEO 1)

On the other hand, ERTDOs gave the following responses:

I do not know. (ERTDO 2)

I am not sure. (ERTDO 1)

From the responses above, it is clear the ERTDOs did not want to commit themselves one way or the other.

With regard to whether the Botswana government was prepared to commit the necessary resources to ensure that speaking assessment was implemented as planned, ERTDOs said that they did not know, because they had not made any such request to the government:

ERTDOs gave the following responses:

I do not know, since we have not made the request. (ERTDO 1)

I do not know, though the government is trying to cut down on its expenditure. (ERTDO 2)

CDEOs' and SEOs' comment that it is the ERTDOs who are not committed to the assessment of speaking, rather than the government, seems to be supported by the ERTDOs' responses. They said that they did not know if the government was prepared to commit the necessary resources in order to ensure the implementation of the assessment of speaking as planned, because they had not

asked the government to commit resources to the project. If the ERTDOs were committed to this project, they would have asked the government to fund it. CDEOs and SEOs said that the government was committed, provided a request for them was made and a strong justification for the expenditure was made. CDEOs and SEOs gave the following responses:

Yes, they could if the request for resources was made with a clear justification for their need. (CDEO 2)

The government would be prepared to supply the resources as long as it is shown that this will be for a good cause and the resources are available. (SEO 1)

CDEOs and SEOs believed that if a request accompanied by a strong justification for the resources needed to assess speaking were made, the government would be willing to provide them. The Botswana government's commitment to a project depends on how well those who are supposed to be the experts promote and justify the resources needed to make its implementation succeed. ERTDOs are supposed to be the experts of the government when it comes to matters of assessment and examinations. However, since it has already emerged that the ERTD department does not have anyone who specializes in speaking assessment, this lack of implementation capacity may account for the apparent lack of commitment to speaking assessment. If ERTDOs are not keen on having speaking assessed in the BGCSE English examination, they will not advocate its implementation. On the contrary, they might convince the government that its implementation would just be an unnecessary expense, and the government would only be too happy with them, since it is naturally happy to welcome means of cutting down on its expenditure.

#### **4.2 *Clash of values or interests***

The education officers were asked to indicate the initial reasons for assessing speaking. ERTDOs tended to either blame CDEOs or the Task Force for imposing the decision upon them. The responses of ERTDOs are presented in the narratives below:

It was a decision of the CDE department. The CDE department has a tendency of making decisions and expecting ERTD to implement them. (ERTDO 1)

Because the Task Force insisted that all the aspects of the syllabus should be sampled. (ERTDO 2)

It is interesting to observe that ERTDO seem to distance themselves from the initial decision to assess speaking when they were part of the Task Force. One of the officers even singled out the CDE department as the department that made the decision to assess speaking. In fact, it was the Task Force, comprising not only CDEOs, but many other stakeholders as well, that made that decision. These included the ERTD department itself, teacher representatives, representations from other departments in MoE, colleges of education and the University of Botswana (MoE, 2000). This singling out of the CDE department as the department that made the decision to assess speaking is perhaps informed by the ERTDOs' knowledge of the agenda of CDEOs, which is to ensure that assessment supports teaching by sampling all the aspects of the syllabus. This agenda however is not compatible with that of the ERTDOs which is to make sure that they produce assessment instruments that are regarded by the nation as reliable for the purpose of selecting candidates for further education, training and employment.

CDEOs and SEOs gave reasons based, they felt, on sound educational principles. These are their accounts:

It was because the ESL policy demanded that all language skills be given equal attention in teaching and assessment. Also the communicative language teaching approach calls for it and it was felt that there was need to develop all the skills. Furthermore, the syllabus objectives called for it. (SEO 2)

It was because of a desire to assess all the aspects of the syllabus, because the communicative teaching approach demanded that all the four language skills be assessed. It is unfortunate that this is not done. (CDEO 1)

From the narratives above, it is clear that the interests of CDEOs and SEOs include having all the aspects of the curriculum, including speaking, taught and assessed. CDEOs and SEOs gave a number of reasons based on educational principles as to why it was initially decided to assess speaking. They asserted that both the ESL and the communicative language teaching (CLT) policies, both of which underlie the syllabus, call for the alignment of teaching with assessment. The responses of the two categories of education officers indicate a clash of values or interests.

