

MAKOYA

UMALUSI



Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF UMALUSI

July 2017



FROM
THE CEO'S
DESK



UMALUSI
TO HOST
2018 SAAEA
CONFERENCE

WHAT'S INSIDE

From the Editor's Pen	3
From the CEO's Desk	4
Research support enhances quality assurance	5
How does Statistics support research?	6
Mathematical Literacy and 21st Century skills: an Umalusi seminar	7
Post-Examination Analysis monitors standards of NSC examinations	8
How Umalusi standardises results	9
Undertaking research in early childhood development (ECD)	10
Quality assurance through common understanding: South African Sign Language	12
2017 SAAEA Research Forum: collaboration key to harmonisation	14
Umalusi to host 2018 SAAEA Conference	15

SAAEA Research Forum Zambia





By Lucky Ditaunyane

We are constantly looking for opportunities to communicate significant, strategic messages about the mandate and work of the organisation to our external stakeholders.

FROM THE EDITOR'S PEN

Welcome to this issue of Makoya, Umalusi's official external newsletter. It is amazing that the first half of 2017 has already gone. This shows that, as the old adage says, 'time and tide wait for no man'. While this is true, one can only maximise the use of time through careful planning and judicious implementation of the plan.

As a Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, Umalusi remains committed to the achievement of its strategic objectives and goals in the medium to long term. To this end, the organisation can only achieve its goals if there is collaboration on different levels of the organisation. It is this teamwork that enabled the organisation to implement its strategic plan in the first six months of this year.

Once again, we are delighted to bring you stories that depict key moments in the work of Umalusi so far. This publication highlights, in the main, the work done by Umalusi's Statistical Information and Research Unit, which entails conducting and commissioning research projects to enhance the organisation's quality assurance systems and processes, to inform its strategic direction.

As usual, Makoya contains vital information about the work of Umalusi. Over the years, Umalusi

has positioned itself as one of the key stakeholders in education. We are constantly looking for opportunities to communicate significant, strategic messages about the mandate and work of the organisation to our external stakeholders. Makoya – Umalusi's official newsletter – is one of the platforms that we use to achieve this goal. Enjoy!



By Dr Mafu Rakometsi

As a public entity, we are aware of our responsibility to account to the South African public on all aspects of our work, in particular issues pertaining to our legislative mandate.

FROM THE CEO'S DESK

It gives me great pleasure to once again pen my thoughts regarding the work of Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training. Umalusi is a statutory body that was founded by an Act of Parliament, the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act No. 58 of 2001. Over and above the GENFETQA Act, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008 gives effect to the work and mandate of Umalusi as a Quality Council in the general and further education band of our education system.

There is no doubt that the work of Umalusi is in a constant state of flux, given the ever-changing landscape of our education system. This is caused by undulations in external environmental factors such as socio-cultural, political, legal, technological, economic and global influences. As a public entity and a significant player in education, Umalusi is constantly looking for ways to make itself relevant within the context in which it operates.

In the past four months I have travelled to various universities with the aim of sharing crucial information on Umalusi's work and mandate. In the main, the meetings with Education faculties focused on the mandate of Umalusi in relation

to higher education and training, e.g. the value of Umalusi qualifications; and the implications of quality issues for higher education. The information sessions also touched specifically on the standardisation of exit point results. This is an area of our work that needs to be explained to our stakeholders.

So far, I have visited the following universities: the University of Fort Hare, Walter Sisulu University (two campuses), the University of Venda and the University of Limpopo. My aim is to also take this advocacy campaign to provincial legislatures and provincial departments of education. As a public entity, we are aware of our responsibility to account to the South African public on all aspects of our work, in particular issues pertaining to our legislative mandate.

This issue of Makoya contains important information regarding the work of one of our core units, the Statistical Information and Research Unit, whose main task is to conduct research on the educational issues that are related to Umalusi's work, and to provide strategic direction to the work of the organisation. As a Quality Council, we usually say that we do not take any strategic position unless it is backed by research.

Enjoy your reading!



