Makoya

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UMALUSI

Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training

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From the
Editor's Pen

Lucky Ditaunyane

Welcome to the first issue of Makoya in 2020. Umalusi has once again delivered on its quality assurance of assessment mandate, as the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training in South Africa. On 3 January 2020, Umalusi announced its approval of all 2019 exit-point examinations, as administered by various assessment bodies: the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) and Benchmark Assessment Agency (BAA).

We are delighted to bring you stories that cover the work of the two quality assurance of assessment units, namely, Quality Assurance of Assessment: School Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Assessment: Post-School Qualifications.

On another matter of national importance, the country is currently under a nationwide lockdown because of COVID-19. This is an unprecedented moment in the history of our country.

I wish to reiterate the message of government: that it is crucial for all citizens to exercise extreme caution during this time of uncertainty and trepidation. In order to minimise the spread of the virus, we need to go back to the basics of sound hygienic practices such as washing our hands regularly with soap and water or hand sanitisers, coughing or sneezing into our elbows, and not to touch our faces until our hands are clean. Enjoy reading this issue of Makoya.

From the
CEO's Desk

Dr Mafu Rakometsi

I am delighted to write this introductory piece for our official newsletter, Makoya, which covers some of the work of Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training. One of Umalusi's national responsibilities is to quality assure all exit-point examinations in line with the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act No. 58 of 2001(as amended). For us to approve the release of examination results, we need to satisfy ourselves that the various assessment bodies have complied with all our quality standards as outlined in the relevant directives.

At the time of writing the entire world, including South Africa, is going through an unprecedented period of anxiety and uncertainty caused by the scourge of COVID-19. By now, COVID-19 has been classified as a pandemic and our President, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, announced a nationwide lockdown on 23 March 2020 to commence from midnight 26 March 2020. We need to put our differences aside, rally together behind our national leadership and perform our national duty of ensuring that COVID-19 does not decimate our nation during these truly perilous times.

In line with the call made by our President and other relevant structures of government, the management of Umalusi took the following decisions prior to the nationwide lockdown:

1. To conduct a risk assessment of the internal environment.
2. To implement a staff rotation plan from 23 March 2020 to relieve pressure on units and create more space between staff members, where applicable.
3. To allow vulnerable employees with chronic illnesses and pregnant women to stay at home until further notice.
4. To limit access to Umalusi Buildings 37 and 41 by only allowing delivery of essential services, such as certification paper, etc.
5. To set up an internal email address for staff to report incidents related to COVID-19: COVID_19@umalusi.org.za
6. To cancel all external events and non-essential internal meetings to reduce the level of exposure to staff.
7. To use innovative ways to hold meetings, such as teleconferencing/Skype/Zoom conferencing.
8. To initiate the procurement process for hand sanitisers, soap, gloves, masks, tissues and, where possible, temperature scanners.
9. To implement a comprehensive internal communication strategy to keep staff informed about developments.

The internal steering committee established by the executive management of Umalusi for the internal management of COVID-19 is meeting regularly to assess the situation as it evolves. In the meantime, we urge all our stakeholders and the entire nation to take heed of the advice given by government on how to combat COVID-19. Enjoy your reading!

'It was on the basis of a willingness to learn, unlearn and relearn that the workshop was a success.'

By Mafori Makgahlela

Training NSC moderators and verifiers: embracing change

An intensive workshop, held during the weekend of 26–28 September 2019, saw 120 moderators and verifiers undergoing training and reflecting on their practices, in centres in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

Background and introduction

Training and development should present a prime opportunity to expand the knowledge base of trainees or participants and improve performance in their daily operational obligations. Despite potential drawbacks, training and development provide both individuals and their institutions with benefits that make the time and cost worthwhile investments.

This article covers verification of marking and qualitative input reporting, since the importance of training and developing moderators/verifiers cannot be over-emphasised.

The Quality Assurance of Assessment: School Qualifications (QAA-SQ) Unit conducts verification of marking of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations twice annually for accredited public and private assessment bodies that offer the qualification. Verification of marking then provides a springboard for qualitative input reporting. The magnitude of the two processes eludes ignorance and appeals to diligence for the two processes, which culminate in standardisation and thus approval of the release of the mid-year, end-of-year and supplementary NSC examination results.

Risks associated with marking are managed and quelled before they manifest, because the integrity of verification of marking and the quality of the qualitative input determine the veracity of the marking process and candidates' performance. During the NSC examinations all assessment bodies work together with all stakeholders to allay and avert any possible system lapse. A system lapse during these periods is equivalent to the collapse of the education sector, an experience the QAA-SQ Unit would hate to imagine.