Regarding the things they think need to be done in order for the assessment of speaking in the BGCSE English examination to be successful, the participants gave the following responses. ERTDOs had this to say:

There are no plans to ever implement this recommendation. (ERTDO 1)

It has already been decided not to implement speaking. (ERTDO 2)

The above responses indicate that the assessment of speaking is no longer in the agenda of ERTDOs.

CDEOs and SEOs, on the other hand, came up with a number of things that would make the implementation of the syllabus provision to assess speaking successful. The things they suggested included the following:

Discussions should be started between ERTD and the other concerned departments relating to what needs to be done to make speaking assessment successful. (CDEO 1)

ERTD should come up with an implementation plan for the assessment of speaking. They should do a pilot study with a few students so that it could be demonstrated that the feared problems really exist. (CDEO 3)

A need-analysis needs to be conducted and all the materials and human resources need to be put in place. (SEO 1)

The mind-set of ERTDOs that assessing speaking is too difficult and would involve too much work on their part to be even attempted should be changed so that they have a more positive attitude. (SEO 2)

It emerges from the above responses that though ERTDOs had not yet divulged their decision not to implement the syllabus provision to assess speaking, they had indicated to CDEOs and SEOs that they considered the assessment of speaking to be too difficult to succeed. This is clearly confirmed by a comment like "the mind-set of ERTDOs that assessing speaking is too difficult and would involve too much work on their part to be even attempted should be changed." It seems to be the case that, because of the layered nature of the Botswana educational system, the various categories of education officers are able to make their decisions without regard to or even contrary to the wishes of the others.

When asked to mention the form they thought a speaking test in the BGCSE English examination should take, ERTDOs did not think it was necessary to talk about the form the test should take, because it had already decided not to assess speaking. They gave the following responses:

There are no plans to assess speaking. (ERTDO 1)

It has not yet been discussed and a decision has been made not to assess it. (ERTDO 2)

CDEOs and SEOs gave the following suggestions:

Continuous assessment which contributes towards the final English exam mark. (CDEO 1)

A written test with students responding to what is being spoken. (SEO 1)

A variety of procedures such as group discussion, debates, role plays, and paired discussion. (SEO 2)

Some of the suggestions above such as the idea of continuous assessment which contributes towards the final English language mark, and the use of a variety of procedures such as group discussions, debates, role-plays and paired discussions to assess speaking, are consistent with those of the Task Force. The Task Force also made the same suggestions in view of the large numbers of students involved. It was clear to the Task Force that, because of the fact that speaking assessment can be time consuming if students are examined through one-to-one procedures, tasks such as group discussion, debates, role plays and paired discussions, in which more than one candidate is examined at the same time, were thought to be more practical. These procedures, if not done by well trained examiners, are fraught with problems that may threaten the validity and reliability of the scores obtained from them. Such problems may include the awarding or deducting of marks for something that is irrelevant to the construct being measured such as outspokenness or soft-spokenness or not being consistent in their rating of the same level of performance. It is perhaps because of these fears that ERTDOs – who are more concerned with developing an instrument that produces reliable scores that can be seen to be fair for use in the selection of students for the next level of education, training or employment – decided to drop the implementation of the BGCSE English syllabus provision to assess speaking.

As has been said, the BGCSE English syllabus was developed by a Task Force that comprised many stakeholders, but when it came to the decision not to implement one of the provisions of that syllabus, the department responsible for its implementation made a unilateral decision. This indicates that consultation and communication between the various departments in the MoE is lateral and limited. Each department seems to be acting independently and only consults other departments, if it feels like it. The limited consultation could be due to the fact that since the agendas of the various departments in MoE are different, they are not necessarily pursuing the same goals. Each has its own main agenda. As the results have indicated, on the one hand, the ERTDOs' main agenda is to develop valid and reliable exam instruments that are deemed by the nation as fair for use in selection, while the main agenda of the CDEOs and SEOs is to make sure that English is taught according to the syllabus. It seems that, in this case, Steffy and English's (1997) concept of layered educational systems reflected in the lateral communication between the various players is helpful in explaining how change in the form of the implementation of the syllabus provision to test speaking in the BGCSE English examination is obstructed in senior secondary schools.