By Biki Lepota

The overarching goal is to strengthen research and the production of knowledge, and it seeks to achieve three key aims: to increase Umalusi's research capacity; to enhance organisational ability to influence policy; and to elevate the visibility of Umalusi's research work at national level.

RESEARCH SUPPORT enhances quality assurance

Umalusi is mandated to provide research-based advice to the relevant education minister on matters relating to general and further education and training. Since research advice has the potential to influence policy, it is important that research work stands up to public scrutiny. In this connection, the Statistical Information and Research (SIR) Unit has conceptualised initiatives that bring together internal and external research expertise.

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To achieve this, internal seminars are held regularly at which staff present research ideas and receive constructive feedback to guide possible research papers. Discussions focus on Umalusi's operational areas, such as accreditation, assessment, qualifications and curriculum. The seminars provide an invaluable opportunity to sustain conversations about setting and maintaining education assessment standards, and how to continuously improve these. Finalised papers are submitted for presentation at national and international conferences. Of equal importance, papers grounded in research are submitted for consideration in academic journals.

Other related activities, referred to as external strategic support, include workshops with examiners, moderators and subject specialists from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Independent Examinations Board (IEB), and the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).





By Pauline Masemola

As a discipline, statistics has tools that can be used to develop models to evaluate the preparedness of learners in the education system.

How does **STATISTICS** support research?

Statistics is used in our everyday lives even though we may not realise it. We make statistical statements in our everyday conversations, such as “learners who prepare in time are more likely to pass the examination”.

Statistics is therefore the science concerned with developing and studying methods for collecting, analysing, interpreting and presenting empirical data. Statistics is a highly interdisciplinary field as it is applicable in medical settings, in political campaigns, in quality testing and also in education settings, just to mention a few.

The question might be how statistics can support research in an education setting. Well, statistics can for instance be used to benchmark performance between different assessment bodies in a particular qualification. As a researcher, one can also collect data on how a particular group of learners perform by using instruments which must be validated by statistics. After analysing the data and turning it into meaningful information, one might also look into factors that influence the performance. However, statistics would have been the point of departure. Statistics also supports research as a useful tool in evidence-based decision-making. Numbers do tell a story.

In education, statistics is applied both descriptively, where statistical procedures are applied to summarise and describe important characteristics of a set of observations, and also inferentially, where statistical procedures are used to make inferences about population characteristics observed from a sample. At Umalusi, statistics is applied descriptively through describing the learner cohorts in learning areas of interest and how these learners have performed over the years. These descriptive statistics are then used to support decisions taken in qualitative and quantitative research. Statistics is also applied inferentially through Item Response Theory (IRT) related research, where statistical models are developed to identify questions that classify the skills sets of learners according to their

learning abilities. Another initiative involving inferential statistics is the monitoring of the impact in higher education of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) as one of Umalusi's qualifications.

Statistics gives us an opportunity to ‘work smart’ and not have to deal with data manually. This can be achieved through using the tools embedded in statistics. For example, if a researcher wants to investigate the impact of an educational programme, the researcher might sample learners in the programme and collect data. If this programme is exposed to thousands of learners, it might not be possible to include every learner in the investigation, due to resource limitations. That is where sampling comes into play.

As a discipline, statistics has tools that can be used to develop models to evaluate the preparedness of learners in the education system. Statistics is also crucial at Umalusi because it helps us to monitor what is happening in the education sector when it comes to statistics on the performance of learners. It is also used to monitor the impact of our processes, such as the application of language compensation for learners whose language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is not English and/or Afrikaans. There are researchers in education settings who constantly need to identify trends in the basic education sector. The kinds of statistics produced at Umalusi also benefit their research and assist them to make evidence-based recommendations.

This science is also important in questionnaire design. Such questionnaires are used to collect information to make decisions about processes such as evaluating the compliance of institutions when applying for accreditation. Statistics is a powerful tool for uncovering trends.

Long story, short: Numbers count, and statistics support both research and everyday life.



