The marking process of the National Senior Certificate: exploring perceptions of quality

by

Patricia Sybil van Wyk
(JPTD; SPTD; ACE; BEd Hons; PGDE)

Dissertation submitted to fulfil the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

in the discipline

Philosophy and Policy Studies in Education

School of Education Studies

Faculty of Education

at the

University of the Free State

Bloemfontein

Supervisor: Dr Kevin LG Teise

Co-supervisor: Dr Adré le Roux

July 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, submitted in fulfilment of the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS (MEd)

is entirely my own work, except where reference to other sources has been indicated, which I did under the guidance of my supervisors.

I further certify that this dissertation has not previously been presented for a degree to this or any other faculty/university.

I hereby cede copyright to the University of the Free State.

……

Patricia Sybil van Wyk
Bloemfontein
July 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory and honour to God Almighty for affording me the ability to complete this degree.

Though my name appears on the cover of this dissertation, I owe my gratitude to each and every one who made a contribution:

- My supervisor, Dr Kevin Teise, thank you for your insightful comments and constructive criticism at different stages of my research. Without your guidance I never would have completed this dissertation.
- My co-supervisor, Dr Adré le Roux, thank you for believing in me when, at times, I doubted myself. I am grateful to you for enforcing strict standards regarding the details of my work and for carefully reading and commenting on countless revisions.
- Dr Lynette Jacobs, in your own special way, you have always been there to listen and give advice, which is what pulled me through when I was on the verge of giving up. I am deeply grateful to you for your humane contribution to my academic success.
- I am also indebted to the Northern Cape Education Department for granting me approval to carry out this research.
- To each and every individual with whom I interacted during the course of my research, including the language practitioner, Mrs E Viljoen-Massyn, for her scrupulous editing of my work. I am thankful to each of you.
- I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to my parents who, by God's grace, are still alive to share this achievement with me.

I dedicate this dissertation to my children and grandchildren as an inspiration to never give up on your dreams because 'effort and determination spell prosperity'. I have neglected you when I was buried in my books, but I thank you for understanding and keeping up with me during difficult times. You were a constant source of love and concern. All of you have given me support and strength, each in his/her own different way. I love you all.

May the Almighty God richly bless all of you.

ABSTRACT

Examinations play an important role in the progress and success of learners in schools around the world, as well as in South Africa. The South African public in general and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in particular place enormous emphasis not only on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination, but also on the subsequent final results of this examination.

Quality is a significant guiding principle of South African education. By implication, every aspect of the NSC examination should be of high quality. Quality during the NSC examination, and particularly during the marking process, is therefore of the utmost importance because this examination not only makes up 75% of a Grade 12 learner's promotion mark but, being an exit examination, it also serves as a door to the workplace or tertiary education. The NSC examination can therefore be considered as a 'high-stakes' examination because it is the yardstick by which the South African education system is measured with regard to quality and effectiveness.

However, despite the directives in the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examinations* (DBE 2014) and the involvement of the national regulatory body (Umalusi) in ensuring the quality of the entire examination process, marking during the NSC examination appears to be clouded in controversy and its credibility casted in doubt.

This study explored the perceptions on the quality of the NSC marking in the Northern Cape Province. The aim was achieved by means of a critical policy analysis of particular South African education policies and interviews with various respondents. All this was done and informed by pragmatism as a research paradigm. The findings suggest that respondents perceived the marking quality of the NSC examination in the Northern Cape not to be at an acceptable level due to various factors. Based on the findings, certain recommendations are made to improve the quality of marking in the Northern Cape.

Keywords: South African Education Examinations; Quality; NSC Marking; Northern Cape.

OPSOMMING

Eksamen speel ’n belangrike rol in die vordering en sukses van leerders op skool regoor die wêreld, sowel as in Suid-Afrika. Die Suid-Afrikaanse publiek in die algemeen, en spesifiek die Departement van Basiese Onderwys, plaas nie net uitsonderlike klem op die Nasionale Senior Sertifikaat- (NSS) eksamen nie, maar ook op die daaropvolgende uitslae.

Gehalte is ’n beduidende riglyn in Suid-Afrikaanse onderwys. Daarom behoort elke aspek van die NSS-eksamen van hoë gehalte te wees. Groot klem word dus ook op die nasienproses van die NSS-eksamen geplaas. Gehalte gedurende die NSS-eksamen en spesifiek tydens die nasienproses is van die uiterste belang aangesien die eksamen 75% van die graad 12-leerder se promosiepunt uitmaak. Verder is die NSS-eksamen ook ’n uittree-eksamen, wat beteken dat dit toegang tot die beroepswêreld of tersiêre onderwys verleen. Daar is dus baie op die spel in die NSS-eksamen, want hierdie eksamen is die maatstaaf waarvolgens die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysstelsel gemeet word ten opsigte van gehalte en doeltreffendheid.

Nieteenstaande die riglyne in die *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examinations* (DBO 2014) en die betrokkenheid van die nasionale reguleringsliggaam (Umalusi) om die gehalte in die eksamenproses te verseker, blyk dit dat die nasienproses van die NSS-eksamen in omstredenheid gewikkel is, wat ’n vraagteken agter die geloofwaardigheid van die eksamen plaas.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die persepsies rakende die gehalte van die NSS-nasienproses in die Noord-Kaap Provinsie. Hierdie oogmerk is bereik deur middel van ’n kritiese beleidsanalise van spesifieke Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysbeleidstukke, asook onderhoude met verskeie respondente. Die analise en onderhoude het binne die raamwerk van pragmatisme as die navorsingsparadigma plaasgevind. Volgens die bevindings is die respondente van mening dat die gehalte van die NSS-nasienproses in die Noord-Kaap weens verskeie faktore nie op die vereiste vlak van gehalte is nie.

Op grond van die bevindings word sekere aanbevelings gemaak ten einde die gehalte van die NSS-nasienproses in die Noord-Kaap te verbeter.

Sleutelwoorde: Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwys; Eksamens; Kwaliteit; NSS Merk; Noord-Kaap.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 : ORIENTATION 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION 1
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SECONDARY QUESTIONS 2
1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES 5
1.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM 5
1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS 6
1.5.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 7
1.5.2 RESEARCH METHODS 8
1.5.2.1 Qualitative data generation 8
1.5.2.2 Literature study 9
1.5.2.3 Critical policy analysis 10
1.5.2.4 Semi-structured interviews 10
1.5.2.5 Participant selection 12
1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 13
1.7 DEMARCATION 15
1.7.1 SCIENTIFIC DEMARCATION 15
1.7.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DEMARCATION 15
1.8 RESEARCH OUTLINE 17
1.9 SUMMARY 18

CHAPTER 2 : INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE QUALITY OF MARKING 19
2.1 INTRODUCTION 19
2.2 ASSESSMENT IN HONG KONG 20
2.2.1 EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION OF THE HKDSE 21
2.2.2 THE MARKING PROCESS 22
2.2.3 CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT 23
2.2.4 METHOD OF MARKING 24
2.2.5 PREPARING TO MARK 24
2.2.5.1 Marker qualification 25
2.2.5.2 Marker training 25
2.2.5.3 Monitoring of marks 27

a) Double-marking ... *27*
b) Check-marking ... *27*
2.2.6 QUALITY OF MARKING ... *28*
2.3 ASSESSMENT IN ENGLAND ... 28
2.3.1 EXAMINATION BOARDS AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES ... *29*
2.3.2 MARKING IN ENGLAND ... *30*
2.3.3 RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF MARKERS ... *30*
2.3.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARKING TEAMS ... *32*
2.3.5 TRAINING OF MARKERS ... *33*
2.3.6 AUTHORISATION TO MARK ... *34*
2.3.7 LIVE MARKING ... *34*
2.3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE DURING THE MARKING PROCESS ... *35*
2.3.9 CHECKING OF SCRIPTS DURING OSM ... *35*
2.3.9.1 Seed scripts or items ... 35
2.3.9.2 Double-marking ... 36
2.3.9.3 Spot-checking or back-reading ... 36
2.3.10 CHECKING OF TRADITIONALLY MARKED SCRIPTS ... *36*
2.3.10.1 Sampling of scripts ... 36
2.3.10.2 Marking review ... 37
2.3.11 POST-MARKING CHECKS ... *38*
2.3.11.1 Marking data analysis ... 38
2.3.11.2 Clerical checks ... 39
2.4 QUALITY IN MARKING ... 39
2.5 SUMMARY ... 40

CHAPTER 3 : POLICY IMPERATIVES FOR QUALITY MARKING IN SOUTH AFRICA ... 42

3.1 INTRODUCTION ... 42
3.2 CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS ... 42
3.2.1 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS ... *43*
3.2.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS ... *44*
3.2.2.1 Appointment of markers ... 45
3.2.2.2 Marker training ... 48
3.2.2.3 Verification and declaration ... 49

3.2.2.4 Selection panel and marking centres 49
3.2.2.5 Mark sheets and script control..... 50
3.2.2.6 Marking procedures..... 52
3.2.2.7 Re-marking of examination answer scripts..... 55
3.2.2.8 Irregularities..... 55
3.2.2.9 Security and confidentiality..... 59
3.3 INTERTEXUALITY 59
3.4 SILENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE POLICY 60
3.4.1 SILENCES 60
3.4.2 CONTRADICTIONS..... 61
3.5 QUALITY IN MARKING..... 63
3.6 SUMMARY 63

CHAPTER 4 : NSC MARKING IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE..... 65
4.1 INTRODUCTION..... 65
4.2 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EXIT-LEVEL EXAMINATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA..... 65
4.2.1 THE JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD (1918–1992) 65
4.2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN CERTIFICATION COUNCIL (1992–2001)..... 66
4.2.3 UMALUSI (2001 TO PRESENT)..... 67
4.2.4 MATRIC EXAMINATION IN PRESENT-DAY SOUTH AFRICA..... 67
4.3 THE NSC MARKING PROCESS IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE 68
4.3.1 APPOINTMENT OF MARKERS 68
4.3.1.1 Performance reports and competency tests 70
4.3.1.2 Language competency 71
4.3.1.3 Subject-specified qualifications 73
4.3.2 APPOINTMENT OF CENTRE MANAGERS..... 74
4.3.3 APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS 75
4.3.4 NATIONAL MARKING GUIDELINE DISCUSSIONS 76
4.3.5 PREPARING TO MARK 77
4.3.5.1 Marker and administrative training 78
4.3.5.2 Allocation of questions 79
4.4 ACTUAL MARKING 80

4.4.1 MODERATION OF SCRIPTS AND THE ROLE OF MARKING OFFICIALS 80

4.4.2 MONITORING AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKING 81

4.5 POST-MARKING CHALLENGES 82

4.6 SUMMARY 85

CHAPTER 5 : ROLE PLAYERS' EXPERIENCE OF NSC MARKING 86

5.1 INTRODUCTION 86

5.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 86

5.2.1 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH 86

5.2.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS 87

5.2.3 DATA-GENERATION STRATEGY 88

5.2.4 ISSUES OF INTEGRITY 88

5.2.4.1 Credibility 89

5.2.4.2 Transferability 89

5.2.4.3 Dependability 90

5.2.4.4 Confirmability 90

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION 91

5.4 CONDUCTING THE STUDY 92

5.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS 92

5.4.2 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS 92

5.5 THE REALITIES AND EXPERIENCES OF ROLE-PLAYERS 93

5.5.1 TEACHING AND MARKING EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS 93

5.5.2 INVOLVEMENT AND DUTIES OF MARKING OFFICIALS 93

5.5.3 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS 95

5.5.4 APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS 98

5.5.5 FAIRNESS AND CONSISTENCY OF CRITERIA 99

5.5.6 QUALITY AND COMPETENCE OF MARKERS 102

5.5.7 COMPETENCY OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS 103

5.5.8 NEED FOR STRICTER APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS 104

5.6 QUALITY OF THE MARKING 105

5.6.1 RELEVANCE OF THE COMPETENCY TEST 105

5.6.2 IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCY AND SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE IN QUALITY MARKING 105

5.6.3 THE NOTION OF QUALITY MARKING 106

5.6.4 VIOLATION OF MARKING ETHICS 108

5.6.5 IMPORTANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS 108

5.6.6 QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES DURING MARKING 109

5.6.7 QUALITY CONTROL DURING ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKING OF SCRIPTS 110

5.6.8 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF MARKING 111

5.6.9 CONFIDENCE IN THE QUALITY OF MARKING..... 112

5.6.10 QUALITY OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT 113

5.6.11 REASONS FOR HUGE MARK DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE INITIAL AND RE-MARKED SCRIPTS 113

5.6.12 FINANCIAL GAIN AND QUALITY MARKING 114

5.7 DISCUSSION 115

5.7.1 TEACHING AND MARKING EXPERIENCE 115

5.7.2 INVOLVEMENT AND DUTIES OF INTERVIEWEES..... 116

5.7.3 APPOINTMENT PROCESSES AND CRITERIA..... 116

5.7.4 QUALITY OF THE MARKING..... 119

5.8 CONCLUSION 121

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION..... 123

6.1 INTRODUCTION..... 123

6.2 GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF MARKING 124

6.3 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESSES AND CRITERIA 125

6.3.1 GENERAL CRITERIA 125

6.3.2 LANGUAGE COMPETENCY AS A CRITERION 127

6.3.3 INFLUENCE OF TEACHER UNIONS DURING MARKER SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT 128

6.3.4 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS AND CENTRE MANAGERS..... 129

6.3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS..... 130

6.4 MARKING PROCEDURES 132

6.4.1 TRAINING OF MARKERS 132

6.4.2 LIVE MARKING 132

6.4.3 MONITORING OF MARKING..... 133

6.4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS..... 134

6.5 QUALITY MARKING 134
6.5.1 INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL VIEWS ON QUALITY MARKING 134
6.5.2 QUALITY CONTROL PROCEDURES 136
6.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS 138
6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 140
6.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY 141
6.8 PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER STUDIES 142
6.9 CONCLUSION 142

BIBLIOGRAPHY 144

APPENDICES: 154

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTERS- NCDOE 154
APPENDIX B: ETHICS CLEARANCE 157
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT 158
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 160
APPENDIX F: APPROVED EDITING 168

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Research methods 9
Figure 2: Map of the nine provinces of South Africa 16
Figure 3: Map of the five districts in the Northern Cape 17

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant selection 13

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Examinations play an important role in the progress and success of learners in schools around the world, as well as in South African schools (Loock 2009:1-4). More so, the quality of marking is regarded as an equally important component of the marking process. Coetzee and Johl (2009:32) claim that the quality of marking is considered valuable because:

> *it is of no use if the setting and moderation of question papers are in order and of high quality but incompetent markers mark the scripts of learners, because the validity of the marking process may be jeopardised when, amongst others, markers who do not meet the minimum requirements are appointed as markers.*

Hence, prominence is placed on especially the Grade 12 examination and the subsequent marking of learners' examination scripts. The South African public in general, and the Department of Basic Education[1] (DBE) in particular, place enormous emphasis not only on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination, commonly known as the matric examination, but also on the subsequent final matric results. Quality is a significant guiding principle of South African education (DoE 1995:Chapter 4, Section 9). To this effect, quality education is linked to teaching and learning, the capacity and commitment of the teacher, ownership of the school by the community that it serves, the appropriateness of the curriculum and the way in which standards are set and assessed, as well as the efficiency and productivity of the system (DoE 1995:Chapter 4, Sections 9; 4; 5; 23 and Chapter 13, Section 19). By implication, every

1 The original name, Department of Education (DoE), was changed and since 2009 has been replaced with the Department of Basic Education (DBE). All official documentation before 2009 are referenced as DoE and thereafter as DBE.

aspect of South African education should be of high quality, including the examination process.