### ***4.3 The feasibility of assessing speaking***

The education officers were asked to say whether they honestly believe that speaking assessment in the BGCSE English examination, as recommended in the syllabus, was feasible. ERTDOs gave the following responses:

It is not feasible. The ERTD department does not even have one single person who has specialised in oral/aural assessment and who could help us assess speaking reliably. (ERTDO 1)

It is, if we decided to do it. We are not really convinced about the necessity of assessing speaking. One of the reasons for this is that there is no person in ERTD who has specialized in speaking assessment and therefore knows how it could be reliably done. The main concern of the department is to write valid and reliable exam instruments and the department doesn't seem to have the expertise to do that as far as speaking is concerned. (ERTDO 2)

It is interesting to note that one of the officers who had all along seemed to be saying that it

would be too difficult to assess speaking decides to say that it could be feasible, if they were willing to assess speaking. Even though the officer indicated that manpower is a problem that may not be the major problem because if it was, they could appeal for help, which they have not done. The major problem is the fact that they are not convinced about the necessity of assessing speaking. With their view that speaking skills are too basic to be assessed at this level (form five), as discussed earlier, they consider the assessment of speaking as something that would threaten the reliability of the examination and therefore its acceptability as a fair tool for the selection purpose, which they take to be the main function of the exam.

CDEOs and SEOs gave the following responses:

Yes, it is feasible, though a lot of work will have to be done to do that successfully. It will need thorough planning. (SEO 1)

It is, if those in decision-making positions are willing to do it. (CDEO 2)

Yes, the resources could be acquired, if a decision to implement the syllabus provision to assess speaking is made. (CDEO 3)

Yes, because where there is a will, there is always a way. But it seems that ERTD department has no intention of assessing speaking. (SEO 2)

From the above responses, it is evident that while CDEOs and SEOs acknowledge the unavailability of both the material and human resources in the schools necessary to support the assessment of speaking, they also believe that the resources could be acquired, if a decision is made to implement speaking assessment. Their responses also show that they sense that ERTD, which is the department with the responsibility of implementing speaking assessment, is not very keen on doing so, as evidenced by a comment such as "... where there is a will, there is always a way. But it seems that ERTD has no intention of assessing speaking."

Finally, regarding whether they would be prepared to support and even work with someone who offers to produce a speaking test for the BGCSE English examination, both ERTDOs and CDEOs/SEOs said they would. The fact that the ERTDOs would also be supportive to someone who offers to produce a speaking test is indicative that the lack of implementation capacity is also an important factor that handicaps them and makes it hard for them to implement the requirements of the syllabus. Perhaps the solution would be to ask for help, from institutions such as the University of Botswana, and even from outside the country, if such help is not available within the country. Also the fear of embarking on a project for which they do not have expertise might explain why they have not even attempted to ask for the resources.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

The findings of this research has identified three challenges that confront the implementation of speaking assessment, as recommended in the BGCSE ESL syllabus, namely the logistics, the lack of resources and the commitment to speaking assessment. The two categories of education officers, CDEOs and SEOs on the one hand and ERTDOs on the other have opposing views with regard to these challenges. Generally, CDEOs and SEOs believe the challenges can be overcome, while ERTDOs seem to consider them to be insurmountable problems. This situation has resulted in a lack of consultation and collaboration between the two categories, as evidenced by the fact that ERTDOs decided to unilaterally drop the plans to assess speaking without consulting other stakeholders.

The findings also revealed that there was a clash of values or interests between the two categories of education officers. Each has its own main agenda. For instance, while, on the one hand, the ERTDOs main agenda is to develop valid and reliable exam instruments deemed by the nation as fair for use in the selection for the next level of education, training or for employment, the main agenda of the CDEOs and SEOs is to make sure that English is taught according to the syllabus.

The two categories also differ with regard to what they regard to be the function of assessment. According to Crafter, Crook & Reid (2006), assessment in senior secondary school years can serve a range of purposes. The first is assessment for learning, by which is meant that assessment is considered as a part of the learning process rather than as an activity at the end of it. From this perspective, assessment is used by teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and learning program, and to assist in the planning of future teaching, learning and assessment activities. In the same way, it is used by students on an ongoing basis to help them reflect on their learning in order to determine what they need to work on next. Schools and educational systems use assessment information for organisational improvement. CDEOs and SEOs held this view of the function of assessment.