By Marco MacFarlane

MATHEMATICAL LITERACY and 21st Century skills: an Umalusi seminar

courses offered in Hong Kong and Australia.

The discussions showed that Mathematical Literacy, introduced in South Africa in 2006 as an alternative to Mathematics, is not the "Cinderella" subject many South Africans think it is. It is, in fact, a highly relevant, internationally recognised subject. This fact was given further impetus by an invitation in 2016, from the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, to provide input on aspects in the Mathematical Literacy curriculum that pertain to Budget Literacy.

The first presenter at the 2017 seminar, Joan Houston, articulated the novel insight that perhaps South Africa was a world leader in equipping high school students to understand how local, provincial and national budgets work, where the money comes from and how it is used, how inflation complicates budgeting, and how different sectors compete for their share of the budget.

The seminar traced the history of South Africa's teaching of Mathematics, with its damaging impact on the education of the majority of people; how this new subject (Mathematical Literacy) was introduced and how it has been received; and how the curriculum has been transformed into a highly relevant, context-based subject, the aim of which is to transform young people into confident, curious, analytical and reflective adults.

The seminar also examined how Mathematical Literacy shares its content, skills, outcomes and values with Quantitative Literacy, taught at college and university level in the USA, and Functional Mathematics, taught in the GCSE years in the UK. It raised the question of whether all learners should take the subject to Grade 12, and how the subject should be viewed as an offering for Higher Education.

Finally, the seminar showed how the curriculum of Mathematical Literacy revives and reinforces those old-fashioned concepts of the 3Rs:

reading, writing and 'rithmetic. Except that two more Rs were added: reflection and responsibility. It was argued that this subject called Mathematical Literacy in South Africa, but by other names internationally, is one of the most useful, relevant and empowering tools that an educational system can give its student graduates and school leavers.

The second speaker, Dr Sarah Bansilal of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), honed in on the particularly complex nature of the contextual features inherent in Mathematical Literacy. She noted that because each and every question was constructed around a novel context, with a high degree of complexity in the language skills required of the learner, the curriculum was far more challenging than many people realised. She also spoke about the differential challenge that learners face when dealing with the language demands of the subject. The subject is substantially more complex for a learner for whom English is their second language: the challenge is, first, about language and contextual demands; and only secondarily about the demand inherent in the mathematics.

Dr Bansilal noted that a key '21st Century Skill' was the ability to interpret and analyse novel information, and that Mathematical Literacy – perhaps above all other subjects – trained and inculcated this particular skill in learners.

The seminar was an immensely successful event, with a high level of audience participation and engagement.

On 31 March 2017, Umalusi hosted a seminar titled: How does Mathematical Literacy equip South Africans to live in the 21st Century? The seminar was part of an ongoing collaboration between Umalusi, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), and Wits School of Education.

The origins of Umalusi's interest in Mathematical Literacy lie in an Umalusi workshop held in 2014. The object of that workshop was to benchmark subjects in the school-leaving category against similar curricula in a selection of countries on different continents. One subject was problematic: Mathematical Literacy apparently had no equivalents internationally. Or so the research team thought.

The team soon discovered that around the world, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, subjects exist which share many of the features of Mathematical Literacy. The research resulted in the revelation that Mathematical Literacy, taught to South African children in Grades 10, 11 and 12, closely resembles Quantitative Literacy in the USA and Functional Mathematics in the UK, as well as other



By Biki Lepota

This study is of great significance in that it makes specific recommendations on how the standards of each subject can be improved.

Post-Examinations Analysis monitors standards of NSC EXAMINATIONS

Umalusi conducts research annually, as part of its legislated areas of responsibility. One such research report, Post-Examinations Analysis (PEA), aims to ensure comparability of examination standards from one year to the next. The study started before the 2008 transition from the Senior Certificate (SC) to the National Senior Certificate (NSC). More specifically, the first project, billed as *Investigation into the standards of the Senior Certificate examination*, was published in 2004. It focused on the comparative difficulty of the examinations administered in 1992, 1999, and 2003; each of which represented a different era in South Africa's education system. The study was continued in earnest after the introduction of the NSC in 2008, with the overall goal of evaluating the extent to which the current year's examinations compared with comparator examinations written in the previous three to five years.