One way of ensuring the quality of the examination process is through an effective, accurate and high-quality marking process. In the South African context, the marking process is informed by the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examinations* (DBE 2014) (hereafter referred to as the *NSC Regulations*). As a policy, this document articulates the guidelines that should direct the entire marking process, including the recruitment and appointment of markers, and the administration of marks and examination papers. As such, the marking process, and particularly the appointment of markers, is an integral part of the NSC examination.

Although question papers for the NSC examination are nationally set, the entire marking process is administered by the provincial Directorates of Examination (DBE 2014:Chapter 7, Section 36). The responsibility to ensure that the marking process runs smoothly and is of high quality rests with the provinces. Provinces, the Northern Cape Province in the case of this study, is responsible for putting in place mechanisms to ensure not only the appointment of the best possible candidates to mark, but also that conditions during marking do not jeopardise the quality of marking (DBE 2014:Chapter 7, Section 37). These mechanisms should ensure that the marking process and the examination results are above suspicion and that learners are not disadvantaged during the marking of their scripts.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SECONDARY QUESTIONS

The transformation of South African education after 1994 included the desegregation of education (Roux 2002:418) and prompted the revision of many aspects of education. Various policy changes entailed an effort to move towards a desegregated and unified high-quality examination system (Govender 2008:1). Since 2008 Grade 12 learners sit for a uniform NSC examination. The rationale behind a uniform NSC was, among other things, to ensure equality, uniformity and quality across the nine provinces of South Africa (Govender 2008:1; also Edwards 2010:1). As such, the NSC

introduced the transformation of the examination system as part of the entire constitutional reform process in the country and in education.

The NSC examination is an important examination, firstly, because it makes up 75% of a Grade 12 learner's promotion mark and, secondly, as the exit examination, it serves as a door to the workplace or tertiary education. According to Agrey (cited in Loock 2009:4), the Grade 12 qualification (i.e. the NSC certificate) has dual value, namely as a school-leaving certificate and as a university-entrance qualification. Agrey (cited in Loock 2009:4) further claims that the performance of Grade 12 learners, with specific reference to the NSC examination in South Africa, is 'high stakes' because the NSC examination is the yardstick with which the South African education system is measured with regard to quality and effectiveness. Based on the importance of the marking process as a component of the final assessment, the DBE (2011:Section 8) acknowledges the particular burden of responsibility on all marking officials to make the correct assessment of each question in each individual answer script they mark.

However, despite the directives in the *NSC Regulations* and the involvement of the national regulatory body (Umalusi) in the quality and standard of the examination and the marking process *per se*, the marking process appears to be clouded in controversy. This is according to various media articles which persistently report negatively on the marking process. For example, in one of its articles headlined 'Markers cast shadow over matric results', *The Times* (17 December 2010:10) reported on the discrepancies in the marks a matric pupil received from different examiners during a moderation process of examiners. In an article in *Beeld* (17 December 2011:2), serious issues were highlighted, ranging from teachers' being dismissed for being intoxicated during marking, marking centres' not being monitored, markers' not being properly qualified to mark or markers' not having a matric qualification. Another article in *Beeld* (25 April 2012:15) raised concerns about the appointment of markers without the necessary subject or language competency to mark the subjects. *Daily News* (2 July 2010:5) reported that teacher unions blocked the selection process of markers because of apparent inconsistencies in the recruitment and appointment process. These media reports, although anecdotal, sketch a negative picture of the entire marking process and contribute towards serious

suspicion and negative perceptions among the public about the marking process, the quality of marking and, ultimately, the credibility of the NSC.

The quality of marking of the NSC examination is not only a national concern. In the Northern Cape Province, in particular, local newspapers also often report on the quality of the marking process. On 7 January 2009 an article in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* (DFA) suggested that NSC marks were manipulated and that markers were instructed to alter marks. Also, on 19 December 2011, the DFA reported that 'the competency of the markers and therefore the integrity of the marking process, remains a great concern'. Whether they are true or not, these allegations impact negatively on the integrity of NSC examination and fuel negative perceptions of the quality of the NSC marking process. In short, it casts a shadow of doubt over the entire national matric examinations – with disastrous effects. Controversy about the marking process not only casts doubt on the credibility of the education system, the matric examination and the subsequent results, but also jeopardises the future of many Grade 12 learners. Bearing in mind that the NSC is the gateway to employment and higher education studies, such perceptions could, ultimately, have a negative impact on the growth and development of the country.

Formulated against the background of the foregoing exposition, my study was guided by the following overarching research question: *What are the perceptions of quality in the marking process of the National Senior Certificate?*

In an attempt to answer my research question, my study was driven by the following secondary questions:

1.1.1 What perspectives exist on quality assessment grading (marking) internationally?

1.1.2 How do the stipulations of the *NSC Regulations* support and promote quality assessment marking in the NSC?

1.1.3 How is quality assessment marking considered in the context of the South African NSC examination?

1.1.4 What are the realities of various role players in the marking process in the Northern Cape?

1.1.5 From the gathered information, what suggestions could be offered regarding the quality of marking of the NSC examination in the Northern Cape?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

In alignment with the research question (cf. 1.2), the aim of this study was to explore *the perceptions of quality in the marking process of the National Senior Certificate*. In order to reach this research aim, I intended to:

1.3.1 highlight some of the existing perspectives on quality assessment marking, on international level;
1.3.2 critically analyse how the stipulations of the *NSC Regulations* support and promote quality assessment marking in the NSC;
1.3.3 indicate how quality assessment marking is considered in the context of the South African NSC examination;
1.3.4 explore the realities of various role players with regard to the marking process in the Northern Cape; and
1.3.5 indicate some suggestions of this study for the quality of marking of the NSC examination in the Northern Cape.

1.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Kinash (2010:1) asserts that a paradigm is a matrix of beliefs and perceptions consisting of power relationships and action implications. Similarly, Willis (2007:8; also Denzin and Lincoln 2002:5) claims that a paradigm is a comprehensive belief system, worldview or framework that guides research and practice in a certain field. Hart (2010:2) compares a paradigm with a map which people continuously use to make sense of the social landscape to find their way to whatever goals they seek. These maps are developed throughout a person's lifetime through socialisation and social interaction. Mertens (2007:7) concurs by describing a paradigm as a way of looking at the world and as being composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and

direct thinking and action. It can, therefore, be assumed that a paradigm is the lens through which one sees and looks at the world and reality. In this research, I used *pragmatism* as the lens through which I looked at issues pertaining to quality in the NSC marking process.

Pragmatism is concerned with action and change and the interplay between knowledge and action (Goldkuhl 2012:2). According to Thayer (1982:1), 'pragmatism' in its broadest and most familiar sense refers to the usefulness, workability and practicality of ideas, while 'pragmatic' refers to experimental, empirical and purposive thought which is based on and applicable to experience. Goldkuhl (2012:7) emphasises that the essence of pragmatism is actions and change, which refer to human action and interaction in a world which is in a constant state of becoming. Thayer's (1982:1–5) view on pragmatism is in accord with that of Goldkuhl (2012:7) for whom pragmatism relies on actions, situations, consequences and a concern with applications for what works as practical solutions to problems. Based on the views of Goldkuhl (2012) and Thayer (1982), it is assumed that pragmatism is premised on practical solutions for a specific problem at a specific time.

It has been suggested in local newspapers that the NSC examinations and marking process in the Northern Cape is fraught with problems, affecting their value and effectiveness with a potential negative impact on the quality of the subsequent results, thus yielding them questionable. Because it includes practical solutions for a specific problem at a specific time, pragmatism was deemed an appropriate paradigm to explore the problems of quality in the marking process of the NSC in the Northern Cape and to find practical solutions to the problems to ultimately bring about change (Ihuah and Eaton 2013:941).

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

According to Thomas (2010:308), a research design can be viewed as the master plan of a research study shedding light on how the study is to be conducted. It shows how all the major parts of the research study work together in an attempt to address the research questions. Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013:22) define a

research design as a way to plan and prepare one's research and should, therefore, include various sources and information related to the problem, as well as approaches to be used in solving the research problem. The research design is the foundation of the entire research work and assists in performing the chosen research task in a systematic way. The research approach, together with the best methods of collecting and analysing data, forms the research design.

1.5.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is 'the collection of methods or rules by which a particular piece of research is undertaken and the principles, theories and values that underpin a particular approach to research' (Somekh and Lewin cited in Mackenzie and Knipe 2006:7). These views are supported by Rajasekar *et al.* (2013:1) who argue that a research methodology is a systematic way of solving a particular problem and describing how the particular research is to be carried out, which is regarded as the work plan. In addition, methodology is regarded as the overall approach and perspective to research (Collis and Hussey cited in Neville 2007:26). Based on the views of Somekh and Lewin (cited in Mackenzie and Knipe 2006:7), a methodology can be summarised as an orientation influenced by the paradigm in which a theoretical perspective is placed or developed and can, thus, be regarded as the overall approach to research, linked to the paradigm or theoretical framework. In the case of this study, my approach, thus my work plan, was qualitative in nature.

Qualitative research produces descriptive data in the participants' own written or spoken words and not in terms of numbers. This means that qualitative methods capture what people have to say in their own words, describe their experiences in depth and give account of real life in its many variations while simultaneously providing insight into the reasoning and feelings that motivate people to take action (Seep-Aims 2000:5). Denzin and Lincoln (2002:3) summarise the above views when they state that, because they study phenomena in their natural settings, qualitative researchers attempt to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. However, Neville (2007:26) finds these methods to be more subjective in nature because they involve examining and reflecting on the less tangible aspects

of a research subject such as values, attitudes and perceptions. A qualitative approach would, therefore, present an opportunity to all stakeholders in the marking process to give account of their own meanings, experiences and perceptions regarding the quality of the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape.

1.5.2 RESEARCH METHODS

1.5.2.1 Qualitative data generation

Creswell (2003:12) contends that, because it is not committed to any specific system of philosophy and reality, pragmatism allows the researcher to choose any or both quantitative and qualitative methods which best meet the needs and purposes of the study. A method is a systematic mode, procedure or tool used for data collection and analysis (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006:8). The assumption is thus taken that research methods refer only to the various specific tools or ways of data collection or data analysis such as a questionnaire, interview checklist or data analysis (Neville 2007:26). In line with the paradigm of this study, which focuses on 'that which works' and with the research methodology, which focuses on the experiences of the participants, it was my intention to use only qualitative research methods.

Creswell (2003:13) opines that, with *qualitative* methods, the inquirer makes knowledge claims based primarily on the multiple meanings of individual experiences. With this research, I sought to establish the experiences of various participants by collecting data about the marking process. I, therefore, employed data-gathering methods which included a literature study, interviews and a policy analysis. I believe that these qualitative methods enabled me to answer my research question pertaining to the perceptions of quality in the marking process of the NSC. Figure 1 illustrates the research methods followed in this study.

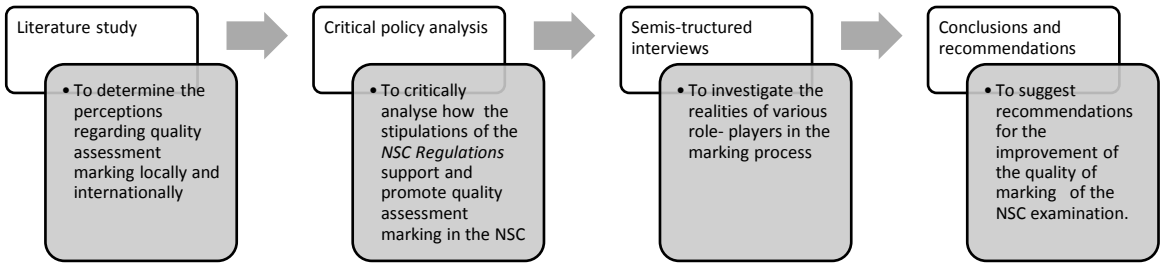

Figure 1: Research methods

1.5.2.2 Literature study

An essential part of research is to conduct a literature study of works published in the field of activity. With the aim of the research topic in mind, I conducted an intensive literature study on the quality of marking, both locally and internationally. A literature study is about searching, obtaining and reading various sources of literature to enable the researcher to familiarise herself with her research topic. According to Boote and Beile (2005:3), a literature study provides a theoretical basis for the current research, helps the researcher to determine the nature of the research and highlights flaws and gaps in previous research. Knopf (2006:127) concurs by arguing that a literature study gives a general overview of unfamiliar research while simultaneously revealing what has already been done and what new conclusions have been drawn from the latest research. Literature studies are also relatively inexpensive and efficient because a large amount of data can be collected quickly at minimal cost (Marrelli 2005:43).

A literature study enabled me to become knowledgeable about both recent and past research results on my topic (Rajasekar *et al*. 2013:17) to ensure the same results are not duplicated. A literature study is therefore a critical look at the research task at hand and goes beyond the search for information to include the identification and articulation of relationships between the literature and the field of research. It also shows where the research fits into the existing body of knowledge, which enables the researcher to learn from previous theories on the subject. Primary and secondary sources (Govender 2008) such as the *NSC Regulations* and Agrey (cited in Loock 2009) were consulted during this literature review.

1.5.2.3 Critical policy analysis

Policy analysis is an applied social science discipline that employs multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information which could be used in political settings to resolve policy problems (Patton and Sawicki 1993:8). Hanekom (cited in Roux 2002:427) defines 'policy analysis' as an attempt to measure or evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies. This suggests that various methods and techniques could be used to analyse policy-related information so that meaningful solutions for the specific policy problems can be found. However, Codd (1988:235) adds another dimension to policy analysis by viewing policy analysis as the critical examination of existing policies. In this regard policy analysis focuses on the analysis of policy content to examine the values, assumptions and ideologies underpinning the policy process. For a critical examination of the *NSC Regulations*, I drew on Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry's (1997) conceptualisation of critical policy analysis (CPA).