The second purpose of assessment is that of assessment as learning, meta-cognition and reflective practice. According to Crafter et al. (2006), in this paradigm, learners are taught to think consciously about how they think and how they learn. Since it is not possible to teach young people everything they need to know for the rest of their lives in school, the focus is on learning how to learn. This involves critical reflection on learning how to generate knowledge and information, and how to process, evaluate and apply it efficiently and effectively in a range of known and unforeseen contexts. From this perspective, assessment and learning are two sides of the same coin. Ongoing critical reflection or assessment as learning cannot be separated from learning itself. A study by Chapman & Snyder (2000) investigated the effects of changes to examinations in Trinidad and Tobago and in Uganda intended to raise the cognitive complexity of the students' thinking and problem-solving processes by concentrating the questions on the application of knowledge rather than information recall. It provides an example of exams that attempted to implement the assessment as learning principle. It also seems that CDEOs and SEOs held this view of the function of assessment.

The third purpose is assessment of learning, in which assessment is used at points in time to evaluate and determine learners' achievement. Judgments are made and levels of student achievement recorded and reported. Assessment results are often used for certification purposes. Reported differences in student achievement are used to sort and select students for various paths and programs. It is apparent from the findings that ERTDOs held this view of the function of assessment.

With regard to the feasibility of introducing speaking assessment in the BGCSE English examination, it became apparent that each of the two categories or layers of the education system with a stake in what is taught and assessed in BGCSE English gave a response that was influenced by what it considered to be the main function of the BGCSE English examination. On the one hand, ERTDOs, who considered the main function of the exam as the selection of candidates for the next level of education, training or employment, had divergent views on the issue. While one said it was feasible, but they were not willing to assess it, because they were not convinced of the necessity of assessing it, the other said that it was not feasible because it was difficult to develop a reliable instrument that can be seen to be fair for use in selection, especially since they did not have anyone who has expertise in speaking assessment. On the other hand, the CDEOs and SEOs, who consider the main function of the exam as being to support teaching, said that the introduction of speaking assessment was feasible, provided the necessary material and human resources were provided and careful planning were carried out with regard to the kinds of instruments and the administration strategies to be used.

It is likely that, as long as ERTDOs remain resistant to, nothing will ever happen as far as assessing speaking in the BGCSE English exam is concerned, as they are the department that should take the lead by planning, requesting for the necessary material and human resources, and organizing and overseeing the implementation of the project. Also, since they said that everything was going well now without the assessment of speaking, they are not likely to embark upon something that, in their view, may disturb a system that is running well. By saying that everything was going very well, ERTDOs mean that the BGCSE English examination is performing its role as a selection examination well, since the public has not expressed any dissatisfaction with it.

The results further indicate that ERTDOs' reluctance to implement speaking assessment was also due to a lack of implementation capacity, as they said that they did not have a single person in

their department who is a specialist in speaking assessment. This is reinforced by their statement that they would welcome and be prepared to work with someone who offers to develop a speaking test for the BGCSE English examination. It is likely that, if they had adequate personnel with expertise in speaking assessment, they would have been more receptive to speaking assessment than they are at the moment.

## 5 Conclusion

This study has partially supported Steffy and English's (1997) concept of layered educational systems, in which communication between various players is lateral rather than vertical, thereby making program implementation requiring involvement of all the players difficult. This is because, apart from the fact that the two categories of education officers have different agendas and mandates, there are also other factors, such as the lack of implementation capacity due to a shortage of both human and material resources, which discouraged ERTDOs from testing speaking in the BGCSE ESL examination.

It is therefore recommended that a liaison officer in MoE should be appointed to oversee the implementation of projects that need the co-operation of a number of departments such as the recommendation of the BGCSE English syllabus to assess speaking. This should be a senior officer who would have the authority to give instructions to officers in the concerned departments so that they do their part in the implementation process. This would eliminate the problem of a crucial department in the implementation of a project deciding unilaterally to drop its implementation, because it sees it not to be in its own interest, as is what happened with the recommendation to assess speaking.

The ERTD department needs the services of an expert in speaking assessment, since they do not have such expertise in their own department to assist them in introducing speaking assessment, as recommended by the BGCSE English syllabus. This person can either be sourced locally from institutions like the University of Botswana or from outside the country. This would only be a temporary measure until they train their own testing specialists for speaking.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of ensuring that all the stakeholders, especially those that would be involved in the implementation of the curriculum and/or assessment innovation, not only understand and are comfortable with the reform, but that they actually have the necessary implementation capacity. Otherwise if one or some key stakeholders are not only uncomfortable with the reform, but also do not have the necessary capacity to implement the reform, as was the case with ERTD officers in the current study, the reform may not take off.