Given their high numbers of learner enrolment, the following subjects are normally selected: Accounting, Economics, Business Studies, English, Geography, History, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Sciences. Since Grade 12 exit-level examinations in South Africa are administered by three different bodies – Department of Basic Education (DBE), Independent Examinations Board (IEB), and South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) – the study evaluates each body's examinations in their own right. In others, no cross-body comparisons are drawn.

The project is designed to accomplish three broad objectives:

- To evaluate the degree to which the examinations adhere to the overall examination requirements, as set out by the assessment body;
- To evaluate the extent to which the examinations cover the curriculum;
- To determine the comparable degree of difficulty and the nature of the cognitive demands made in the examination papers in relation to previous papers.

Umalusi normally uses teams of four evaluators per subject in a methodological approach. Each team is comprised of a university-based subject specialist, a subject advisor and two teachers, each of whom has at least five years' experience in their respective areas of work. The process unfolds in two stages. Team members first conduct an independent analysis of the examination papers. The respective subject teams then work together to negotiate decisions regarding the individual item-by-analyses, and to consolidate their reports. The analysis is informed by Umalusi's framework for assessing and comparing the cognitive challenge and difficulty level of examinations. In differentiating between difficulty and cognitive demand, the framework views the former as a measure of how successful learners will be in answering questions; while the latter gauges the demands posed by questions on learners' cognitive abilities.

The findings have hitherto highlighted four issues, broadly summarised as: Firstly, the papers do adhere to examination specifications. Secondly, the examinations sufficiently cover the curriculum content. In terms of difficulty, the findings reveal that some subjects are consistently easy, while others are consistently difficult. At the same time, some subjects are becoming easier by the year, whereas the opposite is true for other subjects. This suggests instability of standards. Similar patterns of instability are observed in some subjects for cognitive demand.

This study is of great significance in that it makes specific recommendations on how the standards of each subject can be improved. The findings are presented at various forums to various stakeholders, such as the DBE, IEB, SACAI, teachers, universities, and others. Detailed information about this study and other related studies is accessible here:

www.umalusi.org.za/services.php?cat=Research



By Bridget Mthembu

How **UMALUSI** standardises results

STANDARDISATION MEETINGS

Considering the vast differences of the assessment bodies that Umalusi quality assures, the standardisation meetings begin with each assessment body's presentation of candidate profiles to be standardised. For the National Senior Certificate, this is followed by a report (for gateway subjects) of the subject experts' analyses, or judgement, of the examination paper(s).

At the pre-standardisation meeting, the reports on all quality assurance processes are presented to the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC), which is responsible for the standardisation of results. Additionally, statistical analyses of candidate performance over the past three to five years, per subject, at national level and per assessment body, are provided to the ASC in two booklets (Booklets 1 and 2). The statistical analyses consist of candidates' raw marks only for the given period and the current examination. Pre-standardisation meetings are held per qualification, per assessment body.

HOW UMALUSI DEVELOPS THE STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Umalusi uses a norm referencing method for standardisation. This implies that Umalusi develops candidates' expected performance by using raw marks from the previous three to five years, where applicable.

This data is used to develop the historical average (norm) for the previous three to five years. In analysing the norm, one can detect expected performance per interval, failure rate, pass rate, the mean (average), and median. Booklet 1 reflects statistical tables from the previous examination sittings and distribution of the current examination. It also contains a graph reflecting the performance pattern of preceding examination sittings.

Booklet 2 reflects how candidates performed in subjects other than the subject in question. For example, it contains comparisons of the performance of candidates who write, say, both Mathematics and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and Life

Sciences; or Mathematics and Accounting. The aim in this case would be to determine whether Mathematics can be deemed generally difficult, or easy, compared to other subjects.

HOW DOES UMALUSI ADJUST MARKS?