From a CPA perspective, policy analysis is regarded to be a value-laden activity which makes judgements to whether and in what ways policies help to improve situations (Taylor *et al*.1997:36). Consequently, Taylor *et al.* (1997) suggest that the values and assumptions which underlie the policy process should be explored. In addition, CPA proceeds from the standpoint that policy analysis should bring about reform and change; therefore, policy analysis should reveal the extent to which policy should be changed in order to realise its intended aims and objectives. In this regard CPA enabled me to explore the effectiveness of the *NSC Regulations* and to make certain recommendations, aimed at change, to enhance its effectiveness and promote the quality of the NSC marking process. The results from this analysis may suggest alternative policy ideas or procedures that could improve the effectiveness of the *NSC Regulations* for learners nationally, but more specifically for learners in the Northern Cape.

1.5.2.4 Semi-structured interviews

According to Thomas (2010:314), interviews are methods of gathering information through oral questioning in which pre-planned core questions are posed by the researcher. Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush (2006:1) regard an interview as a

conversation to gather information and which involves an interviewer, who coordinates the conversation and asks questions, and the interviewee, who responds to the questions. Kvale (1996:88) claims that research interviews are based on the conversations of everyday life with structure and purpose defined and controlled by the researcher. Although it might not yield objective information, a research interview captures many of the subjects' views on a specific issue and could reveal meaningful relations to be interpreted (Kvale 1996:88). Interviews take on different forms and can be conducted face to face or telephonic, with the internet also emerging as a tool for interviewing (Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush 2006:1). In line with the overall paradigm and methodology of this research, I conducted standardised, open-ended, face-to-face interviews which were qualitative in nature.

Kvale (1996:88) is of the view that qualitative research interviews attempts to understand a phenomenon from the subjects' point of view and to uncover the meaning of their experiences. Interviews allow people to convey a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:314) contend that qualitative interview methods are widely used because they consist of individual face-to-face, in-depth interviews that seek to foster learning about individual experiences and perspectives on a given issue. Standardised, open-ended interviews are faster and easy to analyse and compare. Furthermore, it enables the researcher to ask the same questions to all interviewees (Kvale 1996:133). The aim with the interviews in this study was to gather the opinions from different role players on the realities regarding the quality of marking.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:315) claim that semi-structured interviews are often the sole data source for qualitative research and usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location. Semi-structured interviews are organised based on a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. The most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research is semi-structured, in-depth interviews with an individual or in groups. These interviews are commonly conducted only once and last between 30 minutes to several hours. The individual in-depth interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree

2006:315). Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush (2006:1) are also of the view that semi-structured interviews are useful when there is a need to collect in-depth information in a systematic manner from a number of respondents or interviewees (e.g., teachers, community leaders).

Semi-structured interviews during this research proved valuable because they were organised based on a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. The use of semi-structured interviews afforded the interviewees the opportunity to reveal their personal views and experiences of the marking process in the Northern Cape.

1.5.2.5 Participant selection

According to Nastasi (2007:1), qualitative studies use purposeful or criterion-based selection of participants with characteristics relevant to the research question. Nastasi (2007:1) further claims that qualitative research typically starts with a specific type of individual, event or process and the participants are selected purposefully to include only those individuals with particular experience relevant to the research. Similarly, Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood (2013:1) state that purposeful selection is used in qualitative research to identify and select cases which are rich in information. Creswell and Plano Clark (cited in Palinkas *et al.* 2013:2) explain that information-rich cases refer to and involve the selection of individuals or groups with specific knowledge or experience of a specific research subject. Based on these definitions of purposeful selection, individuals with particular experience relevant to the research is intended to maximise efficiency and validity. Because qualitative research is more concerned with meaning and not making generalised hypothetical statements, the number of participants are generally much smaller (Mason 2010:1; also Nastasi 2007:3) it reduces judgement within a purposeful category, because the interviewees are selected randomly and without regard to the programme outcome. For the purpose of this study, purposeful random selection was applied based on the mentioned definitions. To obtain insight into people's perceptions of the quality of marking, relevant stakeholders at different levels of the marking process needed to be interviewed. Participants with knowledge of the marking process were, therefore, randomly selected from the ranks of markers, principals, Grade 12 educators, union

members and curriculum officials. Table 1 below sets out the participants selected for the interviews.

Table 1: Participant selection

Participants	Number of participants	Involvement in NSC marking
Marking officials	1 x Senior Marker 1 x Chief Marker 1 x Internal Moderator	Actual markers responsible for the marking and moderation of scripts at all levels
Marking centre managers	1 x Centre Manager	Responsible for the overall management of the marking centre which includes checking of errors during marking
Principals	1 x Principal	Recommend initial marker applications
Union Members	2 x Union members	Involved in the selection of markers (observer status)
District or provincial curriculum officials	1 x District official	Involved in the selection of markers
Total number of participants	**8**	

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:54) argue that major ethical dilemmas require researchers to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth and the rights and values of their subject which could be threatened by the research. Ethical issues can arise from the kinds of problems investigated by social scientists and the methods they use to obtain valid and reliable data. This means that each stage in the research sequence raises ethical issues. They may arise from the nature of the research project itself, methods of data collection or the type of data collected (e.g., highly personal and sensitive information), and the application of the data (e.g., publishing information that could embarrass participants) (Cohen *et al.* 2007:54). While many of these issues concern procedural ethics, we must bear in mind that ethics are concerned with right and wrong or good and bad.

The researcher, consequently, has to consider how the research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes abide by ethical principles and practices.

Kvala (1996:133) asserts that, during any qualitative interview, the interviewees should always be considered regarding issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and consequences. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:319), researchers need to focus on reducing the risk of unanticipated harm, protecting the interviewees' information, effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study, and reducing the risk of exploitation. Interviewees should also be informed about the purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design. Various ethical issues came to the fore in this research. Because marker information and processes are confidential matters, permission was sought from the Head of the Northern Cape Education Department (NCDoE) to use the NSC marker information relating to the marking process in the periods 2010 to 2015. Written assurance was given to the NCDoE that no information would be used to discredit the Department in any way and that all information would be used only for research into the field of marking and would contribute positively to the credibility and the improvement of the marking process in the Province. Permission was also sought from the Head of Examinations and Assessment via the Head of the NCDoE to perform individual interviews with principals, markers and educators at selected schools and officials at district and provincial offices.

Before the actual commencement of the interviews, I determined from the participants whether they would voluntarily participate in an interview. The research study and its purpose were made known to them so that they could take an informed decision. After the participants had agreed to participate I secured a separate office to conduct the interviews so that daily operations would not interrupt the interviews or impact the privacy of participants. Participants were informed that their identities would remain confidential throughout the interviews and that no forms or recordings would reveal their identity or that of their school. After the interviews, the recordings were rewound in order for the interviewees to listen to the recordings to ensure that their identities had not been revealed and that they were satisfied with the recorded information. In

addition, ethical clearance **(UFS-HSD2016/0091)** was sought and obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State.

1.7 DEMARCATION

1.7.1 SCIENTIFIC DEMARCATION

Education policy, according to Hartshorne (1999:5), is a 'course of action adopted by government, through legislation, ordinances and regulations and pursued through administration and control, finance and inspection, with the general assumption that it should benefit the country and its citizens'. The study of policy, thus including that of education policy, is regarded by Hogwood and Gunn (in Cloete and De Coning 2011:8) as the study of, among other things, policy content, policy process, policy outputs and the evaluation of policy. Such a study may be descriptive or explanatory, or both.

In South Africa, issues pertaining to quality in the marking process of the NSC examination are guided and directed by the *NSC Regulations*. As the focus of this study incorporated issues linked directly to a specific educational policy, the research was positioned in the discipline of Education Policy Studies.

1.7.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DEMARCATION

This study focused on the Northern Cape as one of the nine provinces in the RSA (see Figure 2).

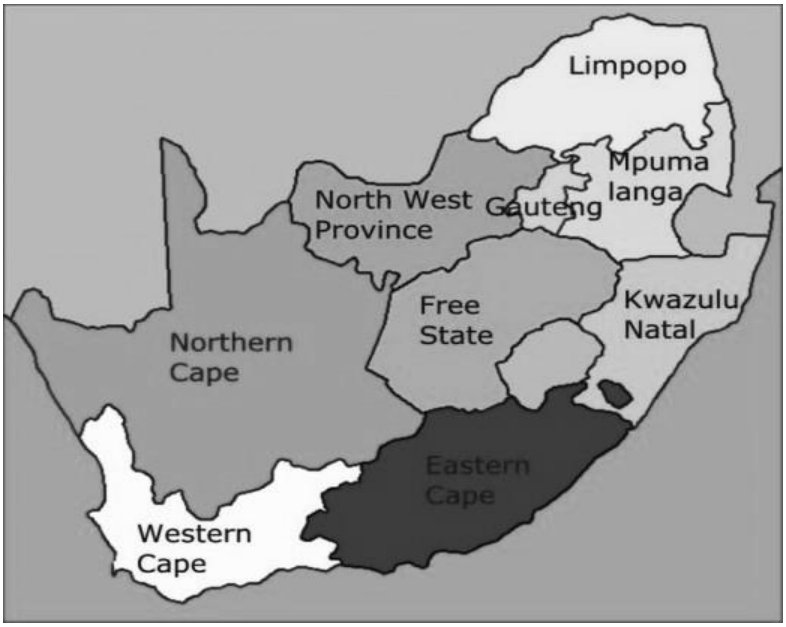

Figure 2: Map of the nine provinces of South Africa

(Source: www.southafrica.info/about/geography/provinces.htm)

The Northern Cape consists of five municipal districts which formed an intrinsic part of the study on the quality of marking in the Northern Cape Province. These districts are Frances Baard, John Taole Gaetsewe, Pixley Ka Seme, ZF Mgcwau and Namaqua Districts (see Figure 2). The study was conducted in Kimberley in the Frances Baard District, which is the central location of all NSC marking processes in the Northern Cape. However, all five districts were visited to conduct interviews because all five districts are involved in the NSC marking sessions and the composition of the marker fraternity is as wide apart as the vastness of the Province.

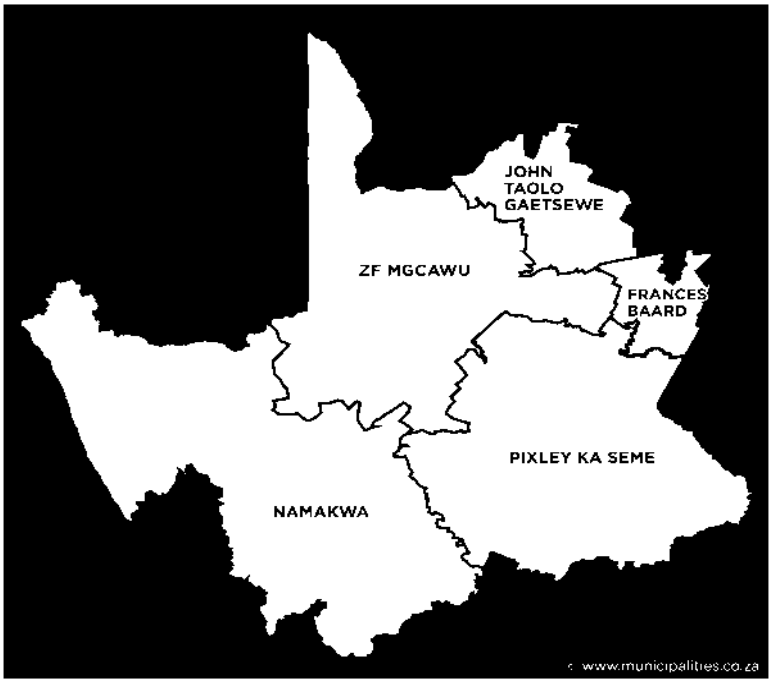

Figure 3: Map of the five districts in the Northern Cape

(Source: http://www.localgovernment.co.za/provinces/view/7/northern-cape)

1.8 RESEARCH OUTLINE

In accordance with the objectives of this study, the research is reported in various chapters:

- Chapter 2 entails an international perspective on quality assessment marking. By means of a literature review, an exposition is given of the assessment processes during secondary school exit-level examinations in Hong Kong and England.
- Chapter 3 deals with a critical analysis of the *NSC Regulations*. The aim of this analysis was to determine how the policy supports and promotes quality in the NSC marking process.
- The focus of Chapter 4 is on quality assessment marking in the context of the South African NSC examination. In this chapter specific reference is made to assessment in the Northern Cape.
- In Chapter 5 the realities of various role players in the marking process are explored. With the help of semi-structured interviews, the aim of this chapter was to obtain first-hand information from stakeholders of the NSC marking in the Northern Cape.

- In Chapter 6 recommendations of the study are indicated with regard to the quality of marking of the NSC examination in the Northern Cape.

1.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter an orientation was given regarding the entire study. The importance of the Grade 12 examination as an exit examination in South Africa, as well as the perceptions about the quality of marking, was highlighted. Also mentioned in this chapter were the statement of the problem, the research question and subsidiary questions, the aims and objectives of the study, the overarching research paradigm and the research methodology.

In the next chapter a literature review is provided to present an international perspective on quality assessment marking as undertaken in Hong Kong and England.

CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE QUALITY OF MARKING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to provide a review of international perspectives on quality assessment marking and the administration of exit-level examinations. My contention was that an exploration of international perspectives on quality assessment marking and the administration of exit-level examinations would give me a better understanding of the issues that might have practical implications for the effectiveness of these examinations. I therefore anticipated that a literature study would give me insight into those issues that might impede on the quality of the NSC examination in South Africa. Such insight was deemed important and relevant in order to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of the *NSC Regulations* and thus the effectiveness of the NSC examination.

In this chapter I describe the administration of examinations in Hong Kong and England. I chose China (specifically Hong Kong) as a developing country and England as a developed country, because I believe it is important to explore how secondary school exit-level examinations are dealt with both in developing countries and developed countries. China is classified by the World Bank as a developing country (CSIS 2014:1), and along with South Africa it forms part of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries (Bokova 2014:1). BRICS countries are dedicated to working together to accelerate the development of their education systems. The decision to narrow my focus to Hong Kong was informed by the fact that its education system is rated among the best in the world (Sharma 2011:1). After conducting research on international best practices in various countries, Dowling (2008:1) has concluded that many examination boards aim to produce ‘world-class tests’, but that none come as near to achieving this aim as the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). Dowling (2008:1) observed that, in studying

international best practice, the HKEAA can be judged to be diligent in pursuit of its aim of producing valid, reliable and fair examination results.