## References

- Akiyama, T. (2004). *Introducing EFL speaking tests into Japanese senior high school entrance examination*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.
- Alderson, C.J., & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics*, 14, 115–129.
- Chapman, D.W., & Snyder, C.W. (2000). Can high-stakes national testing improve instruction: Re-examining conventional wisdom. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 20, 457–474.
- Crafter, G., Crook, P., & Reid, A. (2006). *Success for all: Ministerial review of senior secondary education in South Australia*. Adelaide: Government of South Australia.
- Davies, A. (1990). *Principles of language testing*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kellaghan, T., & Greaney, V. (1992). *Using examination to improve education: a study of fourteen African countries*. Washington DC.: The World Bank.
- McNamara, T.F., & Roever, C. (2006). *Language testing: the social dimension*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Messick, S. (1996). Validity and washback in language testing. *Language Testing*, 13(4), 241–257.
- Ministry of Education. (2000). *Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) teaching syllabus*. Gaborone: Ministry of Education.
- Shohamy, E., Donitsa-Schmidt, S., & Ferman, I. (1996). Test impact revisited: Washback effect over time. *Language Testing*, 13, 298–317.

- Shohamy, E., Reves, T., & Bejarano, Y. (1986). Introducing a new comprehensive test of oral proficiency. *ELT Journal*, 40(3), 212–220.
- Steffy, B.E., & English, F.W. (1997). *Curriculum and assessment for world-class schools*. Lancaster, Pennsylvania: TECHNOMIC Publication.
- Wall, D. (1996). Introducing new tests into traditional systems: Insights from general education and from innovation theory. *Language Testing*, 13, 334–354.
- Wall, D. (1999). *The impact of high-stakes examinations on classroom teaching: A case study in using insights from testing and innovation theory*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK.
- Wall, D. (2000). The impact of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning: Can this be predicted or controlled? *System*, 28, 499–509.
- Wall, D., & Alderson, J.C. (1993). Examining washback: the Sri Lankan impact study. *Language Testing*, 10, 41–70.
- Weir, C. (1993). *Understanding and developing language tests*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Interview Guide:

For Senior Education Officers Responsible for English in the following departments in the Ministry of Education: Examination, Research and Testing Unit; Department of Secondary Education; and Curriculum Development and Evaluation.

Department-----

Qualifications-----

Position/Rank-----

Questions relating to the following will be asked:

- When the BGCSE English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking and listening skills will be implemented  
-----
- Factors that have delayed the implementation of the recommendation  
-----
- Whether they think/feel the assessment of speaking skills is really that important  
-----
- Whether they think speaking and listening skills are as important in the Botswana English language situation as reading and writing skills  
-----
- Whether they think the non-assessment of speaking skills in the BGCSE English examination has any impact on teaching  
-----
- Whether they think the non-assessment of speaking skills in the BGCSE English examination might give the impression to the teachers and students that the skills are not important compared to reading and writing skills  
-----
- Why it was decided in the first place to assess all the four language skills (writing, listening, reading & speaking) in the BGCSE English examination  
-----
- What steps have been taken so far towards the assessment of speaking and listening skills  
-----
- What facilities have been put in place so far, in the schools, towards the assessment of speaking and listening skills  
-----



- Have any teachers been trained or are any teachers being trained in oral/aural assessment  
-----
- Whether since the BGCSE English examination recommends that a school-based continuous assessment of speaking and listening skills should be externally moderated, any staff has been trained to play that role  
-----
- Whether any work has been done towards producing the proposed tests e.g. the framework of such tests, sample tasks, making criteria, etc  
-----
- Whether any thinking has been done on the contribution of such a test to the BGCSE English examination final mark  
-----
- Whether they think, given the resources in senior secondary schools, both material and human, introducing a speaking test is feasible in Botswana  
-----
- Whether material resources, e.g. video/audio recording equipments, are available or whether they could be made available for the introduction of a speaking test to work  
-----
- Whether they think the teachers would cope with such assessment, given the large numbers of students in the schools.  
-----
- Whether they think government is really committed to the assessment of speaking and listening skills in the BGCSE English examination  
-----
- Whether they think the government is prepared to commit resources in order to ensure that the assessment of speaking and listening skills goes ahead as recommended in the BGCSE English syllabus  
-----
- What they think should be done to speed up the assessment of speaking and listening skills in the BGCSE English examination  
-----
- What form the assessment of speaking and listening skills should take in order to be successfully carried out in Botswana  
-----
- Whether they honestly believe that given the current situation in Botswana, the introduction of a speaking sub-test as recommended by the BGCSE English syllabus is feasible  
-----
- Whether they would be prepared to support and work with someone who offers to work on the production of a speaking test for the BGCSE English examination  
-----