Each examination cycle comes with its own idiosyncratic nuances. As a result, the QAA-SQ Unit's verification of marking and qualitative input processes must be remodelled annually, in anticipation of possible challenges that may emerge with each cycle and the evolving nature of the education sector. While the verification of marking model cannot be fixated on past experiences or practices, or ignore potential future challenges, qualitative input reporting cannot be simply reporting on the same issues, cycle after cycle. Hence, with

Mr Makgahlela provides guidance to participants

Mr Phokwani presenting to participants

Participants attentively listening to a presentation by Ms Mary-Louise Madalane

Participants reflecting on their practices

each cycle approaching, the QAA-SQ Unit must pause and respond to the question posed by Steven R Covey in his publication, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People":

"Well, why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?"

The plan to capacitate and develop moderators and verifiers in effective reporting on the verification of marking, as well as qualitative input reporting, was such an act: that of pausing and sharpening the saw. When there is a gap between what one can do and what one should be able to do, training and reflection are necessary. Umalusi moderators and verifiers must be seen and understood as reflective practitioners and they, too, must acknowledge this about themselves, since this is the nature of their practice. Capacity-building and reflecting on past practices pertinent to any quality assurance processes are imperative if the credibility of the qualifications registered with Umalusi is what the QAA-SQ Unit seeks to realise and maintain.

Quality assurance of marking

The QAA-SQ Unit derives its mandate from the objectives of the establishment of Umalusi as a quality council, as contemplated in sections 24 to 27 of the National Qualifications Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008. The QAA-SQ Unit operationalises the framework to standardise the management of quality assurance of assessment across assessment bodies for qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) through 12 quality assurance processes.

Umalusi conducts quality assurance across three educational sectors: vocational education and training, offering the National Certificate Vocational NC(V) and the National Education (Report 190/191) (NATED) qualifications; adult basic education and training, offering the General Education Training Certificate (GETC); and the schooling sector, offering the NSC. However, the QAA-SQ Unit is responsible for schools' education and training only, to ensure the credibility of assessment in the sector. As a result, the training workshop was mainly focused on verification of marking of the NSC examinations and the qualitative input reporting of this qualification.

The verification of marking remains important in the trajectory of quality assurance processes because it marks the culmination, or termination, of the examination cycle. Accuracy of marking is key and it is founded on three elements:

• the appointment of appropriately skilled subject markers;

- the accurate use of the marking guidelines; and
- the quality of the verification of the marking process.

Verification of marking is conducted to determine if marking was fair, reliable and valid, considering the following criteria:
- training of marking officials;
- adherence to marking guidelines and tolerance range;
- quality and standard of marking;
- quality of internal moderation; and
- management of irregularities.

The QAA-SQ Unit ensures the success of the verification of marking through careful recruitment, appointment and training of external moderators and verifiers. Suitable external moderators and verifiers are deployed to the marking venues of all assessment bodies countrywide to conduct on-site verification of marking, using criteria and directives developed by Umalusi. In subjects with fewer enrolments, centralised verification of marking is conducted at a venue identified by the assessment bodies concerned.

A need to unlearn in order to relearn

It is true that people are born with an intense desire to learn, but somewhere along the line many lose the passion for learning. The pressure to excel in our work space, with its ever-pressing emphasis on performance, has the potential to rob professionals of the enjoyment of the process of learning. Whatever the reasons, once the basics have been covered many professionals stick with what they know and avoid situations or challenges where they may mess up or be forced to learn something new. They thus create a safe, secure and comfortable as well as confining world for themselves. Here, they do their best to mould the changes going on around them, in co-workers, events and the general work environment, to fit their current 'mental maps'. They may say they're open to change, but actually do their best to avoid it. For a while, that strategy can work fairly well. What it does not do is prepare them to adapt to a future that may well require an entirely new set of maps.

The QAA-SQ Unit fully subscribes to the notion of reflective practice, where moderators and verifiers need to know what they do not know and reflect on it; and also know what they know they can do best. The strength of knowledge of the self helps one to embrace failures and enables one to capture the new lessons, which then breeds new ways of thinking and doing.

Participants at the workshop were divided into two coastal clusters, Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal, and an inland cluster, in Gauteng. QAA-SQ staff, Mrs Mary-Louise Madalane, Mr Doctor Phokwani, Ms Nomaswazi Shabalala, Mr Mafori Makgahlela and Mr Nhluvuko Maluleke, made sure that the learning agility among participants became the name of the game. The team emphasised that the rules of the game were changing, and changing very fast. Verification of marking and qualitative input had become gamechangers in the space of quality assurance of assessments and all participants should adapt. They all had to let go of the old rules and praxis, and learn anew.