Umalusi adjusts raw marks only when there is compelling evidence from quality assurance reports and statistical analyses that candidate performance was affected by factors other than subject knowledge, ability and aptitude. This requires that before a decision is made, per subject, all reports on quality assurance processes that Umalusi engaged in during the year are consulted. The assessment body's description of the current group of candidates compared to that of the previous year, and support provided; subject experts' judgement; and the statistical analyses are all consulted.

Secondly, mark adjustments where necessary are guided by the following (among other) principles:

- No adjustment should exceed 10% of the total marks or the historical average; and
- No adjustment should exceed 50% (or half) of the candidates' raw mark (original mark).

The assessment bodies are also expected to hold a pre-standardisation meeting to formulate decisions for presentation to Umalusi in a standardisation meeting. During the standardisation meeting, the assessment body can present its proposed decisions, with motivations, to Umalusi. Umalusi's decision takes precedence if the adjustments presented are not the same as those of Umalusi.

It is worth noting that the standardisation meeting and consequent decisions do not conclude the final mark for the candidate. The examination mark has still to be aligned with a candidate's internal assessment result to determine the final mark. The process of statistical moderation to standardise the candidate's internal assessment then follows, with the adjusted examination the determinant.

Standardisation is a moderation process used to alleviate factors that affect candidates' performance, other than ability and knowledge. It comprises a broad spectrum of processes, starting from the setting of the examination paper through to the final resulting of the candidates. The standardisation meeting is just one part of the procedure.

The South African education system involves both external and internal assessments, all of which are standardised and approved by Umalusi before the results are finalised.

Umalusi performs the following quality assurance processes to reduce the variability of marks from year to year and to deliver a relatively constant product to market:

- Moderation of question papers;
- Moderation of school-based assessment;
- Monitoring of state of readiness;
- Monitoring of writing;
- Marking guideline discussions;
- Monitoring of marking;
- Verification of marking;
- Standardisation and results.



By Agnes Mohale

The voice of a child as an active agent or participant in her own development emerges as being deemed important.

Undertaking Research in **EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)**

There are concerns around the quality of South African qualifications and, in particular, the National Senior Certificate (NSC). This prompts commentators, researchers, academics, politicians and others to mainly put the spotlight on the Further Education and Training (FET) phase.

This can be attributed to Grade 12 being the exit level for the NSC qualifications and it is therefore assumed to be the measure of effectiveness of the South African education system. In the public schooling sector, Umalusi creates a sensation that can be euphoric for some, but withering for others, during the pronouncement of the release of Grade 12 end-of-year results. Of course, this is a pronouncement that will reveal the ultimate achievement of the work done over 13 years of schooling. What this highlights is that Umalusi's presence in this regard is felt when learners have to exit the schooling system. This skewed focus on Grade 12 undermines the opportunity for understanding the holistic nature of the system through which basic education is delivered.

To ensure that the provision of basic education in South Africa is of good quality, it is important to focus on issues around curriculum, assessment, and teaching and learning – among others – throughout the schooling sector.

Moreover, the National Development Plan (NDP) articulates that the quality of the schooling system has a significant impact on further education, college, higher education and society's ability to innovate. The NDP further highlights that education, training and innovation are elements that are key to eradicating poverty and reducing inequality. It is the foundation for an equal society. I believe that the question that needs to be considered is whether quality assuring the provision of education and training at the exit point serves the aspirations of the NDP.

Elsewhere, the GENFETQA Act (2001) section 16 (b) mandates Umalusi to monitor the suitability and adequacy of standards and qualifications in its sub-framework. Whereas the National

Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) section 27 (h) highlights that Umalusi, as the Quality Council must, in respect of quality assurance within its sub-framework, do the following:

- Develop and implement policy for quality assurance;
- Ensure the autonomy, integrity and credibility of qualifications registered;
- Ensure that quality assurance as is necessary for the sub-framework is undertaken.