However, before considering the quality assessment marking in Hong Kong and England, the meaning of 'quality in education' ought to be highlighted. According to Sallis (2002:12), the word 'quality' comes from the Latin word *qualis* which means 'what kind of'. In defining 'quality', Sallis (2002:13) claims that 'quality is about being measured against a criterion'. This means the end product is judged as being up to (or not up to) standard. Quality is achieved by putting systems and procedures into operation to ensure that those systems are efficiently and effectively operated and that the procedures occur in accordance with pre-determined specifications (Sallis 2002:14). With regard to the marking process, Sallis's (2002) definition of quality implies that quality marking should be measured against criteria and judged as being up to (or not up to) standard. It further implies that quality marking could be achieved by having systems and procedures in operation that are efficient and effective in accordance with pre-determined specifications.

In this chapter quality marking in Hong Kong is first discussed, followed by that in England.

2.2 ASSESSMENT IN HONG KONG

The administration of the examination process and, therefore, the marking of examination answer scripts, is the responsibility of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). The HKEAA, an independent statutory body, was established in May 1977 under the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority Ordinance (Hong Kong Legislative Council 2006:1). As an independent statutory body, the HKEAA is committed to upholding the highest standards of corporate governance and believes that transparency, integrity, fairness and accountability are the cornerstones of corporate governance. The statutory responsibility of the HKEAA is to plan and conduct the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) (Hong Kong Legislative Council 2010:1–2).

The HKDSE is the equivalent to the South African exit-level NSC examination. The importance of the HKDSE as an exit-level examination is as follows, confirmed by the 2008 Legislative Council:

> *The reality is that students' results in public examinations have a far-reaching impact on their future, whether they pursue further studies or seek employment. Examination results are often regarded as indicators of a person's knowledge and capability. Hence, society has legitimate expectation that its public examination system can appropriately and fairly assess its students, so that their results adequately reflect their standards.*

Tong (2013:2) states that the mission of the HKEAA is to provide valid, reliable and equitable examinations and assessment services in a professional, innovative, efficient and effective manner through the appointment of well-trained, experienced and professional staff members.

2.2.1 EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION OF THE HKDSE

The marking of the HKDSE stretches over a few months and examination takes place in a number of assessment centres as identified by the HKEAA (2014a:2–3). The HKEAA is only responsible for the public assessment of the 24 New Senior Secondary (NSS) subjects referred to as Category A subjects. Comprehensive procedures ensure fairness and consistency during the marking of Category A subjects (HKEAA 2014b:1). All subjects in the other categories are assessed by the different course providers or, alternatively, by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) (HKEAA 2014b:17–18).

Marking is done at assessment centres which are spread across the districts and main cities (Tong 2013:9). In Hong Kong, teachers from aided and government schools are released earlier during normal school hours to conduct on-screen marking, depending on their individual arrangements with the school HKEAA (2014a:4). The HKEAA also has an Examination Quality Assurance Framework (HKEAA QAF) which operates as the quality control body watching and guarding the quality of the HKDSE examinations in Hong Kong (HKEAA QAF 2011:1).

To achieve the aims of fairness and quality of provisioning, the HKEAA QAF (2011:3) identifies a number of objectives, including:

- Safeguarding of standards: To ensure that the standards of the examination papers are consistently upheld at the expected and required level.

- Compliance and quality of delivery: To ensure that the examinations are conducted in compliance with established regulations and guidelines so that fairness and reliability can be maintained.

- Recognition of the HKDSE: To ensure that examination data and results are processed and reported appropriately at the necessary standards of reliability and integrity in order to achieve both local and international recognition.

- Continuous improvement: To ensure that feedback is collected from and provided to stakeholders by conducting regular reviews and quality audits in order to improve the service continuously (HKEAA QAF 2011:3).

2.2.2 THE MARKING PROCESS

The Hong Kong Education Bureau (2014:8–9) deals with marker applications and keeps record of applicants' personal information for purposes of qualification assessment, employer reference and integrity checks. The marking process starts with marker applications, which are open between November and December of the previous year (HKEAAA 2014a:3) Markers are recruited and selected based on a point system which takes into consideration their qualifications and marking and teaching experience (Hong Kong Legislative Council 2010:1). Teachers with HKDSE teaching experience receive preference on the assumption that they are familiar with the curriculum and the expected standards. To ensure marking of a high quality, the HKEAA (2014a:1) requests that 'the most competent teachers available in the schools apply and be recommended by school principals'. The HKEAA (2014a:1) frames the competence of markers and the marking of candidates scripts within a justice discourse:

> [T]he marking of candidates' examination scripts should be done by the most competent teachers available in the schools; otherwise no matter how much care is taken in the process of assessment framework preparation and question paper setting/moderation, the end product will be flawed and justice will not be done to the candidates or to the investment in their education.

It therefore seems that, in Hong Kong, the effective marking of exit-level examination papers by competent markers is regarded imperative to do justice to both the student and the investment made over the years into education. It appears that the HKDSE focuses on academic qualifications and teaching and marking experience as the three key elements which should be considered during the selection of markers.

2.2.3 CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT

As the HKDSE examination is offered in English and Chinese, markers who are not competent in these languages would not be able to mark. In addition, English Language is a subject which is taken by practically all candidates (Cheung and Tong 2014:7). To this effect, it is required that all prospective markers comply with the Language Proficiency Requirements, which include taking a Language Proficiency Attainment Test in English. In this regard, Cheung (2011:8) claims that, apart from the basic requirements for appointment such as academic qualifications and teaching and marking experience, markers must also be in possession of a recognised Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) qualification. It is the view of Cheung (2011:1) that TESOL training is an important factor in determining the reliability and validity of judgements made during marking. It, therefore, appears that markers without TESOL training are more prone to making errors, while markers with TESOL training better understand the requirements of the rating scales, and would, therefore, make fewer errors during marking.

Based on the above, it becomes evident that language proficiency requirements play a crucial role during the appointment of markers. Another requirement to be considered for appointment as markers of the HKEAA (2015:1) is that markers must currently teach the relevant subject or have recently retired from teaching.

2.2.4 METHOD OF MARKING

The HKEAA applies Onscreen Marking (OSM) which refers to a process where marking is done electronically on a computer system which is linked to a local network (Drave 2010:1). Tests have revealed OSM to be more effective as paper-based marking because it allows second marking to be conducted within a very short period of time which, in addition, enables the monitoring of marking quality (Hong Kong Legislative Council *2*006:3). This type of monitoring immediately identifies problematic markers or scripts because third marking is triggered instantly if the ratings of markers are found to be inconsistent with those of other markers. Moreover, OSM also ensures that check-marking occurs faster and more comprehensively, that scripts are easily reviewed, and that statistical figures can instantly show marker performance. An additional advantage of OSM, according to Tong (2013:8), is that it affords the HKEAA the chance to continuously monitor the quality of marking, which is referred to as 'real time monitoring'. In validating the mentioned benefits of OSM, Cheung and Lo (2014:1) confirm the effectiveness of OSM and state that Assistant Examiners are able to monitor marker performance by check-marking the marked scripts on the spot to identify problematic scripts. For this purpose, they use instant statistical figures, namely (1) marking speed; (2) percentage of third-mark triggering; (3) leniency/severity of each marker; and (4) rating distribution of each marker.

A 'per question' marking approach is applied during both OSM and manual marking. This approach refers to a process where an individual marker is not allowed to mark an entire script. Instead, each marker receives only a certain section or question to mark because this ensures consistency in applying the marking criteria (Tong 2013:8). Apart from ensuring consistency, the application of the 'per question' method in Hong Kong also guarantees that the quality of marking is fair and no candidate is disadvantaged in the process.

2.2.5 PREPARING TO MARK

According to Cheung and Chang (2014:1), the marking process entails three compulsory stages, namely the qualifying of markers, the training of markers and the

checking of marks as a control measure to monitor marking quality throughout the process.

2.2.5.1 Marker qualification

To qualify how to assess is a process which determines whether markers meet the set requirements before commencing with the actual marking. The HKEAA (2014b:1) engages in a testing process to test the abilities and competency levels of marker candidates. The reason for this process is that, while markers may comply with the prescribed criteria during their applications, they might not always be competent to mark. In this regard, sample scripts are used for the testing of markers. Markers must therefore first 'trial mark' some scripts before they can proceed with actual marking (HKEAA 2014b:1). Cheung and Chang (2014:1) state that, during the qualification test, markers must demonstrate consistency in their marking. Selected markers are invited for interviews and are appointed as markers only after the qualification test and interviews. According to Cheung and Chang (2014:1), markers must demonstrate that they have mastered the marking standards before they can proceed to marking scripts. Markers who do not meet the standards the first time are given a second opportunity, but are dismissed from marking if they fail again. No marker is allowed access to the OSM system without training, and markers who do not complete training are automatically disqualified for marking (Cheung and Chang 2014:1).

2.2.5.2 Marker training

Part of the marking process is mandatory marker training in a four-hour session. During training markers discuss the marking criteria and are subjected to supervised rating (Cheung and Chang 2014:1). Assistant Examiners first mark sample scripts after which they compare the marks to those of the Chief Examiner who has already pre-marked some scripts. The Assistant Examiners and Chief Examiner then agree on marking principles and standards, and revise the marking scheme where necessary (Cheung and Chang 2014:2). However, markers do not know which scripts have been pre-marked by the Chief Examiner. In this way, 'shadow marking' is prevented. Shadow marking occurs when a marker copies the previous marking without showing insight in the marking.

According to Cheung and Lo (2014:2), scripts used for standardisation are drawn from a stratified random sample and discussed in a two-day marking script standardisation meeting. During this process the sample scripts are trial marked to identify and rectify discrepancies in the interpretation of the marking scheme (HKEAA 2013:1). When discrepancies have been identified, the marking scheme is updated and revisions are made after the scrutiny of actual samples of student performance in the practice papers. These scripts are used to ensure marker consistency and marking quality during the three stages of the marking process (HKEAA 2013:1). After standardisation, markers must adhere to the marking scheme to ensure uniform standards of marking. However, as the marking scheme does not exhaust all possible answers, markers must exercise their professional discretion and judgement when they accept alternative answers that are not in the marking scheme but are correct and well-reasoned (HKEAA 2012a:2).

After the standardisation of the marking scheme, a compulsory meeting is held with the markers during which they are informed on the assessment objectives and demands of individual questions (HKEAA 2013:1). A certain number of scripts are marked before panel group meetings with markers take place. This is essential since intervention can be initiated only after a marker has marked a certain number of scripts. The purpose of the meeting is:

1) to collect data on common misjudgements and errors made by the markers;

2) to gather enquiries and information from markers on borderline cases and problematic scripts; and

3) to disseminate decisions made by the Chief Examiner during OSM (Coniam 2013:120).

These meetings ensure and assist with quality management and control of the marking process, because the collected data reveal the errors that need to be discussed and corrected.

2.2.5.3 Monitoring of marks

The HKEAA follows a set of comprehensive quality assurance procedures during the marking of public examination papers to ensure fairness and consistency in the marking process. Methods to ensure quality assurance include double-marking and check-marking which also serve as evaluation of the marking process. These methods confirm the mission of the HKEAA to ensure validity, reliability and equity during the conduct of public examinations.

a) Double-marking

According to Coniam (2011:1), double-marking serves as a quality control measure during marking. Double-marking implies there are two raw marks awarded independently by two different markers. When there is a big discrepancy between the marks of the first and second marker, a third marker will also mark the script. Should the discrepancy continue, a fourth marking might also be conducted. These measures are important to ensure a fair assessment of each script. During double-marking the closest highest pair of marks are added up to form the raw mark for the script (Coniam 2011:2). Therefore, by adopting double-marking the reliability of marking is enhanced.

b) Check-marking

During the marking process the Chief Examiner and Assistant Examiners check-mark random samples of marked scripts at two stages at any time during the marking (Cheung and Lo 2014:2). During the entire marking process the Assistant Examiners are required to check-mark no less than 5% of the total scripts from each marker and identify problematic scripts. This mechanism of check-marking and instant feedback ensures marking quality and maximises marker congruence. Immediate feedback regarding the marking errors ensures immediate intervention. The feedback is kept general to avoid creating fake reliability as an artefact of feedback (Tong 2013:8). Only selected scripts are check-marked and if a script has been selected for check-marking, the mark awarded by the check-marker is also recorded and may override the raw mark if deemed more reliable. The marked scripts of each marker undergo at least two stages of check-marking by Assistant Examiners (HKEAA 2014b:1). Check-marking is an additional measure of quality control and is conducted by Assistant Examiners to ensure consistency and spot-marking problems.

Cheung and Lo (2014:4–5) indicate that timely intervention cure both inconsistency and over-consistency. In this regard, the statistical figures of scripts which were wrongly marked play an important role in maintaining the marking quality. OSM provides concrete figures to evaluate markers' performance. Reference to figures are also the most tactful way to request markers to re-mark their scripts (Cheung and Lo 2014:4–5). Because some markers only start to re-mark scripts a day after the errors were identified, it is important to complete this re-marking immediately when and wherever marking are found to be problematic.

2.2.6 QUALITY OF MARKING

Based on the literature, it is evident that continuous monitoring (cf. 2.2.5.3) throughout the marking process plays a crucial role in the marking of the HKDSE. Continuous monitoring ensures that mistakes are corrected immediately and not after the completion of the marking process. Robust and rigorous quality assurance practices are in place and strictly observed throughout the marking process. This include check-marking and double-marking ensuring each script has been marked independently by two markers to enhance marking reliability (HKEAA QAF 2011:5). For the HKEAA, check-marking and double-marking guarantee error-free marking, which is a small price to pay when compared with the disastrous effects of poor-quality marking. These processes show the commitment by the HKEAA to prevent professional or administrative mistakes due to oversight or negligence – which is in line with the mission of the HKEAA.

2.3 ASSESSMENT IN ENGLAND

Although the UK comprises England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the focus of this section is on England which is the biggest of the four countries in the UK (Accredited Qualifications 2012:online). My decision to focus on England was partly because, like Hong Kong, England also participated in the *International Comparisons in Senior Secondary Assessment* in the UK (Ofqual 2014a:3). The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is a "high stakes" exit-level examination and, as such, equivalent to the South African NSC qualification. I was, therefore, in particular

interested to investigate the perceptions on the quality of marking in England regarding the GSCE.

The Department for Education in England (DfE) do not administer any GCSE examinations. Instead, the responsibility for assessing the GSCE lies with Ofqual as the independent regulator (UK DfE 2014:5). Also, it should be noted that the GCSE is not a centrally organised examination and various role players, such as awarding organisations and examination boards and regulatory authorities (Accredited Qualifications 2012:online), are involved in and responsible for the smooth running and administration of GCSE examinations.