The QAA-SQ team reviewed the instruments for verification of marking and qualitative input, carefully mediated the revised instruments and ensured that all participants were on board. Attendees were also guided in how to consolidate the verification of marking and qualitative input reports.

However, through reflective exercises, participants were made to recognise failures and mistakes stemming from past years' practices and experiences. Acknowledging, and embracing, those mistakes and failures helped to unlock their learning agility, which then unlocked their change proficiency and prepared them to thrive and succeed in the fluid environment of quality assurance of assessments in successive years.

It was on the basis of this willingness to learn, unlearn and relearn that the training workshop was a success.

'Research evidence indicates that the standard of SBA at implementation level is not acceptable.'

By Dr Nkoloyakhe Mpanza

Quality implementation of SBA in AET sector 'of utmost importance'

Background

The General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET) qualification at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1 is designed to cater for adults and out-of-school youth who, for various reasons, dropped out of school and could not go back to acquire a qualification. This qualification aims to provide basic academic and vocational skills that will enable adults and out-of-school youth to further education, employment or to develop skills to become self-sustainable. The qualification therefore aims to give them a second chance.

Requirements of the qualification

The GETC: ABET qualification requires that adult students be assessed in two different ways. To acquire a qualification, students must complete internal assessment, known as site-based assessment (SBA), which contributes 50% towards the final mark per learning area. The other 50% comes from summative assessment (examinations). Umalusi conducts quality assurance of assessment processes for the GETC: ABET qualification, which includes evaluation and judgement of the quality and standard of the SBA tasks and their implementation, as well as of the examinations.

The assessment bodies (the Department of Higher Education and Training, Independent Examinations Board and Benchmark Assessment Agency) are responsible for the setting, internal moderation and implementation of SBA tasks, based on their assessment guidelines. Students' responses to the SBA tasks are packaged into portfolios of evidence, which are presented by the assessment bodies to Umalusi for external moderation.

The implementation and moderation of SBA should ensure that the credibility and reliability of the SBA mark is maintained. However, research evidence reveals that the standard of SBA at implementation and moderation levels are not always in line with the set standard (DoE 1999b, 2002c and 2003c, in Singh 2004).

Formative assessment

SBA is seen as an alternative way of assessing what students know and can do. SBA aims to test skills that cannot be assessed during examinations. It therefore aims to complement tests and examinations. It also helps students to develop a variety of skills through multiple opportunities under different conditions and situations. This is expected to influence the culture of teaching and learning, resulting in improved student performance. SBA is included in some of the high-stakes qualifications around the world (Williamson, 2016).

De Lange (1999), Black and William (1998) agree that formative and summative assessment are not mutually exclusive. Summative assessment, in the form of tests and examinations, can give evidence of how well teachers handled formative assessment during the course of the year (teaching and learning). Gipps (1994) believes that SBA has a potential to be a more valid form of assessment as it could cover a wide range of curricula outcomes. However, given the challenges in its implementation and moderation, it opens itself to lower levels of reliability and reduced validity and credibility of learner performance (Poliah, 2010; Reineke, Meyer and Nel, 2010).

Maxwell, Field and Clifford (2006, in Van Staden & Motsamai: 2017) believe that quality control measures are important to address the issues of validity, reliability, fairness and authenticity, as well as the quality of marking of SBA tasks.

Because of the equal weight of the SBA and examination marks, and the poor quality of SBA tasks developed by educators, the assessment bodies in South Africa are required to develop common SBA tasks. According to Singh (2004: 6), "Some teachers, from their experience, will be stricter than others, others will be more lenient, others may not have the necessary experience to know what an acceptable standard is and others may not even conduct the assessments but still provide some marks." The marking standards of teachers may also be too high or inflated (Poliah, 2010 and Maile, 2013).

Although the Regulations on the Assessment Process and Procedures for the Adult Education and Training, NQF level 1 (in terms of Adult Education and Training Act No. 52 of 2000) do not stipulate the number of SBA tasks, two out of the three assessment bodies set and implement five SBA tasks per learning area. The skills that are collectively assessed are, however, more important than the variation in the number of tasks.

The skills assessed differ from learning area to learning area. The SBA tasks may be in the following forms: assignments, investigations, projects, worksheets, demonstrations, oral presentations, journal entries, business plans, tests and observations. The nature of such tasks suits the purpose of formative assessment.