**Appendix B****Contact Summary Form 2**

Type: contact Mgt CD&amp;E Officer 2    Date 30/03/04

Place: CD&amp;E Offices

Question import	Question	Responses	Sequence
Implementation of English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking	1. When will the BGCSE English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking be implemented?	No definite date has been set but the aim is to eventually test all the language skills. ERTD still has to look into the testing of speaking	1
	2. What factors are delaying the implementation of the recommendation	From our meeting with ERTD the logistics of testing speaking would be too demanding give the large numbers in the schools. Testing speaking is difficult and will demand a lot of resources.	2
Importance of speaking skills assessment	3. Do you think the assessment of speaking skills is that important in the Botswana situation?	I am not very sure, though the communicative language teaching approach demands that we test it. The logistics of going about it are major problems. At the moment the education system is failing by not testing speaking. Not assessing speaking is unfair to those students who might be more talented at speaking than at writing or reading. Testing speaking tests the students assertiveness	3
Importance of speaking skills	4. Do you think speaking skills are as important in Botswana English language situation as reading or writing	All the skills are important. Certain jobs require very good speaking skills.	4
Impact of non assessment of speaking on teaching	5. Do you think the non assessment of speaking has any impact on teaching?	Yes, teachers teach towards the exams to the extent that they pay more attention to those skills that are assessed to the neglect of those that are not. They tend to consider teaching skills that are not assessed in the exam as a waste of time	5
	6. Do you think the non assessment of speaking	Yes, both students and teachers tend to think that	6

	gives the impression to teachers and students that it is not as important as writing or reading?	teaching skills that are not tested in the exam is a waste of time. The current exam tends to encourage a teacher centered approach rather than a learner centered one because the teacher is the one who knows what is tested in the exam.	
Reasons for assessing all the four language skills in exam	7. Can you explain why was it initially decided to that all the four language skills would be assessed?	The Communicative teaching approach demands that all the four language skills be assessed. It is unfortunate that this is not done.	7
Preparation for assessing speaking skills	8. What steps have been taken so far towards the assessment of speaking?	I am not sure but I am doubtful if anything has been done	8
	9. What facilities have been put in place, in the schools, towards the assessment of speaking?	Nothing so far.	9
	10. Have any teachers been given specialist training in the assessment of speaking	No	10
	11. Have any education officers or teachers been trained to help teachers in the assessment of speaking as part of coursework by students?	No	11
	12. Have any work towards producing test framework, sample tasks, marking criteria etc. for the proposed assessment of speaking	Nothing seems to have been done	12
	13. Have any thinking been done on the contribution the speaking test would have to the final exam?	Not sure	13
	14. Do you think, given the resources in the schools, both material and human, assessing speaking is feasible?	At the moment it is not but it is some thing that can be done if ERTD took the lead as the department directly responsible for testing and examination	14

	<p>15. Could the material resources, e.g. audio/video equipment, be made available for the introduction of the speaking test?</p> <p>16. Do you think given the large numbers, the teachers would cope with such assessment?</p>	<p>Not available but they could be acquired if the schools required them</p> <p>The large numbers are too high but once a framework has been worked out like group testing, it can be done.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>16</p>
Government commitment to the assessment of speaking	<p>17. Do you think government is really committed to the assessment of speaking in the BGCSE English exam?</p> <p>18. Is the government prepared to commit resources in order to ensure that speaking assessment goes ahead as planned?</p>	<p>ERTD seems to fear to start or even try. They seem to regard the problems to be insurmountable. Perhaps they lack implementation capacity.</p> <p>The government would be prepared to supply the resources as long as they are shown that this would be for good cause.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>18</p>
Action that needs to be taken in order to assess speaking	<p>19. What should be done to speed up the assessment speaking?</p> <p>20. What form should the assessment of speaking take in order to be successful in Botswana?</p>	<p>ERTD should come up with an implementation plan for the assessment of speaking. They should do a pilot study with a few students, so that it could be demonstrated that the feared problems really exist.</p> <p>Continuous assessment which should contribute towards the final English exam mark</p>	<p>19</p> <p>20</p>
Personal views on feasibility of assessing speaking the syllabus?	<p>21. Do you honestly believe that given the current situation in Botswana, assessing speaking is feasible as recommended by</p>	<p>Yes, the resources could be acquired if a decision to implement the syllabus recommendation to assess speaking is made.</p>	<p>21</p>
Support for a speaking test development	<p>22. Would you support and work with someone who offers to produce a speaking test for the BGCSE English examination?</p> <p>23. Would you be pre-</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>22</p> <p>23</p>

	pared to assess with a view of making a recommendation as the suitability or otherwise of my proposed test for the BGCSE examination?		
--	---	--	--