2.3.1 EXAMINATION BOARDS AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

Examination boards such as the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Pearson Edexcel and Oxford Cambridge and RSA (OCR) develop and award qualifications which are accredited by Ofqual (Isaacs 2012:4). As such, examination boards and other relevant stakeholders are expected to work closely with Ofqual regarding the assessment processes and to ensure that assessment standards are adhered to (Ofqual 2014a:5).

As the official regulatory authority responsible for overseeing the GSCE in England, Ofqual ensures and maintains standards in educational qualifications in England and Northern Ireland (UK DfE 2015:1). Ofqual, a non-ministerial government department, is independent of political control and is the largest regulatory authority registered in the entire UK (Ofqual 2015:3). Being a non-ministerial government department means that, while Ofqual is part of government, it is accountable to parliament and not to ministers for its judgements and performance of its functions.

It is Ofqual's duty to ensure that candidates of public examinations get the results they deserve (Ofqual 2013a:1). In this regard, Isaacs (2012:3) agrees that the results of public examinations should be reliable, fair and credible irrespective of who marks them. Ofqual is responsible for ensuring public confidence in examination standards and regulating qualifications and examinations (Isaacs 2012:3; Ofqual 2015:3). To achieve this, Ofqual monitors standards in qualifications, examinations and

assessments, as well as the quality of the marking of examinations and other assessments. Ofqual is furthermore responsible for ensuring that marking is carried out in line with the required standards central to the marking process (Clark 2014:1). For this reason, Ofqual carries out rigorous checks to ensure that the mark schemes are interpreted correctly and consistently by each examiner, and that they are consistently applied throughout the marking session. Ofqual also ensures there are no clerical errors during the adding up of marks when traditional marking is used and that all marks are assigned to the correct student in OSM and traditional marking (Clark 2014:1).

2.3.2 MARKING IN ENGLAND

Marking in England is done at home and not at marking centres because of the vast number of papers for the GCSE examination (Ofqual 2014b:16). Over the years, a marking system of considerable scale has developed. The extent at which marking is performed also raises considerable demands for efforts to ensure the quality of marking. However, Ofqual (2014a:11) is adamant that it remains the responsibility of the examination boards to ensure that marking is as accurate and reliable as possible.

2.3.3 RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF MARKERS

Examination boards are responsible for the recruitment and appointment of their own markers. For these purposes, they use external advertising measures to ensure that available posts are widely advertised (Ofqual 2014b:2). The application forms of all successful applicants who comply with the requirements are then put into a pool of examiners and the required number of examiners for each examination session are selected from the pool (Ofqual 2014b:2).

However, Meadows and Billington (2007:4) observe that the selection of markers for the GSCE is largely a matter of custom and practice. This means that examination boards greatly depend on the progress and performance of markers of previous years. It is therefore custom that examiners who have marked a unit successfully in the past are preferred to mark in the next examination cycle. Previous experiences in marking is, therefore, regarded as important for the selection process. Markers who displayed

positive qualities such as accuracy during marking are also most likely to be selected again (Ofqual 2014b:2). Examination boards believe their retention of markers from one examination series to the next to be good practice (Ofqual 2014b:3). Examination boards try to retain markers over a period of time also because it minimises the appointment of novice or inexperienced markers who could jeopardise the quality of marking and the reliability of GSCE results. The assumption is therefore that, by retaining the previous markers, examination boards ensure the competency of experienced markers.

In case experienced markers are not available and shortages arise, novice markers are drawn from the pool. According to Ofqual (2014b:2), the minimum requirements for markers differ from one examination board to another. Although there are some similarities, such as that all examination boards require a degree, it appears that the requirements in other cases are not mandatory but preferential. This difference is noticeable, for example, with the CIE which is the only examination board to test prospective examiners' abilities for examining. The CIE uses the *Test 2 Assess* assessment, which requires applicants to mark scripts from a previous examination series (Ofqual 2014b:3). Markers are expected to pass the test by marking accurately or close to the marking of the senior official who has pre-marked the script. In addition to the *Test 2 Assess* assessment, applicants are required to be qualified teachers in possession of a degree or equivalent qualification to be considered for appointment, especially for more senior positions (Ofqual 2014b:3). Furthermore, markers must also have a minimum of one year's full-time teaching experience of the relevant subject. In general, examination boards recruit examiners only if they have some degree of teaching experience. While they prefer those who are currently teaching, former teachers and lecturers are also considered (Ofqual 2014a:6). According to Ofqual (2013a:6), almost all GCSE markers have considerable teaching experience and subject knowledge. However, for the marking of simple, highly constrained questions with clearly defined answers, examiner experience is less important and for this purpose general markers are used sparingly by examination boards.

2.3.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARKING TEAMS

Marking of the GCSE examinations is performed in marking teams (Ofqual 2013a:10). An exposition of the responsibilities of these team members are given below.

The role of the Chair of Examiners is to maintain standards within a subject and across different requirements from year to year by using reports from the Chief Examiner and other relevant data provided (AQA Exams Administration 2012: online). The Chair of Examiners ensures that the marking standards are not lowered each year as a result of the different subject requirements (AQA Exams Administration 2012: online). Principal Markers are responsible for applying professional judgement to determine the standard for marking and, therefore, professional judgement underpins the standardisation process (AQA Expert Examiners 2015: online). As such, the manner in which a Principal Marker interprets the marking guideline would set the trend for the markers. Principal Examiners are also responsible for the training of all markers and they lead the pre-standardisation and standardisation meetings and monitor markers and standards of marking to ensure consistent and accurate application of the approved mark scheme (AQA Expert Examiners 2015:online). In addition, Principal Examiners coordinate and monitor a Team Leaders' supervision of markers assigned to them. Finally, they must ensure all marking is completed by specified deadlines (AQA Expert Examiners 2015: online). Given their vast responsibilities, Principal Examiners appear to be the hands-on managers who lead the marking and play a significant role in the assurance of quality in the marking of the GSCE. Team Leaders report to the Principal Examiners. Markers report to their Team Leaders.

In order to become a Team Leader a marker must have very accurate marking skills. The skills of different markers are evaluated by the examination board and stored on a system where they can later be retrieved (Greatorex and Bell 2002:2). When a new Team Leader is needed, the Principal Examiner identifies on the database a suitable candidate in line with the code of conduct of the examination board (Moody cited in Greatorex and Bell 2002:2).

At the lowest level of the marking hierarchy are the markers who mark candidates' responses, online or manually. They need to adhere to the Code of Practice and

examination procedures which aim to 'promote quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in the assessment … and help maintain standards across specifications' (Ofqual 2011:5).

2.3.5 TRAINING OF MARKERS

Training is a key activity that prepares markers to mark correctly. Two types of training can be distinguished. During the first training markers are given training materials and guidance documents. This training usually focus on the technical aspects such as how to use the OSM system (Ofqual 2014b:4). The second part of the training includes pre-standardisation and standardisation meetings – it is here where markers are actually trained on how to mark. As a quality assurance mechanism, pre-standardisation is done by all examination boards. Pre-standardisation is specifically for senior marking officials with the aim to mark and discuss student responses, familiarise themselves with the marking guidelines and make amendments to the marking scheme if necessary (Ofqual 2014b:5). Team Leaders or Principal Examiners select appropriate scripts or items prior to the pre-standardisation meeting. Because of the large volume of scripts being prepared, pre-standardisation meetings can last two to three days (Ofqual 2014b:6).

After pre-standardisation all markers must attend the standardisation meeting to go through question papers, learn about the marking scheme and establish the marking standard (Baird, Hayes, Johnson, Johnson and Lamprianou 2013:10). Standardisation is important because it prepares the markers for applying the marking guideline (Ofqual 2014b:4). These marked sample scripts are used to train markers on how to mark and apply the marking guideline. However, markers are not aware that the scripts have already been marked by Team Leaders or Principal Examiners. As a form of quality assurance to monitor markers' ongoing marking, standardisation serves to ensure markers mark at the same standard as the Principal Examiner. During training markers mark and then stop to discuss the marks they have awarded to each section. The Team Leaders record the marks given by the markers to demonstrate how the marks converge until all marking has been done to the same standards (Ofqual 2014b:7). Markers liaise with Team Leaders, especially with regard to problem papers

(Baird *et al*. 2013:10). Additional checks might be performed on any of the scripts where there are doubts about the performance of a marker or where the performance of a candidate or school is significantly different from the expectations (Ofqual 2013b:14).

2.3.6 AUTHORISATION TO MARK

After completion of the standardisation, markers must first be authorised or cleared to mark. Ofqual (2013b:16) refers to this stage as the approval phase, which is when a judgement is made as to whether the quality of marking by markers is on standard and they are ready for live marking. The marking of the sample scripts is reviewed and evaluated by senior marking officials to ensure that it is up to standard. The marking is measured by means of a marking tolerance, where the markers' mark is compared with the mark of the Principal Examiner. If a marker's marks are within the acceptable tolerance of the Principal Examiner who has set the standard for marking, a marker is cleared or qualified to start live marking of the GCSE answer scripts (Ofqual 2014b:8). For most examination boards the clearing process takes place once at the start of the marking, with the exception of AQA which requires markers to qualify for live marking each time they log into the OSM system (Ofqual 2013a:17).

2.3.7 LIVE MARKING

Live marking starts only after markers have been cleared during the standardisation process. Live marking is the actual marking of the GSCE scripts and involves the marking of original scripts or items (Ofqual 2013a:17). Throughout the marking period, a sample of markers' work is checked by Principal Examiners and Team Leaders to ensure that they continue to apply the mark scheme accurately and consistently. This is all aimed at ensuring reliability of the marking process. However, if discrepancies are detected, if the markers' work falls below the required standard on a continuous basis or if markers are not marking correctly, they are stopped from marking and their scripts are given to other markers.

2.3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE DURING THE MARKING PROCESS

Various monitoring strategies are used to ensure the quality of the marking and the reliability of the GSCE marking. These strategies include seed scripts or items, double-marking and spot-checking or back-reading in the case of OSM (Ofqual 2014a:12–13). Alternatively, sampling of marking is applied in the case of traditionally marked scripts (Ofqual 2014a:9–11). These quality assurance strategies are explained briefly in the next sections.

2.3.9 CHECKING OF SCRIPTS DURING OSM

2.3.9.1 Seed scripts or items

'Seeds' refer to scripts or items that have already been marked and given a true score at pre-standardisation. During this process the seed scripts or items are marked in an item-level fashion. Item-level marking suggests that scripts are split up into individual questions (or groups of related questions) which are then marked by different markers. This type of marking has many potential benefits which improve marking reliability and accuracy (Ofqual 2014a:15). One such benefit is that candidates are not unfairly disadvantaged by individual markers who mark and pass judgement on the entire script. When more than one marker is involved in the marking of the different sections or items of a script, it ensures a fair marking process. Seed scripts or items are typically planted in each marker's batch of marking, usually at a rate of at least 5%, although other examination boards use 10%. This means that out of 20 scripts or items marked by a marker, one is likely to be a seed. A marker could be automatically suspended from marking if he or she fails too many of these seeds. In such cases the marker is blocked from the OSM system and cannot continue marking until the Team Leader restores access (Ofqual 2014b:12). Although seeding is the main way in which examination boards monitor the accuracy of marking, two other methods, namely double-marking and spot-checking or back-reading, can be applied as well (Ofqual 2013a:18). Seeding is used purely as a tool to check the accuracy of a marker's marking and not in any way a form of double-marking.

2.3.9.2 Double-marking

For some of the more subjective subjects, double-marking runs concurrently with, or in the place of seeding. During double-marking, two markers mark the same item and if their marks differ, Team Leaders or Principal Examiners re-mark and decide on the correct mark. Markers who are guilty of incorrect marking receive penalties and are usually stopped from marking an item if they have received two penalties for the same item. Around 5 to 10% of items are generally double-marked (Ofqual 2014b:13).

2.3.9.3 Spot-checking or back-reading

Some examination boards include spot-checking as a formal part of their quality assurance processes. When spot-checking, examination boards specify a minimum number of scripts from each marker that must be reviewed by Team Leaders. Spot-checking could also be used to investigate possible issues when a marker's seed performance is of concern (Ofqual 2014b:13). Once an unacceptable level of inaccurate or inconsistent marking has been identified through any of the methods above, markers are stopped temporarily. They are given additional support until the examination board is satisfied that they can mark in line with the standardised approach. If this cannot be achieved, the markers are not allowed to continue marking scripts or specific questions and, if it is deemed necessary, all work they have completed will be re-marked (Ofqual 2013a:18).

2.3.10 CHECKING OF TRADITIONALLY MARKED SCRIPTS

2.3.10.1 Sampling of scripts

During sample checking, one or two scripts or items of markers are drawn by the Team Leader to see whether the markers continue to mark accurately. To ease the process, markers are informed how many scripts to provide and are also given guidance about the types of scripts they should include in their sample (Ofqual 2014b:9). This sampling of marker scripts is continuous and lasts throughout the marking process. During sampling a marked script is re-marked to ensure marking is within the acceptable tolerance (Ofqual 2014b:9). It is through the sampling of marking that examination boards are able to detect inaccuracies in marking, which would then require some intervention, worst scenario being to stop markers from continuing to mark (Ofqual

2014b:11). Throughout the marking process, sampling of scripts takes place at different levels of the marking hierarchy. The Principal Examiner sample-checks the marking of Team Leaders to ensure that they continue to apply the mark scheme accurately and consistently. During sampling, markers could be classified as not being in need of intervention when their marking is accurate, or scaling would be required because marking is too lenient or too severe, or they could be classified as lingering doubt markers (Ofqual 2014b:11). A lingering doubt marker is one whose marking is continuously doubted. In such a case, the scripts are passed for marking review (Ofqual 2014b:11).

2.3.10.2 Marking review

Marking review is only applicable to scripts that have been traditionally marked (Ofqual 2014b:13). The marked scripts of any marker about whom there is lingering doubt are presented for marking review. During marking review a sample of a marker's marked scripts are re-marked by a Principal Examiner or Team Leader. Depending on the findings from the re-marking, the Principal Examiner or Team Leader will:

- confirm that the marker's marking is accurate, so no further action is required;
- decide that the marker's marking is aberrant, and all the scripts marked by the marker will be allocated for re-marking;
- take a further sample of scripts from that marker to reach a final decision.

Again, examination boards have different approaches to the marking review (Ofqual 2014b:14). Some focus on those students whose marks place them just below or above a grade boundary, for example, in cases where the grade boundary is 60% and a learner scores 59% or 61%. Since Ofqual (2014b:14) is of the view that these students are most at risk of receiving the wrong grade due to errant marking, scripts are sent for review marking. However, if a marker is found to be irregular in his or her marking, all of his or her scripts are re-marked. This process effectively combines marking review and marking data analysis into a single activity. The findings of each re-marking are reviewed alongside statistical information (information captured and

recorded regarding the pattern of each marker's marking mistakes) to identify markers who need intervention (Ofqual 2014b:14). A marker's marking is passed for marking review usually when the marker has been recommended for scaling but there remains some doubt as to whether his or her marking is sufficiently consistent, or when the marker's marking is broadly within tolerance but some inconsistencies are present (Ofqual 2014b:12).