Challenges with the current practice

SBA tasks that the assessment bodies develop often consist of questions similar in nature and format to those set in the examination question papers. Skills that are supposed to be assessed formatively are often excluded. A quantitative study was conducted using datasets of the November 2018 examinations received from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), one of the assessment bodies assessing the GETC: ABET qualification. The aim of this study was to investigate whether the mean of SBA and that of examination scores in each of five learning areas were comparable. These learning areas were: Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises; Natural Sciences; Mathematical Literacy; Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences; and Economic and Management Sciences. This study found that there was a

significant difference between the mean of SBA scores and that of examination scores in each of the five sampled learning areas.

External moderation revealed that community learning centres (public) and adult education and training (AET) learning sites (private) often teach SBA tasks instead of teaching the content, as prescribed in the unit standards. During external moderation it became evident that in some cases students were given all the tasks at the same time, and a few days to submit their responses. This defeats the purpose of formative assessment. Teaching, learning and assessment cannot be divorced from each other. It takes proper planning to manage the three aspects so that one aspect is not over-emphasised at the expense of another.

Poor quality of moderation and a lack of, or poor quality, of feedback defeat the purpose of formative assessment in a teaching and learning environment. Moderation of SBA portfolios is often conducted for compliance purposes. This does not add to the improvement of teaching and learning. Moderation is conducted late in the year and there is very little or no chance for students to implement feedback received.

There is still much that needs to be done in building the capacity of lecturers and facilitators for assessment in the AET sector. If facilitators lack knowledge, and teaching and assessment methodology, they will not be able to successfully conduct formative assessment, despite good assessment tasks.

Research evidence indicates that the standard of SBA at implementation level is not acceptable (DoE 1999b, 2002c and 2003c, in Singh 2004). In this regard, Singh (2004: 4) states that, "the raw SBA marks of learners do not give a true reflection of the learners' achievements in terms of the national norms and must be statistically adjusted". Umalusi (2012: 9), upon the evaluation of the internal assessment and examination system, found that:

- the consistent unreliability of the SBA mark and a gap between SBA mark and the examination mark, bring the standard of the SBA mark into question; and
- poor policy guidance in respect of the purpose and implementation of SBA results in inflated SBA marks.

Way forward

SBA tasks should be carefully developed to assess skills that cannot be assessed during examinations. Skills like research (from data collection analysis and findings), practical skills, observations, demonstrations, investigation, reading and speaking, etc. should be emphasised in SBA tasks.

The timing of moderation is vital. Moderation should be conducted early enough to allow time for the implementation of feedback by lecturers/facilitators and students. Feedback should not be provided for compliance purposes only. Quality feedback should deal with three aspects: good practice, challenges and ways of dealing with challenges.

It is of utmost importance to build the capacity of the personnel who implement SBA in the classroom or learning environment. When lecturers/facilitators are in the dark, they will not be able to support students and the purpose of teaching and learning would be defeated.

Conclusion

The effective implementation of SBA is critical, as improper implementation of SBA has the potential to affect the credibility of the SBA mark. It is the responsibility of all assessment bodies to ensure that SBA tasks are developed in line with the purpose of formative assessment; and that the implementation process is continuously monitored.