**Contact Summary Form 5**

Type: contact Mgt Sec. Edu. 2 Date 08/04/04

Place: Sec. Edu. Offices

Question import	Question	Responses	Sequence
Implementation of English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking	1. When will the BGCSE English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking be implemented?	I don't that Examination, Research and Testing Division (ERTD) has any plans of assessing speaking.	1
	2. What factors are delaying the implementation of the recommendation	ERTD lacks the expertise and the experience of assessing speaking	2
Importance of speaking skills assessment	3. Do you think the assessment of speaking skills is that important in the Botswana situation?	It is, if it is not assessed teachers tend to give it less attention in. Classes are still conducted in the traditional way that was used in the old syllabus. The teacher still does most of the speaking while the students are mostly passive. The students still can do well even if they are taught in the old style. This is because like in the old COSC syllabus speaking skills are not assessed.	3
Importance of speaking skills	4. Do you think speaking skills are as importance in Botswana English language situation as reading or writing	Yes, because Botswana is an ESL situation. People should to be taught to competent in all the four language skills.	4
Impact of non assessment of speaking on teaching	5. Do you think the non assessment of speaking has any impact on teaching?	Yes, teachers pay less attention to speaking	5
	6. Do you think the non	Yes, teachers and stu-	6

	assessment of speaking gives the impression to teachers and students that it is not as important as writing or reading?	dents focus on reading and writing because they are examined while giving perfunctory attention to speaking	
Reasons for assessing all the four language skills in exam	7. Can you explain why was it initially decided to that all the four language skills would be assessed?	It was because that ESL policy demanded that all language skills be given equal attention	7
Preparation for assessing speaking skills	8. What steps have been taken so far towards the assessment of speaking?	None	8
	9. What facilities have been put in place, in the schools, towards the assessment of speaking?	None	9
	10. Have any teachers been given specialist training in the assessment of speaking	Not specifically for oral/aural assessment	10
	11. Have any education officers or teachers been trained to help teachers in the assessment of speaking as part of coursework by students?	Nothing	11
	12. Have any work towards producing test framework, sample tasks, marking criteria etc. for the proposed assessment of speaking	Nothing has been done	12
	13. Have any thinking been done on the contribution the speaking test would have to the final exam?	None	13
	14. Do you think, given the resources in the schools, both material and human, assessing speaking is feasible?	Yes because where there's a will there is always a way. But it seems that ERTD has no intention of assessing speaking.	14
	15. Are there or could the material resources, e.g. audio/video equipment, be made available	At the moment the resources are not available but they could be acquired if budgeted for.	15

	<p>for the introduction of the speaking test?</p> <p>16. Do you think give the large numbers, the teachers would cope with such assessment?</p>	<p>Yes, if the teachers are trained through short regional workshops and equipment is provided.</p>	16
Government commitment to the assessment of speaking	<p>17. Do you think government is really committed to the assessment of speaking in the BGCSE English exam?</p> <p>18. Is the government prepared to commit resources in order to ensure that speaking assessment goes ahead as planned?</p>	<p>Yes, but the ERTD officers who are responsible for implementation of the recommendation may not be committed to it.</p> <p>Yes they could if the request for resources is made with a clear justification.</p>	17 18
Action that need to be taken in order to assess speaking	<p>19. What should be done to speed up the assessment speaking?</p> <p>20. What form should the assessment of speaking take in order to be successful in Botswana?</p>	<p>The mind set of ERTD officers that assessing speaking is too difficult and would involve too much on their part to be even attempted should be changed so that they have a more positive attitude.</p> <p>A variety of procedures such as group discussion, debates, role plays, paired discussion, etc.</p>	19 20
Personal views on feasibility of assessing speaking	<p>21. Do you honestly believe that given the current situation in Botswana, assessing speaking is feasible as recommended by the syllabus?</p>	<p>Yes, though a lot of work will have to be done do that successfully.</p>	21
Support a speaking test development	<p>22. Would you support and work with someone who offers to produce a speaking test for the BGCSE English examination?</p> <p>23. Would you be prepared to assess with a view of making a recommendation as the suitability or otherwise</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	22 23