Most examination boards apply a marking tolerance during marking review in acknowledgement of the fact that legitimate differences in the professional judgement of markers do occur. Many examination boards, therefore, apply a maximum 6% marking tolerance for both OSM and traditional marking. A 6% marking tolerance is not accepted in all cases. For a number of subjects the tolerance range is lower and in the most objective subjects such as maths the marking tolerance could be zero (Ofqual 2014b:10).

2.3.11 POST-MARKING CHECKS

After all scripts have been marked and have gone through various quality assurance processes as outlined above, two different types of checks are conducted. These checks are a) marking data analysis and b) clerical checks (Ofqual 2014b:13).

2.3.11.1 Marking data analysis

During both traditional marking and OSM, examination boards analyse marking data to identify any patterns which indicate errant marking. Because of the advantages of technology used in OSM there are usually more detailed data available, which are not always possible in traditional marking because of limited time and the manual way of gathering data. Although performance may vary from one year to the next for legitimate reasons, significant differences could indicate errant marking, particularly if all the scripts from one school have been marked by one examiner. Therefore, these analyses are only ever used as flags to identify possible issues that require investigation through a review of the scripts (Ofqual 2014b:14–15).

2.3.11.2 Clerical checks

The most common clerical checks are carried out for traditionally marked scripts to double-check that all the marks have been included, transcribed and added up correctly. These checks are generally carried out by examination board staff. For OSM, additional clerical checks could be carried out, especially where a student scored zero in any items. These scripts receive a clerical check followed by a marker check to look for any responses in the script the original marker might have missed (Ofqual 2014b:15).

2.4 QUALITY IN MARKING

For Ofqual (2013a:3) the term 'quality of marking' includes both accuracy and reliability of marking. This means that candidates should receive marks as close to their correct, 'true' scores irrespective of who marks their work. Ofqual (2013a:3) acknowledges that the evaluation of quality of marking is not straightforward because there is no single accepted way of measuring marking quality. However, Ofqual (2013a:3) has identified indicators or directives that should be manifesting in a healthy and reliable marking system:

- robust systems and controls should be in place to promote good marking or to prevent poor marking;
- poor marking should be identified and remedied when it occurs;
- examinations should be marked by markers with the right skills and experience; and
- the review of marks by examination bodies should be dealt with consistently, fairly, transparently and promptly.

In short, for Ofqual (2013a:3) 'quality in marking' refers to a process of marking in which there are minimal to zero marking errors. In this way, candidates would not be unfairly disadvantaged and all possible measures would have been implemented to ensure there are no professional or administrative mistakes in the marking.

The marking process in England appears to be extremely complicated. This might be due to the huge volume of candidates. However, there are multiple ways to ensure quality in the marking process. What stood out for me was that markers need to be qualified or authorised to mark. This implies that even a selected marker would not be allowed to continue marking if he or she has not been cleared and qualified during the sample marking. Moreover, markers who are guilty of incorrect marking receive penalties, and are usually stopped from marking an item if they have received two penalties for that item (Ofqual 2014b:13). All these measures are in place to ensure and strengthen the quality of marking in England and should be applauded especially when applied successfully during a high-stakes examination such as the GSCE.

2.5 SUMMARY

The core of this chapter was to determine through a literature review some of the international perspectives on quality assessment marking. The focus in this chapter was on assessment processes for secondary education exit-level examinations in Hong Kong and England. More specifically, the chapter focused on the quality of the different marking processes of exit-level examinations equivalent to the South African NSC examination. What came to the fore strongly in both the Hong Kong and England cases is the emphasis on ‘high quality marking’ informed by continuous checking procedures. Another crucial point was the process where markers are ‘qualified or cleared’ to mark. This means that markers are not automatically appointed but merely selected for possible appointment after having complied with the specified appointment criteria. Final appointment is absolutely dependent on the results of a competency test which determines a marker’s competency and skills to mark effectively. In both Hong Kong and England the competency test involves a process where markers are ‘cleared to mark’, ‘qualified to mark’, or ‘approved to mark’ live scripts. While different terminology is used to describe the process, it all refers to a competency test. The process of testing marker competency involves markers’ being subjected to a trial marking process. Should they fail twice to mark in accordance with pre-determined standards they would not be allowed to participate in real marking.

The following chapter presents a CPA of the *NSC Regulations* which guide and regulate the NSC marking process.

CHAPTER 3: POLICY IMPERATIVES FOR QUALITY MARKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The NSC examination in South Africa is regarded to be a high-stakes examination because it is an exit-level examination. The NSC marking takes place annually during December, and the duration, start and finish dates are nationally determined (DBE 2014: Annexure L.1; DBE 2015b: Section 7; Section 7.4). Marking is spread over 10 days including Saturdays and Sundays for 12 hours daily (NCDoE 2014e1). Although the nine provinces are at liberty to determine their own start and finish dates within a given timeframe, the marking process in all provinces is undertaken in accordance with the *NSC Regulations* as published in the *Government Gazette* No. 37651 of 16 May 2014[2]. As this policy plays a guiding role in the NSC examinations, the aim of this chapter is to critically analyse how the stipulations of this document support and promote quality assessment marking.

3.2 CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS

According to Taylor *et al.* (1997:19), CPA not only theorises education as a moral idea linked to the concerns of social justice, but also the extent to which particular policies are consistent with the moral vision for education. In order to critically analyse a policy, it is important to understand the context from which the policy has arisen, evaluate how the policy-making processes are arranged, assess policy content in terms of a particular set of educational values, investigate whose interest the policy serves and explore how this might contribute to policy advocacy, and examine how the policy has been implemented (Taylor *et al*. 1997:20).

2 It should be noted that, although it was enacted in 2008, the policy has undergone various amendments. The 2014 version is the latest version of the policy and is referenced in this study.

As the aim of CPA in this chapter is to critically analyse how the stipulations in the *NSC Regulations* support and promote quality assessment marking in the NSC examination, the focus will be placed on an analysis of the policy content with specific reference to the marking process and aspects which relate directly to the marking process. My decision for this focus was informed particularly by media reports that alluded strongly to issues of controversy regarding the marking of NSC examinations. In this regard an article headlined 'Markers cast shadow over matric results' (*The Times* 17 December 2010:10) reported on the discrepancies in the marks a matric pupil received from different examiners during a moderation process.

3.2.1 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In line with Taylor *et al*.'s (1997) statement that every policy develops from and within a particular context, it can be assumed that the historical background of the matric examinations, with specific reference to previous education policies guiding matric examinations in South Africa before 1994, contributed to the development of the existing policy. Policies have always steered education according to the prescriptions of the ruling government. According to Ham and Hill (cited in Codd 1988), policies are developed to exercise political power, and language is used to legitimatise the process. In this regard, Ham and Hill (cited in Codd 1988) perceive policy as 'the course of action which relates to the selection of goals, the definition of values or the allocation of resources'. I explain below the pressures which have ultimately led to the development of the *NSC Regulations*.

The notorious Bantu Education Act of 1953 marks a significant period in the history of separate educational development in South Africa. During the reign of the National Party (1948–1994), various policies were enacted aimed at promoting and upholding the state ideology of separate development for different racial groups. Blumfield (2008:1–2) mentions, for example, the Coloured Person's Education Act of 1963, the Indian Education Act of 1965, the *National Education Policy Act* (Act 41 of 1967), the *General Education Policy* of 1971, the *National Policy for General Affairs Act* (Act 76 of 1984) and the *South African Certification Council Act* (Act 85 of 1986). These policies were not informed by values of equity, equality and justice; rather, they

contributed to social, economic and political malfunctioning (Hartshorne 1999:71). Education policy thus became part of the problem, instead of the solution. Because education policy was marked by instability, uncertainty, contradictions and struggles, a change in policy became essential. Consequently, during the transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994, various policy changes were made as a result of new political leadership.

Beukes (2008:2–3) confirms that democracy was now seen as the political system that would bring about the long awaited transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. With the Government of National Unity at the steer in 1994, a change in policies was indeed inevitable. The *NSC Regulations* (*Government Regulation Gazette* No. 31337 of 29 August 2008) was one of the many new policies born out of a dire need to break free from years of inferior and separate education policies under the oppression of apartheid. Under the umbrella of the *National Education Act* (1996) and the *South African Schools Act* (1996), the *NSC Regulations* is significant because it was the first national policy to address and rectify previous inequalities regarding the exit-level examinations. De Clerk (2010:91–112) claims the country had high hopes that, with a newly found democracy, new education policies would promote greater quality and equity in an effort to redress the unequal education provisions and resources of the past. As such, it assumed that the *NSC Regulations* would portray values such as social justice, equity and equality as contained in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996).

3.2.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS

The analysis of policy content is undertaken to answer the *how* and *what* questions in a policy (Taylor *et al*. 1997:49). With reference to Sallis's (2002:14) definition of quality, I aimed to indicate how:

- quality manifests in the systems and procedures which are in operation in the existing policy;

- quality control systems and procedures are efficiently and effectively operated; and

- the procedures occur in accordance with pre-determined specifications as set out in the policy.

To achieve this, I critically considered the *NSC Regulations* (2014) in terms of quality assessment marking.

As one of the objectives of the *NSC Regulations* (DBE 2014:Chapter 1, Section 2) is to 'regulate and control the administration, management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examination and assessment process', all processes related to the NSC examination are addressed in the policy document. However, in this particular analysis, the focus was placed on Chapter 7, Chapter 9, and certain sections of Chapters 10 and 11, because these chapters address the marking process.

3.2.2.1 Appointment of markers

The selection of markers is a crucial pre-determinant for final marker appointment. In order to ensure fairness and social justice in the appointment process of NSC markers, the criteria for the selection of markers are stipulated in Annexure K in the *NSC Regulations* as an excerpt from the *Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)* (DoE 2003:Chapter E, Section 4.4):

1. a recognised three year post school qualification which must include the subject concerned at second or third year level or other appropriate post matric qualifications;
2. appropriate teaching experience, including teaching experience at the appropriate level, in the subject concerned;
3. language competency; and
4. in addition to the above criteria, preference should be given to serving educators who are presently teaching the subject concerned.

In addition to these criteria, cognisance should be taken of Section 4.1 in the *PAM* (DoE 2003) which states:

> In selecting and appointing persons to the various examination-related positions, cognisance must be taken of the general need to build capacity

> among serving educators in order to attain equity in respect of race and gender, also taking into account the special needs of educators in rural areas. This should be pursued by reserving a certain minimum number of appointments for this purpose. The number of appointments that needs to be reserved for this purpose should correspond with the department's identified needs in this regard.

With regard to the selection of markers, the policy merely indicates that the panel responsible for the selection of markers should comprise:

> (a) the chief examiner;
> (b) relevant departmental officials; and
> (c) teacher unions (as observers) (DBE 2014:Annexure K, Section 4.4.6).

The policy, however, does not elaborate on the selection process itself. In fact, Section 35.2 (DoE 2014) leaves a sense of indecisiveness when referring to '*any* [my emphasis] other additional criteria as determined and approved by the Head of the assessment body or his or her representative'. This vague reference not only creates the impression that the policy developers were uncertain as to what should or should not serve as criteria for marker appointments, but also leaves room for interpretation open to the Head of the assessment body or his or her representatives.

The lack of clear guidance regarding the selection process itself, as well as the vague reference to additional criteria, creates an element of uncertainty in the policy statement. Such a lack of direction stands in direct contrast to Taylor *et al*.'s (1997:48) statement 'that any national policy should provide as much direction as possible'. For example, the only reference to equity is made in Section 4.1 of the *PAM* (DoE 2003), but the notion of the attainment of equity is nowhere else mentioned in the exposition of the selection criteria. Direction in a policy should be illustrated in agreed-upon objectives and priorities in the framework of the policy. Furthermore, this lack of direction might be the reason for 'divergent practices' in the marking which the minister referred to (DBE 2012: Section 6.2.3).

In Section 4.4.3 (DBE 2014:Section K) language competency is listed as one of the criteria for marker appointment. It is, however, uncertain what is meant by language competency. Both the *NSC Regulations* and the *PAM* (2003:Chapter E) provide no information regarding language competency, but merely refer to it as a criterion for appointment. As a consequence, this criterion is rendered almost insignificant because it appears as if no consideration was given to the critical nature of language competency as a criterion for marker appointments. This is a concern because policy-makers ought to be aware of the crucial role of language competency and how non-compliance in this regard could have a detrimental impact on the quality of marking.

Teaching experience in a particular subject is indicated as a criterion in Sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.4 (DBE 2014: Annexure K), as well as in Sections 4.2(c)(i) and (ii) in the *PAM* [2003: Chapter E, Section 4.2 (c)(i)(ii)]. However, no reference is made to subject competency. 'Subject competency' and 'teaching experience in a subject' do not share the same meaning. Subject competency relates to content knowledge in a specific subject, and having teaching experience in a subject does not mean that one has achieved subject competency. According to the DBE (2010:3.2):

> *only teachers who have demonstrated the academic content knowledge and pedagogical expertise in the classroom, had been selected for the marking process because a teacher with low subject knowledge and poor learner performance would be unable to handle problem solving and critical thinking of learner responses.*

And yet, the notion of 'subject competency' is not mentioned in the *NSC Regulations*. Thus, while a required level of subject or content knowledge is needed to be able to mark the NSC examination answer scripts, the policy document is not explicit in this regard.

However, it should be noted that *Government Gazette No. 35631* of 12 August 2012 refers to a draft amendment of the *NSC Regulations* regarding Section 35, which specifically mentions that the appointment of markers will be subjected to the outcome of a competency test. The implementation of such a competency test was earmarked for 2013, but three years after the circulated draft, the competency tests have not yet

been implemented (*Mail & Guardian* 15 October 2014:online; *News South Africa* 26 October 2015:online).

In the context of marking, the aim of a competency test is to test the subject knowledge and skills (competency) required to mark NSC answer scripts. As a value concept, equity refers to fairness, justice or impartiality. The assumption is, therefore, that without evidence of a test to determine sufficient knowledge and skills (competency), marker appointments would be unfair and, as such, a violation of equity as a value. A competency test which precedes the appointment process would underpin equity as a value because markers would be appointed on merit and not merely on race and gender. The reference to equity in the *NSC Regulations* is thus one sided and is used only with regard to race and gender, which serves no purpose in the context of marker appointments because equity refers to fairness or justice.

3.2.2.2 Marker training

In Section 35.3 it is stipulated that:

> [t]he process of appointing markers must commence at least six months prior to the commencement of the specific marking session. This will allow for the verification of marker's credentials, as well as for training, should this be necessary.