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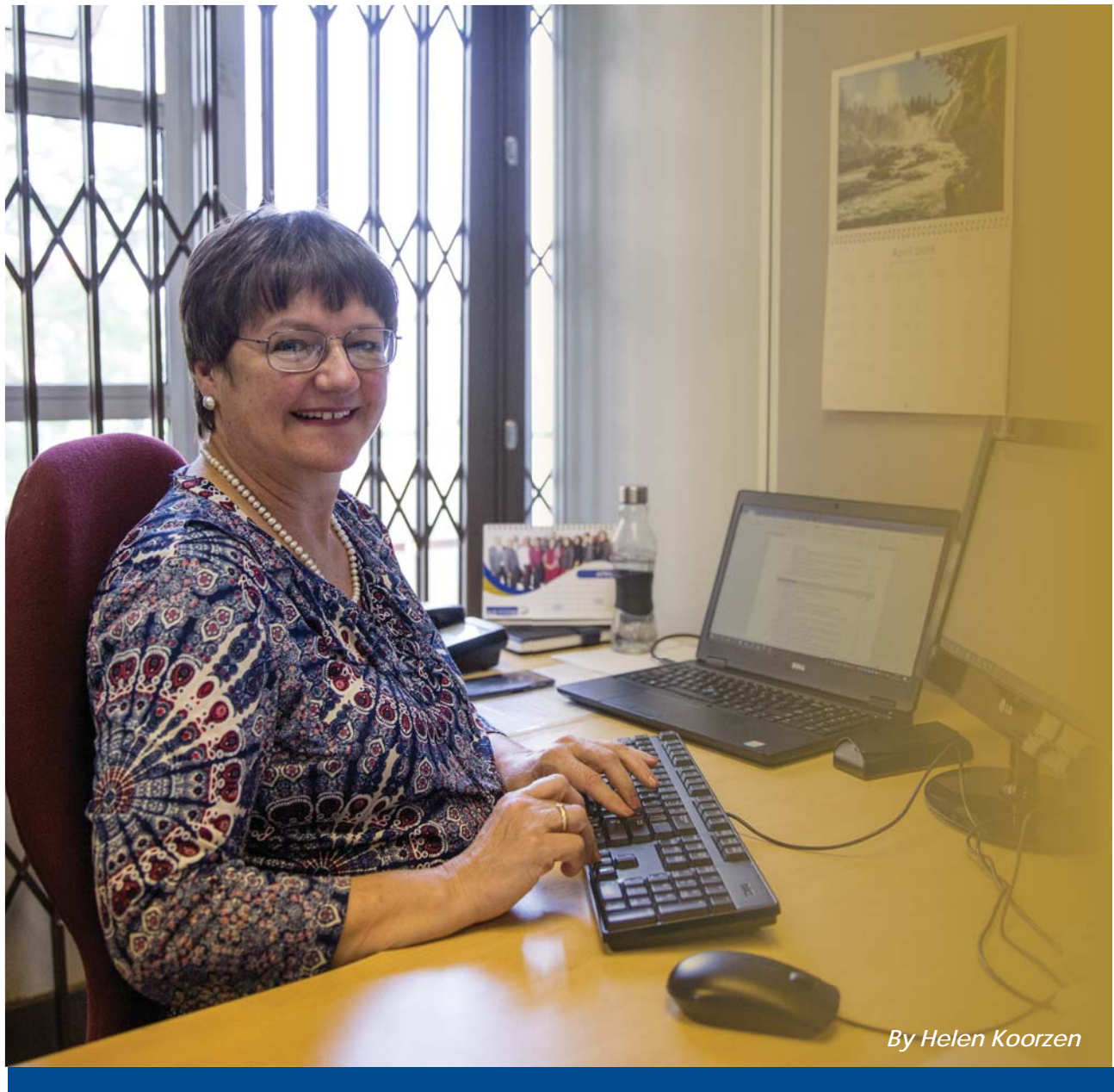
By Helen Koorzen

Marking verification validates NC(V) results

The credibility of the results obtained by candidates in an examination is subject to the standard of marking. During marking the assessment body verifies the standard of marking by testing for accuracy and consistency. Umalusi monitors the marking through external verification to ensure that it is conducted according to agreed and established practices and standards, and that it is consistent, fair and accurate.

The purpose of verifying marking is to:

- determine whether the approved marking guidelines are adhered to and applied consistently;
- determine that mark allocation and calculations are accurate and consistent;
- ascertain that effective internal moderation is conducted during marking;
- identify possible irregularities; and
- confirm that marking is fair, reliable and valid.

When Umalusi's external moderators verify marking, certain criteria are used to report on:

- the availability of all expected answer scripts;
- changes to the marking guideline during the marking guideline discussion meeting and/or during the marking;
- training of the marking personnel;
- the marking procedure;
- adherence to the marking guideline;
- standard of marking and internal moderation;
- administration of marks; and
- irregularities.

Level 2 and 3

In terms of the National Certificate (Vocational), the answer scripts of level 2 and 3 question papers are marked internally at the colleges/campuses where the examinations are conducted. The colleges manage the marking and internal moderation of marking. Marking is done during office hours and under controlled conditions. College management monitors the flow of scripts and the marks are converted and captured at college level.

Umalusi verifies the marking using a sample of level 2 and 3 question papers at a national marking centre. Selected colleges/campuses are requested to submit the marked scripts to the identified marking centre. External moderators from Umalusi are tasked to verify the marking of the evidence of the selected colleges/campuses. The external moderators draft reports according to set criteria and the findings are presented on a standardised template.

Level 4

The marking of level 4 scripts is conducted at national and provincial marking centres. For subjects with high enrolments, marking is done in almost every province. Subjects with low enrolments are marked at, usually, two marking centres. The external moderators either attend a marking guideline discussion meeting or verify the marking, or do both, for all level 4 question papers being moderated. Umalusi aims to include most marking centres in the verification process.