	of my proposed test for the BGCSE examination?		
--	--	--	--

### Contact Summary Form 6

Type: contact Mgt ERTD officer 1    Date 08/04/04

Place: ERTD Offices

Question import	Question	Responses	Sequence
Implementation of English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking	1. When will the BGCSE English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking be implemented?	It is not near implementation and I am not sure if it will ever be implemented.	1
	2. What factors are delaying the implementation of the recommendation	Economic factors-it is too expensive to do it. Even the current exam is being reduced to cut down on expenses. The other problem is that ERTD does not have a single person who has specialized on oral/aural assessment.	2
Importance of speaking skills assessment	3. Do you think the assessment of speaking skills is that important in the Botswana situation?	It is not that important. Assessment in Botswana is done for selection purposes and not to support teaching. Look at the situation in Japan or China where speaking is not emphasized, yet they are able to communicate. Although Botswana is considered an ESL country, in reality it is an EFL situation. Speaking therefore should not be emphasized.	3
Importance of speaking skills	4. Do you think speaking skills are as important in Botswana English language situation as reading or writing	They are not that important when compared to reading and writing. That's why we are not assessing them.	4
Impact of non assessment of speaking on teaching	5. Do you think the non assessment of speaking has any impact on teaching?	It does not have any impact on teaching as speaking is still taught even though it is not assessed. In fact speaking should not be emphasized because Eng-	5



	6. Do you think the non assessment of speaking gives the impression to teachers and students that it is not as important as writing or reading?	lish in Botswana, in my view, is a foreign language even though it is wrongly called a second language.  I do not know	6
Reasons for assessing all the four language skills in exam	7. Can you explain why was it initially decided to that all the four language skills would be assessed?	It was a decision of CD&E department. CD&E has a tendency of making decisions and expecting ERTD to implement them.	7
Preparation for assessing speaking skills	8. What steps have been taken so far towards the assessment of speaking?	None	8
	9. What facilities have been put in place, in the schools, towards the assessment of speaking?	None	9
	10. Have any teachers been given specialist training in the assessment of speaking	None	10
	11. Have any education officers or teachers been trained to help teachers in the assessment of speaking as part of coursework by students?	None	11
	12. Have any work towards producing test framework, sample tasks, marking criteria etc. for the proposed assessment of speaking	None	12
	13. Have any thinking been done on the contribution the speaking test would have to the final exam?	None	13
	14. Do you think, given the resources in the	Not feasible.	14

	<p>schools, both material and human, assessing speaking is feasible?</p> <p>15. Could the material resources, e.g. audio/video equipment, be made available for the introduction of the speaking test?</p> <p>16. Do you think give the large numbers, the teachers would cope with such assessment?</p>	<p>Not at the moment.</p> <p>No, they would not cope.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>16</p>
Government commitment to the assessment of speaking	<p>17. Do you think government is really committed to the assessment of speaking in the BGCSE English exam?</p> <p>18. Is the government prepared to commit resources in order to ensure that speaking assessment goes ahead as planned?</p>	<p>I do not know</p> <p>Not at the moment. ERTD doesn't think this is practicable at this juncture so and we would find difficult to justify this project</p>	<p>17</p> <p>18</p>
Action that need to be taken in order to assess speaking	<p>19. What should be done to speed up the assessment speaking?</p> <p>20. What form should the assessment of speaking take in order to be successful in Botswana?</p>	<p>There are no plans to ever implement this recommendation</p> <p>There are no plans to assess speaking</p>	<p>19</p> <p>20</p>
Personal views on feasibility of assessing speaking	<p>21. Do you honestly believe that given the current situation in Botswana, assessing speaking is feasible as recommended by the syllabus?</p>	<p>It is not feasible.</p>	<p>21</p>
Support a speaking test development	<p>22. Would you support and work with someone who offers to produce a speaking test for the BGCSE English examination?</p> <p>23. Would you be prepared to assess with a view of making a recommendation as the</p>	<p>Yes, if government implements the recommendation to test speaking</p> <p>Yes, if it's necessary.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>23</p>

	suitability or otherwise of my proposed test for the BGCSE examina- tion?		
--	--	--	--