While Section 35.3 seems fairly uncomplicated, the interpretation of the term 'marker' might pose a particular challenge. Referring to 'a marker' indicates differentiation in the marking hierarchy. 'A marker' immediately refers to the lowest level of appointment in the marking hierarchy, because there are five different marker levels ranging from marker, Senior Marker, Deputy Chief Marker, Chief Marker and Internal Moderator (DBE 2012:Section 6.2.3d). To avoid ambiguity, the term 'marking official' is a more inclusive term and addresses all levels in the marking hierarchy at once.

In addition, the reference to 'training, should this be necessary' implies that training is not compulsory and the policy does not elaborate on when training might be necessary. However, according to DBE training for marking officials are deemed

critical in order for the consistent application of a marking guideline DBE (2013: Section 6.4.3). Section 35.3 in the *NSC Regulations* is thus not aligned with the DBE (2013: Section 6.4.3) which accentuates the need for extensive training by stating '[h]ence, there is a need for intensive training of markers in the consistent application of the marking guidelines'.

3.2.2.3 Verification and declaration

According to Section 35.4 (DBE 2014):

> [t]he information provided by the applicant for the position of markers must be verified in writing by his or her employer and the relevant assessment body. In the case of the provincial assessment bodies, the verification must be done by the school principal and the district manager.

And:

> [a]ny person appointed as a marker must declare with the Head of the assessment body or his or her representative whether he or she has an immediate relative sitting for a National Senior Certificate examination in the year of appointment. After having made such declaration, the marker may be allowed to mark, but he or she may not mark the examination answer script of an immediate family member (DBE 2014: Section 35.5).

The reference to 'person' in Section 35.5 indicates vagueness and no reference to a specific group of people with specific skills. It would be more meaningful and relevant if replaced with 'Grade 12 educator' since only Grade 12 educators are allowed to apply and be appointed for NSC marking. This might also prevent educators who are not teaching Grade 12 from applying.

3.2.2.4 Selection panel and marking centres

In Section 35.7 it is indicated that 'Markers, Senior Markers and Chief Markers must be appointed annually'. However, it is unclear what the guideline is with regard to the appointment of Deputy Chief Markers and Internal Moderators as these two levels of marking officials are excluded from this section.

With reference to the selection panel for markers, it is stipulated in Section 35.8 that such panels 'must be chaired by the relevant Head of the assessment body or his or her representative'. However, the term 'markers' is problematic once again, because it refers to the lowest rank of officials and excludes the other levels of marking officials. The question thus remains: what regulations are applicable for the selection of Senior Markers, Chief Markers, Deputy Chief Marker and Internal Moderators?

Section 36 stipulates that '[e]ach assessment body must have criteria pertaining to the establishment and management of marking centres', while Section 37 indicates various aspects that need to be considered for the selection of a marking venue. According to Taylor *et al.* (1997:48), national policies should not only provide as much direction as possible, but must also acknowledge the need for flexibility so that provincial departments can slot in their own priorities into the existing framework of national policies. Although Section 37.1 provides flexibility in terms of aspects such as '(a) Marking space; (b) Catering facilities; (c) Overnight accommodation (if required); (d) Security; (e) A suitable control centre; (f) ICT facilities and (g) The availability of water, electricity and other basic facilities', it lacks national guidelines regarding specific requirements for marking space such as the size of the marking room and the maximum number of markers allowed in a standard classroom. Other aspects not referred to include the size of the chairs in and tables at which adults could sit comfortable for at least 10 hours, proper air ventilation, or provision for some comfort during extreme weather conditions and, finally, requirements for a suitable control centre and ICT facilities. These aspects should be considered important since discomfort might contribute to marker fatigue and, consequently, impact the quality of the marking. National guidelines regarding Section 36–37 could also help to prevent preferential changes to the venues, in other words, irrespective of who occupies a post, no preferential changes can be made.

3.2.2.5 Mark sheets and script control

The *NSC Regulations* (DBE 2014:Section 37.5) indicates that the control of mark sheets and examination answer scripts 'may be divided into three phases', namely:

Phase one

(i) This phase entails an audit of all mark sheets and their respective examination answer scripts at the marking centre.
(ii) All manually generated mark sheets or examinations answer scripts are to be recorded in a specific register.

Phase two

Chief markers sign a control list when examination answer scripts are issued to them and again when the examination answer scripts are returned.

Phase three

Mark sheets should be kept in a safe place and sent to the chief markers.

(i) During this phase, copies should be made of the completed mark sheets, which have been returned by the chief markers.
(ii) The original mark sheet should be sent for data capturing. At this stage, control lists are checked to establish whether the chief markers have returned all the examination answer scripts.
(iii) Mark sheets could be scanned for security purposes.
(iv) Capture from the examination answer scripts if marks sheets are not used.

The processes in Section 37.5 are clear and detailed. However, the use of ‘may’ in ‘may be divided’ is problematic as it implies ‘no compulsion’; thus, by implication all three phases are not regarded as of equal importance in the control process. In addition, the regulations do not prescribe any compulsory electronic control of scripts. It is during these stages where mark sheets and answer scripts get lost or are misplaced (NCDoE 2013:1). This happens because too many people are involved in the recording of scripts and mark sheets because of manual processes, which are also time consuming. The financial limitations do not allow optimal control and security

during the flow and handling of mark sheets and scripts at marking centres, despite the fact that the NSC is a high-stakes examination (DBE 2012:76).

3.2.2.6 Marking procedures

Regulations regarding the marking procedure are stipulated in Section 38:

(1) Marking procedures should be clearly formulated by the public assessment body, as contemplated in Annexure L. Independent assessment bodies may determine their own procedures.
(2) The assessment body may release the marking memoranda and examination question papers of an examination to interested parties at the end of April in the year following the writing of the examination.

In continuation of Section 38.1, Annexure L stipulates that:

1. Marking will commence at the termination of the examination.

2. The marking procedure, in terms of the different subjects, should be left to the Chief marker, in consultation with the assessment body.

3. Chief examiners must submit detailed plans with regard to the marking procedure and with special emphasis on:

   (a) the flow of examination answer scripts through the marking teams;

   (b) the mechanisms for controlling the flow of examination answer scripts;

   (c) the moderation by senior markers;

   (d) the checking of totals;

   (e) the final mark is rounded down if the first decimal is less than 5 and rounded up if the decimal is 5 and above e.g. a final mark of 70,3

will be rounded down to 70 and a final mark of 70.6 is rounded up to 71.

(f) the completion of mark sheets; and

(g) the dispatching of completed examination answer scripts.

Section 38.1 states that '[m]arking procedures should be clearly formulated by the public assessment body, as contemplated in Section L'. Section L should thus complement the statement in 38.1. However, while Section L1 is clear and needs no further explanation regarding the commencement of marking, it adds little value to the policy directions besides mentioning that marking cannot commence without having received the final approved national memorandum. In addition, Section L2 states that '[t]he marking procedure, in terms of different subjects, should be left to the chief markers, in consultation with the assessment body'.

The marking procedure is indeed considered the most crucial part of the assessment (DBE 2011: Section 8). This is where a wrong tick at the wrong place could mean the difference between pass and fail. Although the basic principles of marking is applicable to all subjects, for example, indicating with a cross when the answer is wrong and a tick if the answer is correct, the assumption is that, based on the difference in subject content, specific marking procedures differ from subject to subject and from one paper to the other (DBE 2015b: Section 7.5). For example, the procedures which markers apply in Afrikaans Home Language Paper 1, is totally different from Afrikaans Home Language Paper 3, Mathematics or History.

Section L2 is problematic in the sense that the marking procedures for all subjects are left to the discretion of the Chief Markers and the assessment body. No differentiation is made with regard to marking procedures for different subjects. In addition, Section 38.1 and Section L both refer to marking procedures that do not depend on the discretion of the Chief Marker, but instead on the national memorandum discussions where a panel of Provincial Internal Moderators and Chief Markers, National Internal Moderators and External Moderators from Umalusi determine the marking procedures per subject (DBE 2015b: Section 7.5.2). Although Provincial Internal Moderators and

Chief Markers attend the memorandum discussions, the nature of their attendance is to receive training. Marking procedures are thus formulated by the panel and not by the Chief Marker or assessment body as claimed in Section 38.1. The memorandum discussions are interwoven with the marking procedures because the memorandum for each subject is standardised during these discussions, and applicable and relevant responses are determined for each subject, including changes to be implemented. Section 38.1 and Section L therefore pose a misrepresentation of what is happening in reality. Section L3, referring to the day-to-day operations in the marking room, should thus specifically name the Chief Marker as being responsible for these tasks, instead of being responsible for the marking procedures(DBE 2014:33–35).

Section 38.2 states that:

> The assessment body may release the marking memoranda and examination question papers of an examination to interested parties at the end of April in the year following the writing of the examination.

This activity takes place outside the marking room and four months after the marking and the re-marking process. It can therefore be regarded as a post-marking activity. The focus should thus be on the security and confidentiality of the memorandum before, during and immediately after the marking session and not on the release of the memorandum as stated in 38.2. The essence of security and confidentiality measures would ensure the integrity, validity and fairness of the examination and include the re-marking and supplementary examinations which are, in fact, the different stages and a continuation of the final year-end marking. The release of the memorandum after the marking session will therefore not have any impact on the integrity, validity and fairness of the examination.

In sum, Chapter 7 (Sections 35–38) in the *NSC Regulations* provides regulations regarding the appointment of markers and the establishment of marking centres and marking procedures. Although the aim of this chapter is to critically analyse the policy, it should be mentioned that in 2012 the DBE (Section 6.2.3) acknowledged that ‘there is currently some divergent practices regarding a number of the marking practices’. In

this regard, the question remains as to what extent these divergent practices could be considered the consequence of unclear and vague regulations in a policy document (cf. Taylor *et al*. 1997:50).

3.2.2.7 Re-marking of examination answer scripts

Regulations regarding the re-marking, rechecking and viewing of examination answer scripts appear separately in Chapter 9 as Section 43. However, the assumption is that re-marking with its two branches, rechecking and viewing, alludes directly to the attempt to ensure quality in marking.

With regard to re-marking and rechecking, the *NSC Regulations* lays down various stipulations in Section 43.1 as to when a candidate may apply, within how many days and the prescribed fee for a re-mark. In addition to re-marking, the document stipulates regulations regarding the viewing of answer scripts in Section 44. However, despite the importance of the re-marking process as an indicator of the quality of marking, the *NSC Regulations* lacks detail on what re-marking entails. Also, the policy document does not give clear directions on how provinces should manage the process of re-marking.

3.2.2.8 Irregularities

The *NSC Regulations* refers in Chapter 10 to irregularities which are applicable to the entire NSC examination. In this lengthy chapter Sections 45–47 provide general information which is not directly related to the marking process. For the purpose of this study, I focused on Annexure M which provides relevant information regarding irregularities committed during the marking process. Conceptual meanings for various forms of irregularities are presented in Section 1 of Chapter 1. These definitions include explanations for assessment irregularities, examination irregularities, acts of dishonesty, acts of misconduct, administrative errors or omissions, unintentional fails, errors or omissions, as well as explanations of various committees relating to irregularities.

Section 45.1 states the following:

> The Minister of Basic Education must establish the National Examination Irregularities Committee (NEIC) to support the provincial assessment bodies in ensuring that the credibility of the examination is maintained.

It is further stipulated in Annexure M, Section 1(b)(i) that the NEIC 'will be responsible for co-ordinating, as well as supporting the PEICs [Provincial Examinations Irregularities Committees] in the handling of examination irregularities in their respective provinces'. In Section 2(d) an exposition of the composition of the PEIC is given.

Both Sections M(4.5) and M(4.6) address serious issues of irregularities. Section M(4.6)states that:

> [i]rregularities during the marking process relate to irregularities identified by markers of examination answer scripts, and any other acts committed by examination officials and markers, which are in contravention of the National and Provincial regulations.

M(4.6) refers to irregularities committed by examination officials or markers:

(a) Any evidence indicating that an examination official or a marker has engaged in the following acts constitutes an irregularity-
   (i) Failure to adhere to the criteria and the prescribed process for the appointment of markers, senior markers, chief markers, examination assistants and other persons involved in examination-related work, as prescribed in the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996).

While Section M (4.6) addresses serious irregularities, Section 4.6(a) only refers to an 'examination official or a marker' whereas Section M(4.6)(a)(1) seems to have bearing

on marker appointments at all levels. Although the *NSC Regulations* clearly state that failure to adhere to the criteria for appointment or the prescribed process for the appointment of markers constitutes an irregularity, it does not refer to the immense role of the selection panel during marker appointments. This is crucial since an examination official or a marker cannot individually appoint any person. Any marker appointments are done by the selection panel which constitutes a group of officials from the broader DBE with specific reference to district and provincial curriculum officials and not just examination officials (NCDoE 2014b:1). The panel also includes representative members from the teachers' trade unions. If the policy excludes these persons they might be discharged from any involvement in erroneous and unfair appointments. It is therefore deemed important to specifically mention the role and involvement of the selection panel and not merely refer to 'examination officials' or 'markers'.

Section M(4.7) provides an exposition of the serious nature of dishonest acts during examinations and refers to copying during examination, for instance crib notes. This type of dishonest act is widespread and occasionally reaches headlines (DBE 2015b:1). This type of serious irregularity is of national concern because it is a threat to the credibility of the examinations; therefore the policy should address the serious lack of training regarding irregularities. This view stems from the apparent lack of addressing the issue of training in the policy, seeing that there is no mention of training regarding any of the irregularity structures in the policy. However, provincial offices provide workshops to the districts who then cascade training down to school level (NCDoE 2015b:1).

The DBE and Umalusi have a huge responsibility in ensuring that the credibility of the NSC examinations is maintained. However, as the integrity of the entire examination process depends on the findings and solutions of irregularities, it is important that the Provincial Education Departments as the PEIC and the main investigators do not fail in their investigation of such cases. Provincial Education Departments must therefore have a strong team who can assist the NEIC in closing cases without sufficient incriminating evidence.

In Section M(5.5) it is stipulated that:

(a) Examination irregularities, identified by markers during the marking process, must be dealt with as follows-

(i) All examination irregularities suspected by markers, must be reported immediately to the senior marker, the deputy chief marker or the chief marker, who then refers it to the centre manager. The matter is then referred to the Head of the assessment body and the PEIC.

The section on irregularities is comprehensive and clarifies the procedures to be followed in respect of irregularities which might be committed during training of the markers.