External moderators follow a specific process for the verification of marking. On arrival at the marking centre, they interview the chief marker for information on the success and progress of marking. They determine which scripts have been marked and select a sample that is representative of various provinces and centres. Re-marking the whole or, in the case of identified challenges, part of a script, provides the necessary information for the external moderator to compile a report. All such reports on sampled question papers are sent to Umalusi and a consolidated report is drafted, to reflect, overall, the moderators' findings.

Challenges are sometimes experienced at the marking centres. These may include a lack of competent marking personnel, poor adherence to a marking guideline, poor internal moderation and/or failure to attend marking guideline discussion meetings by marking personnel.

Verification of marking by Umalusi aims to assure that the results of students in all NC(V) subjects are a true reflection of their competency.

'Learning procedures and proofs without a good understanding of why they are important will leave learners ill-equipped to use their knowledge later in life.'

By William Chauke

Quality Assurance of Mathematics

Background

Umalusi moderates the National Senior Certificate (NSC) question papers developed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI). To perform this function, Umalusi recruits subject specialists with extensive experience in the development of question papers at various levels. Prior to appointment, each external moderator is subjected to a rigorous screening process that includes a competency test. Additionally, Umalusi annually takes moderators through an induction process for capacity building.

Umalusi moderators are thus required to be well acquainted with the curriculum requirements of the subject that they are appointed to moderate. Moderation is extended to the monitoring and verification of school-based assessment (SBA), standardisation and approval of marking guidelines and verification of marking.

Why Mathematics?

The writing of this article was prompted by complaints, or concerns, received from learners, teachers and tutors as well as media reports regarding Mathematics question papers written at the end-of-year examinations. Learners would raise an alarm thinking that others had had an unfair advantage, having seen and revised a question paper before it was officially handed out. Some teachers would be worried about the positioning of questions that required higher-level thinking skills early in a question paper on which many learners might have wasted much time and were then unable to complete the question paper. Another concern related to multi-level questions being allocated fewer marks. Tutors would also comment on sub-topics that were not assessed in question papers.

Mathematics is a subject that receives much attention during the writing of November examinations, from media, candidates, teachers and private tutors. In each examination cycle, the media asks candidates and teachers how each question paper was received. The candidates remark on the length of the question paper, their confidence about passing the subject and marks that they might obtain, as well as how question papers compare with those of previous years. On the other hand, teachers and tutors scrutinise the question papers to determine the fairness of content coverage and point to questions that could challenge learners.

In 2014 and 2016, Mathematics was in the news because of alleged question paper leakages and/or suspected mass copying. More recently, a fake circular/letter was distributed that indicated that a Mathematics question paper had been leaked (https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/leaked-maths-exam-paper-letter-a-hoax-17697091 30 Oct 2018).

Comments post-marking

At the DBE marking guideline standardisation meetings, internal moderators and chief markers from the provinces comment on the question papers, based on the scripts that they have marked and input from teachers in their provinces. On completion of marking, the internal moderators write reports, per question paper, based on the scripts that they have marked, highlighting questions that challenged candidates and presenting possible reasons for poor performance. These reports, to some extent, differ from those prepared prior to marking, which are based mainly on the professional judgement of the chief marker and internal moderators. Consequently, post-marking reports include direct and indirect learner input.

During on-site verification of marking, Umalusi moderators note inconsistent use or application of the marking guidelines. This is reported to the internal moderators/chief markers who, in turn, ensure that such markers are brought up to speed. Where the variance is outside the tolerance range, markers are retrained and/or the scripts containing the affected questions are re-marked. For this reason, verification is conducted as early as possible in the writing process to ensure all candidates are marked fairly. The reports of the external moderators include the quality of marking, the effectiveness of the internal moderation and also identify questions that were either well-received or posed serious challenges. The data collected throughout this process influences the following moderation cycle.

Moderation of question papers and guarantees

According to external moderators' reports, all Mathematics question papers covered the content and cognitive demands as prescribed by policy. This ensured that there was sufficient diversity to cater for a variety

of learner abilities. Moderation also considers whether the language used is accessible to most candidates, with particular reference to candidates whose language of learning is not their home language.