Umalusi believes in grounding its work in research to ensure that it takes informed positions. Recently the Statistical Information and Research (SIR) Unit of Umalusi has embarked on an investigation into early childhood education. The first phase of the project involved appraisal of *The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four (NCF)*.

During this appraisal the opportunity for dialogue was created. The team of evaluators appreciated the aim expressed in the NCF to successfully integrate a holistic view of the young child. The voice of a child as an active agent or participant in her own development emerges as being deemed important. The NCF was also commended for being successful in its advocacy to promote young children's experiences to socially and culturally sensitive environments, where attention is being paid to inclusive, equitable and democratic practices. Of course there were areas of concern that the teams raised and which Umalusi has to investigate further.

The early childhood education research is continuing and the SIR Unit is looking forward to more engagement with major stakeholders in the ECD sector, as the unit will be exploring various approaches and curriculum delivery.

ECD Research



Standardisation 2016
observers



From left to right:
Mr Shakazo Mzyece (Zambia); Mr Boipuso Mosalagotla (Botswana); Ms Kagiso P Maule (Botswana);
Mr Mathew Snelling (ASC member); Mr Angel Mutale Kaliminwa (Zambia)



By Dr Stephan Mchunu

Learners need exposure to native SASL signing to acquire SASL and use it fluently to relate to others, and to participate in the deaf community and wider society.

Quality assurance through common understanding: **SOUTH AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGE**

On 31 March 2017, the Curriculum sub-unit of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Certification (QCC) Unit held an information-sharing meeting at Umalusi on the assessment and quality assurance of South African Sign Language Home Language (SASL HL). The following invited guests were present: Professor Claudine Storbeck, from Wits University's College of Education – Department of Deaf Studies, and Ms Jacolyn Oosthuyzen, Chief Examiner for SASL HL for Grades 10 and 11. Ms Oosthuyzen also teaches SASL HL at Transoranje School for the Deaf in Pretoria. She is a CODA, meaning a Child of a Deaf Adult. In addition, she is proficient in English and Afrikaans. Along with the QCC, the Quality Assurance of Assessment (QAA) and Statistical Information and Research (SIR) units were represented in the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to establish a common understanding on the assessment and quality assurance of the SASL HL. Most deaf learners are children of hearing parents, and that is the reason why most of them come to school with no language at all upon admission. Instead, such learners use gestures as a form of communication at home. In this way, learners who are children of deaf parents would normally catch up faster with the SASL Language, compared to children of hearing parents.

The team-teaching model forms an integral part of teaching SASL HL. Each class has a qualified hearing SASL teacher and a DTA (Deaf Teaching Assistant – native signer). The DTAs assist with signing skills and are in classes as learners' role models. The qualified hearing teacher and the DTA assist each other bilingually, i.e. spoken language/SASL HL. Many hearing teachers, although qualified to teach SASL as a subject, might not have native/fluently signing skills. Learners need exposure to native SASL signing to acquire SASL and use

it fluently to relate to others, and to participate in the deaf community and wider society.

The following are the suggested guidelines for teaching SASL HL as a subject:

- The teacher should not use voice at all in the classroom. This eliminates possible confusion of SASL and the spoken language. It will assist learners to use the correct SASL structure.
- Learners should not be permitted to use voice in the classroom. This fosters the development of expressive skills.
- All in-class teacher communication should be conducted in SASL.
- The teacher should not demand that learners express themselves in SASL until they have had ample, meaningful, receptive exposure to the language.
- All vocabulary should be taught in meaningful context through the use of interactional techniques, dialogues, narratives, stories, etc.
- The teacher should bring in the DTA to function as a role model in team teaching. Learners also need to be exposed to additional role models to provide more exposure to the use of SASL.
- Fingerspelling should not be taught until learners have been exposed to (taught) SASL for at least one semester. Fingerspelling is a complex skill that demands fine visual perception and fine motor skills, which signing does not require.
- As frequently as possible, the teacher and the DTA should record the expressive signing skills of the learners. Constructive feedback should be given to the learners for self-analysis and self-evaluation.
- The teacher should carefully evaluate any proposed text and materials to determine their appropriateness for achieving the curriculum objectives.

The SASL Home Language does not follow the normal English grammatical order. The SASL HL sentence construction follows the Subject Object Verb (SOV) order. For example:

- English Home Language: "I am going to town."
- SASL Home Language: "ME TOWN GO." – SOV order.
- English Home Language: "The boy talks to the girl."
- SASL Home Language: "BOY GIRL TALK-TO." – SOV order.
- English Home Language: "The girl talks to the boy."
- SASL Home Language: "GIRL BOY TALK-TO." – SOV order.
- English Home Language: "I like pizza but I don't like cheese."
- SASL Home Language: "ME PIZZA LIKE BUT CHEESE DON'T LIKE." – SOV order.
- English Home Language: "Do you like pizza or hamburgers?"
- SASL Home Language: "YOU PIZZA LIKE OR HAMBURGERS?" – SOV order.
- English Home Language: "I like pizza and hamburger."
- SASL Home Language: "ME PIZZA HAMBURGER LIKE." – SOV order.
- English Home Language: "I like pizza because it is delicious."
- SASL Home Language: "ME PIZZA LIKE WHY? DELICIOUS." – SOV order.

In SASL HL, the sentence is glossed, that is, it is written in capital letters or block letters to indicate that the sentence is signed. Regarding formal assessments and examination, no pen and paper is used. Candidates use laptops with webcams and questions and answers are signed during the examinations. Examinations are done in a lab (SASL Lab) where each candidate has a cubicle or private space.

The following table shows an interesting brief comparison between English Home Language and SASL HL:

Candidates demonstrate the following five SASL HL parameters during the SASL HL assessments:

- **Handshape:** Each language has its own set of handshapes; some are shared by the different Sign Languages.
- **Location:** Location is the place of articulation. The marker indicates the space in which the sign takes place.
- **Orientation:** The direction in which the palm of the hand is facing. The

direction of the fingers is also included under orientation.

- **Movement:** Most signs imply a movement between two places of articulation. Sometimes the sign contains an additional internal movement of the fingers or wrists, which are considered secondary.
- **Non-manual features:** Sign Language conveys prosody through facial expression and upper-body posture. Head position, eyebrows, eye gaze, blinks and mouth positions all convey important linguistic information in Sign Language.



2017 SAAEA RESEARCH FORUM:

collaboration key to harmonisation



By Dr Celia Boooyse
and Sisanda Loni



The Research Forum, formed in 2011, is an annual gathering hosted by the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA) Secretariat for SADC member countries that are part of SAAEA. It serves as a vehicle to guide, inform and provide guidelines on examination administration to examining boards. The Forum focuses on deliberations to harmonise educational standards in the SADC region. It seeks to provide a robust and carefully researched understanding of what educational harmonisation means, globally, in Africa, and in the SADC region.

The primary goal of the Forum is to provide a framework for harmonisation of education in the region. The aim is to ensure that harmonisation is distinct

from homogenisation, as it is the Forum's belief that part of the region's strength stems from its diversity. While our education systems reflect this diversity, they need to allow for easy student mobility and comparable standards.

The 2017 Forum meeting focused on feedback on 2016-2017 tasks allocated to countries in 2016. The emphasis was on determining assessment standards towards mapping qualifications, to develop a conceptual framework on equivalence of qualifications in member countries.

The items discussed included the following:

- Compilation of curriculum and assessment standards and a qualification framework;
- Development of guidelines for determining standard equivalence;
- Determining equivalence of standards.

A data-collecting instrument to determine curriculum standards, by identifying exit-level outcomes at the respective exit points in the education system, was formulated and used by the individual member countries to collect the required information.

The objective of the instrument was, firstly, to collect background information on the education systems of each participating country. Secondly, the instrument guided the participating countries to identify measurable curriculum outcomes at exit grades/examination levels so that these could be mapped across the countries. The information involved intended exit-level outcomes/assessment standards at two exit points: at the end of the 9th year of schooling and at final exit at the end of the 12th year of schooling, for subjects such as English, Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Biology, a Commercial subject, Arts, Physical Education and Technology. The participants were requested to interpret the content and enter it into the instrument.