Use of previous years' question papers

The previous years' question papers are readily accessible to everyone, being downloadable from the DBE website. These can, therefore, be used by learners as resources, in addition to textbooks, when preparing for the examination. However, some teachers use these question papers to develop tests for SBA, so although the questions are moderated and approved, one cannot guarantee a fair spread of cognitive levels in this context. Further, the use of the whole question paper denies learners exposure to other types of questions. Teachers should know that the chances of having a repeat of the questions are slim; as a result, they should be creative and seek out new questions. In fact, one of the specific aims highlighted in the Mathematics Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) requires that teachers develop problem-solving and cognitive skills in learners. Hence,

> '[T]eaching should not be limited to "how" but should rather feature the "when" and "why" of problem types. Learning procedures and proofs without a good understanding of why they are important will leave learners ill-equipped to use their knowledge later in life.'

The truth about time spent on tasks

The CAPS indicates that a bigger share of notional time is allocated to the learning and teaching of languages and Mathematics (Mathematical Literacy and Technical Mathematics in Grades 10–12) from Grade 1 to Grade 12; whereas in Grades 1–2, Mathematics is allocated seven out of 23 hours; in Grade 3 the allocation is seven out of 25 hours; in Grades 4–6 the allocation is six out of 27.5 hours; and in Grades 7–12, the allocation is 4.5 of 27.5 hours per five-day week. In addition to the official time allocation, extra lessons, particularly in Grades 9–12, are offered to deal with shortcomings observed in class. In some cases, parents seek private tutors to ensure that their children are afforded more opportunities to succeed at the end of the year.

The time allocated to teaching and learning Mathematics at various levels should be sufficient if both the teachers and learners perform their roles effectively. For teachers, it should be about how best to teach learners to solve problems, and guiding the learners in making conjectures and developing reasons and explanations. For learners, it is about improving their problem-solving skills and asking questions rather than expecting teachers to ask them. Learners asking questions provide teachers with opportunities to 'read' their thinking, which might be helpful when planning subsequent lessons.

Conclusion

Questions that are set differently sometimes unsettle both learners and teachers who have not had an opportunity to solve similar problems. Additionally, subjecting learners and teachers to interviews after writing an examination risks compounding the stressful experience and could impact performance in the remaining examination papers.

'Changes led to improved quality assurance and more in-depth research and reporting. [In 2004 a] 22-page [QAA] report included all the examination cycles of 2004 ...the November 2019 QAA TVET report, alone, was around 300 pages.'

by Marisa du Toit

Farewell, from Marisa du Toit

At the beginning of August 2003, I entered the then new offices of Umalusi at 37 General van Ryneveld Street, Persequor Technopark, to accept a one-year contract position. On 31 March 2020 I retired and it was On 31 March 2020 I retired and it was my last day of my last day of employment at Umalusi, still in the same building.

Umalusi and its role in the general and further education and training landscape in South Africa have changed substantially since its inception. In reflecting on the past 16 years of my career, I am often astounded at all the changes, opportunities and developments. The current Umalusi is totally different from the Umalusi of 2003. Processes changed, systems changed, roles and responsibilities changed. Changes led to improved quality assurance and more in-depth research and reporting. Many people came and many left.

Back in 2003 Umalusi was a young organisation, a band education training quality assurer (ETQA) with an expanded mandate when compared to that of its predecessor, the South African Certification Council (SAFCERT). The fulltime staff complement was around 27. Internal communication was easy, due to the organisational structure and limited number of staff. We had desktop computers, thus our offices, in a certain sense, did not follow us home. What

did follow us home, however, were documents to read. The then Chief Executive Officer, Dr Peliwe Lolwana, made the importance of engagement with these documents very clear. Among these were position papers by Professor Michael Young, research reports by Matseleng Alais and framework documents, among others.

Umalusi's involvement in the quality assurance of assessment of vocational education and training in 2003 entailed question paper moderation, moderation of marking, monitoring of the conduct of examinations and standardisation of National Education (Report 190/191) (NATED) Business and Engineering Studies results. In addition, a snapshot survey was done on internal assessment and practical examinations to inform future planning for quality assurance of assessment. Umalusi appointed external moderators for eight N3/ National Senior Certificate subjects in 2002 and another six in 2004. The unit moderated a total of 13 vocational education question papers, monitored 51 examination and 11 marking centres and moderated the marking of 13 subjects in 2004. I was not involved in adult education and training (AET) in those days and, therefore, unfortunately do not have information at hand of the AET sector back then. In comparison, in 2019 there were 130 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) external moderators who moderated a total of

298 National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) and 120 NATED Report 190/191 Engineering Studies question papers, moderated internal continuous assessment (ICASS) at 150 sites and ICASS portfolios of 75 NC(V) subjects, approved marking guidelines for 81 question papers, verified the marking of 150 question papers, moderated integrated summative assessment tasks (ISAT) of 41 subjects and moderated the conduct of ISAT of 44 subjects.