From the meeting discussions, it became clear that the investigation would need careful scrutiny of the curriculum and assessment standards,

as levels/grades in the member countries are not pitched on exactly the same year of schooling. For instance, Grade 12 in Zambia is located at a Level 2A on the Zambian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the South African Grade 12 is located on NQF Level 4 of the South African NQF. The member countries implement their localised/contextualised curricula; however, Lesotho and Botswana are moderated by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) for assessment. Lesotho and Botswana also have two-option syllabuses at Grade 12 in Mathematics, on core and extended levels. The maximum grade for core candidates is C, while for the extended it is A. Zambia has integrated curriculum standards for Grades 8 and 9, and a set of integrated standards for Grades 10, 11 and 12.

In view of the above work, it is critical to recognise that these activities are aligned to the SADC Qualification Framework (SADCQF). While the framework currently serves as a reference only, the aim is for its development as a framework that will have qualifications on it. Thus member states are encouraged to align their qualifications and quality assurance mechanisms with the SADCQF. The purpose of the SADCQF is to enable easier movement of learners and workers across the region and internationally. It therefore has a significant role in setting the regional standard for comparing qualifications obtained in the SADC.

The goal of harmonisation will not be achieved overnight, as evidenced by past efforts to harmonise the education systems in the SADC member countries. Even though the diverse education systems in the sub-region present an interesting challenge to both the concerned governments and education institutions, it is not immutable. Through continued collaborative efforts, political will and investment in research, the vision of SADCQF is attainable.



2018 Conference

By Dr Celia Booyse
and Sisanda Loni



Theme:
“Local context in
Global context:
encouraging
diversity in
assessment”

Umalusi to host 2018 SAAEA CONFERENCE

Under the auspices of the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA), the member countries, namely: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, are tasked with hosting an annual conference. Umalusi, representing the South African section of SAAEA, will be hosting the 11th SAAEA Conference, from 14–16 May 2018. The conference will be held in the jacaranda city of Pretoria in Gauteng. The Capital Menlyn Maine Hotel will host delegates from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) sub-region. Delegates will include education specialists, test developers and administrators, curriculum specialists, researchers and various stakeholders with an interest in the region's education systems.

SAAEA was established primarily to provide a platform for test developers and administrators, curriculum specialists and researchers to exchange good practices in conducting educational assessments within the SADC sub-region. The Association seeks to:

- Encourage and facilitate dialogue and debate among member states and institutions concerning educational assessment issues;
- Promote cooperation among educational assessment agencies within the SADC sub-region;
- Provide a forum where test developers, curriculum specialists and researchers can exchange ideas and good practices on matters related to educational assessment.

The focus of the 2018 conference will be on the following sub-themes:

- Beyond a technical approach to assessment;
- Sustainable assessment practices and standards;
- Innovative assessment: opportunities and challenges;
- Diversifying assessment: diverse learners and diverse assessment practices;
- Assessment and the development of critical thinking;

- The impact of stakeholding on effective assessment.

The 2018 call for papers will be distributed to stakeholders immediately after the 2017 conference, from 17–19 July, in Malawi. Stakeholders are invited to visit the Umalusi website for more details on the conference, from 20 July 2017.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- Prof Leketi Makalela: Umalusi Council member, Qualification Standards and Curriculum (QSC) chair, language expert and professor at Wits University.
- Prof Richard Tabulawa: Dean of Education, Acting VC at the University of Botswana, researcher of distinction and expert in qualitative studies, curriculum and assessment practices.
- Dr Jean Gamble: Umalusi Research Forum Chair.
- Prof Desmond Laubscher: CEO of Greenside Design Centre, College of Design, South Africa, a world-class design education institution founded in 1987, advisor for the Department of Art and Culture in South Africa, policy maker and expert in project-based assessment.

UMALUSI



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