In terms of the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET), Umalusi in 2019 moderated a total of 86 question papers, 63 site-based assessment tasks and the portfolios of 70 learning areas, and quality assured the marking of 162 learning areas. As is evident, the volume of work changed dramatically; but so, also, did the depth of quality assurance processes.

In 2003, standardisation meetings were arranged and took place at the Department of Education (Van der Stel Building) and meetings to approve the release of results did not exist. The first printed quality assurance of assessment (QAA) report on vocational education and training, to Minister Pandor, was published in 2004. The foreword of this report was signed on 22 December 2004 by Mr John Pampallis, the chairperson of Council. This 22-page report included all the examination cycles of 2004. In comparison, the November 2019 QAA TVET report, alone, was around 300 pages. Also, due to the nature of the report, the dates for approval for the release of results and other matters, it is no longer possible to finalise the report before the festive season in December.

In those early days at Umalusi all staff had tea in the staffroom and shared information around Umalusi's work, as well as that of a more personal nature. Across the road was Puddle Ducks, a coffee shop at which we (the assistant managers and managers) had coffee on a regular basis. Yes, it is hard to believe that we had time for coffee breaks and socialisation during work time. Other memories around social activities include a pancake day, soup served during winter (our best recipes), 'secret pals', a meal coupled with a protocol and etiquette lecture, and gifts shared at the end-of-year functions.

The support, growth and development opportunities offered to me were many. Some of the highlights were a study tour to Britain organised by the British Council, an assessment course in Cambridge, attendance at several regional conferences and a substantial number of workshops, seminars, round-table discussions and courses. At Umalusi there was never a dull moment, no two days were the same, and lifelong learning were not just buzzwords but a reality. I was indeed blessed far beyond what I deserved.

Over the years many people at Umalusi, the Department of Education, quality councils and our contract workers assisted and contributed to my development and the work that I was responsible for in TVET and, later, also AET. It is impossible to mention names and it is unfair to single out certain people. I want to thank each and every member of Umalusi's Council, executive and senior management, the staff of the different units, the different branches and provincial and regional offices of the Department of Education (now Higher Education and Training), college staff and our contract workers with whom I engaged over the years, for their cooperation, hard work and assistance in so many ways.

Umalusi, I greet you and salute you. Thank you for all the opportunities to learn and to serve. It was indeed a privilege to work for the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training for 16-and-a-half years.

Dr Mafu Rakometsi,
CEO of Umalusi

Umalusi CEO attends outreach seminar for rural KZN learners

The CEO of Umalusi, Dr Mafu Rakometsi, attended a community education outreach programme at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), on Saturday, 22 March 2020, at the invitation of the Greenhills Seventh-day Adventist Church and the King Cetshwayo District Municipality.

The event was held at Ntambanana Village, Upper Nseleni (Mthonjaneni Local Municipality), in the King Cetshwayo District Municipality, which is headquartered at Richards Bay. In attendance were the district municipality's Deputy Mayor, His Worship Councillor Bhekani Phungula, and the Municipal Manager,

Learners from Dumanikahle and Prince Dumezweni High Schools

Mrs Mbali Ndlovu, as well as a local doctor, Dr Ncedile Zondo, the KZN Department of Education's Mrs Nzama and Pastors Sabelo Ndumo and Mthunzi Khonjelwayo, both of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Some 800 Grade 11 and 12 learners from Dumanikahle and Prince Dumezweni high schools attended the seminar, which television personality Lemogang Tsipa presided over.

Councillor Phungula, Dr Zondo and Mrs Nzama motivated students on topics within the theme, "inspiring students and transforming tomorrow". Pastor Khonjelwayo dealt with the topic, "Be kind to your mind". Dr Rakometsi addressed the learners on why people failed to attain their goals. His presentation also included career guidance in relation to the Umalusi sub-framework of qualifications. The learners were spell-bound and benefited from the presentations. It was heart-warming to see so many learners paying attention to the speeches and displaying the kind of discipline that is needed in our schools. With this type of self-discipline and willpower, it will be easy for learners to attain great heights in education. They appreciated interacting with prominent people from their community and Umalusi, the body that will quality assure their Grade 12 examinations.

The initiative of the King Cetshwayo District Municipality, the church and Umalusi will go a long way to assist students to stay focused and motivated and to work hard to attain their educational aspirations.

Dr Rakometsi on the right with Councillor Phungula Deputy Mayor of King Cetshwayo District Municipality

Talk to us

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