However, Section M(5.5) reads 'procedures in respect of examination irregularities identified during the marking process' and states:

(a) In the event of examination irregularities relating to the marking process, as contemplated in sub-regulation 5(4), 5(5) and 5(6), which are committed by examination officials, the Head of Department or his or her representative may immediately suspend an examination official who contravenes any of these regulations, and the matter must then be dealt with in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998(Act No.76 of 1998) or in terms of the Public Service Act, or in terms of any other relevant legislation.

In the mentioned statement, only sub-regulation 5(5) is relevant and applicable to markers. Sub-regulation 5(4) refers to irregularities during the conduct of examinations and 5(6) refer to the capturing of marks. Sub-regulations 5(4) and 5(6) are confusing in the sense that at no stage in the entire examination process are marking officials involved in the capturing of marks. Markers are involved only with the marking of the examination answer scripts and it is not clear why reference is made to the involvement of marking officials or the marking process. The sub-regulations should

instead refer to educators at school level who are involved in the conduct of the examination or examination officials who are involved in the capturing of marks. Alternatively, sub-regulations 5(4) and 5(6) could be moved to sections dealing with the capturing of marks or the conduct of the examination and not be dealt with in the section on the marking process.

3.2.2.9 Security and confidentiality

Section 48 of the policy is very clear about the security and confidentiality regarding all the processes and examination material, which include and refer to:

(a) the examination question papers;

(b) examination answer books;

(c) examination answer scripts;

(d) mark sheets;

(e) other assessment documents; and

(f) the IT system or data base.

Markers are well informed during the training about the above-mentioned list of material which needs close security and confidentiality during the marking. For this reason, markers sign a register during the moving of the examination question papers, examination answer books, examination answer scripts, mark sheets and other assessment documents from one room to the other during the marking (NCDoE 2014e:1).

3.3 INTERTEXUALITY

Taylor *et al.* (1997:46) claim that policies are also intertextual. This means that the development of a specific policy, such as the *NSC Regulations*, is related to other corresponding policies and for that reason policies cannot be read separately as a ‘stand-alone’. Because of its interrelatedness with other policies, the *NSC Regulations*

(DBE 2014:Chapter 16, Section 59:8) should be read in conjunction with Chapter E in the PAM (2003) and the National Curriculum Statement Grade R–12 (2011a). The latter comprises:

a) The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for all approved subjects listed in this document (CAPS);

b) National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements for the National Curriculum statements Grades R–12; and

c) The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12.

Also, as national policies address issues of concern to the nation as a whole, the *NSC Regulations* should be read within the broader education policy context which includes the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

3.4 SILENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE POLICY

Taylor *et al.* (1997:50) argue that, in a linguistic sense, 'what is not said is often as important as what is said'. This statement simply means that issues which are not directly addressed in the policy often play a significant role although the policy seems to be silent on them.

3.4.1 SILENCES

With regard to silences in the policy, the *NSC Regulations* and the PAM (2003:Chapter E) are silent on the following issues:

- the appointment process, including the roles and responsibilities relating to Centre Managers and Deputy Centre Managers;
- selection criteria and appointment of Examination Assistants despite their crucial involvement in the quality assurance of the marking process;
- criteria to test subject and language competency of applicants;

- a prescribed, uniformed formula that calculates the days and payment per hour or script;
- general quality control and quality assurance measures;
- prescribed norm times for the marking of scripts during marking and the moderation of scripts, including the inability to mark within the prescribed norm time;
- the percentage of scripts which should be moderated by the different levels of senior marking officials; and
- critical administrative skills during the marking procedures which include the transfer of marks;
- additional criteria such as pass percentage during subject performance at school level.

The *NSC Regulations* (DBE 2014) only refers to minimum norms and standards for the marking procedure which are insufficient in relation to the National Report (DBE 2011b:Section 8). The silence on Examination Assistants is of great concern since they play a crucial role during the quality assurance of the marking process. Their roles are not referred to anywhere in the policy nor in the content pages (iii) to (ix), nor in the definitions in Chapter 1. Their involvement in the marking process is also not mentioned in Chapter 7.

3.4.2 CONTRADICTIONS

In Section 35.3 it is stipulated that:

> [t]he process of appointing markers must commence at least six months prior to the commencement of the specific marking session. This will allow for the verification of markers' credentials, as well as for training, should this be necessary.

While this section is fairly easy to understand and implement, the statement ‘as well as for training, should this be necessary’ creates the impression that training is optional or not even necessary. However, according to a specific document called the *National Markers Manual* (DBE 2012), training must occur irrespective of the years of experience of the marker. Therefore, the choice of words should reflect the compulsory nature of training. The statement in the policy is not in line with the draft *National Markers Manual* (DBE 2012) and indicates conflicting instructions.

While Section L2 refers to Chief Markers, Section L3 refers to Chief Examiners. This causes much confusion because Chief Markers and Chief Examiners are referred to in the same context and depicted as the same position. However, in practice, the term ‘Chief Examiner’ as explained in the conceptual definitions in Chapter 1, Section 1 of the *NSC Regulations* refers to ‘a person who manages the process of setting the examination question paper and takes responsibility for the quality and standard of the examination question paper’. Clearly, the Chief Marker and Chief Examiner are not the same position nor are their roles and duties the same. The responsible person for the marking is the Chief Marker and not the Chief Examiner. For this reason the mentioned plans should be expected from the Chief Marker and not the Chief Examiner as incorrectly stated in Section L3.

Section 44.2 refers to the reviewing of examination answer scripts implying that reviewing depends upon rechecking or re-marking, because the original marks obtained cannot be questioned unless they have been rechecked or re-marked. This practice indicates another ‘silence’ in the policy. In addition, because the policy is silent regarding who qualifies for a re-marking and who not, it is impossible to exclude candidates who request for reviewing of scripts. This further holds the risk that candidates with extremely poor marks also apply for a re-mark and afterwards even for the viewing of examination answers scripts, which will add to the logistical nightmare of re-marking. Re-marking has major financial implications for a provincial assessment body, although logistics and financial implications which include additional marker claims, etc., are not mentioned in the *NSC Regulations*.

3.5 QUALITY IN MARKING

The value of quality education is emphasised by UNESCO (2013:2) which states that quality education contributes to economic growth. UNESCO further suggests that education policies at all levels must enhance quality at all levels and, for that reason, quality of education and learning is a key area for UNESCO's post-2015 agenda (UNESCO 2013:2). Therefore, the suggestion by UNESCO that 'education policies at all levels must enhance quality' should also be applicable to the *NSC Regulations*.

In Chapter 3, the *NSC Regulations* was critically analysed to see how its stipulations support and promote quality assessment marking. A number of issues were considered such as the selection, verification and declaration of applicants, and the appointment of markers. It was established that marker training and marking procedures are not supported and promoted in this document, because it appears that only basic issues in this regard are addressed in Section K in the *NSC Regulations*. No reference is made to a competency test for markers as a measure to perform quality control of the appointment process. Instead, Section 4.4(1) states 'a recognised three year post school qualification which must include the subject concerned at second or third year level or other appropriate post matric qualifications' as a criterion for appointment. It is also peculiar that the policy itself does not directly address the issue of marker criteria. With due consideration of the intertextuality between policies, I am of the view that the *NSC Regulations* relies too much on the PAM (2003:Chapter E, Section 4.4) which, according to the year indicated, is outdated with no newer version available. The issue of quality control as a process on its own is absent during marking procedures because nowhere does the policy indicate separately which measures are in place to ensure the quality of the marking.

3.6 SUMMARY

According to Sayed (2001), quality is a tool to indicate a desirable goal for education and is used as a value orientation. The assumption therefore is that value orientation refers to moral values which should eventually serve as directives to accomplish quality education. The CPA performed in this chapter addressed certain aspects in the policy, which include marker training, the verification of marker applications, a

declaration by applicants, selection panels, marking centres, mark sheets and script control, marking procedures, re-marking of examination answer scripts, and irregularities.

Although the *NSC Regulations* addresses the NSC examination in its totality, not enough focus is placed on the quality of marking of such a high-stakes examination with the specific intention to guide the process, ensure undisputable quality and standards, and address challenges which might jeopardise the integrity of the NSC examinations. In summary, I found that the extent to which the *NSC Regulations* supports and promotes quality during the marking of NSC answer scripts in certain areas is not sufficient regarding critical aspects.

Earlier reference to a competency test should have been addressed by the amendment draft regulations in *Government Gazette* No. 35631 of 12 August 2012. However, the draft amendment of the *NSC Regulations* regarding Section 35, never materialised. This implies that the competency test is not prescribed as part of legislation and therefore provinces are not obliged to test the competency levels of marking officials before the appointment process. This is further complicated by opposition from the biggest teachers' union in the country (*Business Day Live* 20 January 2016:online).

My conclusion is, therefore, that the *NSC Regulations* and the PAM (DBE 2003: Chapter E) are problematic and inadequate with regard to proper quality control measures for NSC marking. Thus, while proper quality control measures might lead to what Sayed (2005:263) regards as efficiency and effectiveness in quality education, the opposite might be true: Inadequate quality control measures might indeed have an adverse impact on the quality of marking.

In the following chapter specific reference is made to how the marking process unfolds in the Northern Cape Province in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4: NSC MARKING IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention with this study was to explore perceptions of quality in the marking of the NSC examination in South Africa with specific reference to the Northern Cape. Because the quality of marking forms the central point of the study, a background to the South African matric examinations is given first before considering issues of quality in the NSC marking in the Northern Cape Province.

4.2 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EXIT-LEVEL EXAMINATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African Grade 12 exit-level examinations have a long history dating back to the 1800s. According to Trümpelmann (1991:1), the University of the Cape of Good Hope laid the cornerstone of the first matric examination. The first matric qualification examination was launched in 1858 by the University of the Cape of Good Hope (Trümpelmann 1991:2–3).

The matric qualification became the gateway to universities and other professional careers and was soon established as the only school-leaving certificate and recognised by several foreign bodies (Lolwana 2006:4). The magnitude of the matric qualification required some measures of quality assurance by authorised examination bodies to govern and regulate the matric examination. Lolwana (2006:3) notes that the history of quality assurance of the matric qualification can be divided into three phases, namely that of the Joint Matriculation Board, the South African Certification Council and Umalusi.

4.2.1 THE JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD (1918–1992)

During the period 1918 to 1920 the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) was established and occupied a unique position in the education system of South Africa. The JMB had a particular view of standards regarding the matric certificate examination. As such, the JMB was the arbitrator of standards for the matriculation certificate (Lolwana

2006:3) and was therefore responsible for monitoring the standards of the matric certificate examination.

Because of inconsistencies in the standards of marking, the JMB developed alternative measures to improve the quality of marking and to control the quality of the examination process. In addition, subject moderators had to check the marking of at least 20 sample scripts and assess the standard and quality of the marking after which they made recommendations as to whether or not the marks should be accepted unchanged (Trümpelmann 1991:23). During the effort to improve the quality of marking, the JMB realised the need for help with the checking of the marks and subsequently introduced a system where checking clerks had to counter-check the adding up of marks. This practice led to the official appointment of checking clerks during 1927 (Trümpelmann 1991:36). These measures improved the validity and reliability of the examination and assured that standards were maintained (Lolwana 2006:4).

4.2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN CERTIFICATION COUNCIL (1992–2001)

The South African Certification Council (SAFCERT) was a statutory body under the *South African Certification Council Act* 85 of 1986 and replaced the JMB in 1992 (Lolwana 2006:7). The SAFCERT era has not been formally documented and the history of SAFCERT is primarily anecdotal (Lolwana 2006:7). The primary objective of this certification body was the school-leaving certificate. It appears as if the SAFCERT era was not without challenges which included a selective approach to monitoring standards for different racial groups (Lolwana 2006:8). Additional challenges were that some examining bodies were left unchecked while others were closely monitored. In addition, inadequate resources for former Homeland and Department of Education and Training (DET)[3] furthermore resulted in poor performance. Lolwana (2006:8) notes that government printers and some examiners contributed significantly in undermining

3 Homelands' and 'Department of Education and Training (DET)' were terms used during the apartheid era.

the examination process for Coloureds, Africans and Indians. For example, the leakage of question papers was not uncommon under the reign of SAFCERT and the standard of examinations for the then Department of Education and Training remained a cause of concern. The SAFCERT era, however, was short-lived and ended when Umalusi was established in 2001 (Lolwana 2006:8).

4.2.3 UMALUSI (2001 TO PRESENT)

In December 2001 Act No. 58 of 2001, the *General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act*, signalled the end of the SAFCERT era and the beginning of Umalusi. According to Lolwana (2006:12), Umalusi continued to build on both the JMB's and SAFCERT's approaches to control the quality of the standard of the Senior Certificate Examination. Umalusi took over the quality assurance functions and the infrastructure from SAFCERT which purely focused on the quality assurance of examinations (Lolwana 2006).

4.2.4 MATRIC EXAMINATION IN PRESENT-DAY SOUTH AFRICA

Ethnic-based examinations in South Africa came to an abrupt end when the last Senior Certificate matriculation examination was written in 1995 and thereafter replaced with a provincial Senior Certificate matriculation examination. Since 1996, all pupils irrespective of their racial background have been writing the same provincial matric examinations. In practice it meant that all nine provincial education departments each set and marked their senior certificate matriculation examinations (Govender 2008:2). In 2000 and 2001 this arrangement changed when the National DoE centralised the setting and writing of five matric question papers. However, national subjects were gradually increased and implemented and, by 2006, all provinces had to accommodate 11 national subjects in their provincial timetables (Govender 2008:2).

In the aftermath of the transformation of South African education and in an effort to promote equality and quality in education, all matric question papers for all subjects were nationally set and moderated in 2008. This process marked the birth of the NSC which replaced the old Senior Certificate examination. Govender (2008:3) confirms that the 2008 NSC examination was the first and final assessment to determine the success of learners who had entered the Further Education and Training (FET) phase

in 2006. The NSC examination is remarkable because it is the first non-racial exit-level examination to have been written by all learners in South Africa.

4.3 THE NSC MARKING PROCESS IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

As indicated, the NSC examination in South Africa is regarded as a high-stakes examination because it is an exit-level examination. The marking process is one of 14 components during the NSC examination, and in order to provide fair and reliable assessment results to each of the thousands of learners, it is imperative that answer scripts of learners be marked meticulously. According to the DBE (2011b:Section 8), '[t]here is therefore a particular burden of responsibility on each provincial department, but also on all markers to make the correct assessment of each question in each individual answer script marked by them'.

Although NSC marking takes place annually during December and the duration, start and finish dates are nationally determined, provinces are at liberty to determine their own start and finish dates within a given timeframe (NCDoE 2015a:1). Marking usually starts at 08:00 in the morning until 20:00 at night. Only 10 hours are spent on actual marking since 2 hours are allocated for lunch and supper. In addition to providing accommodation for markers who are not local residents in the place where marking takes place, the NCDoE (2015a:1) provides three meals per day to all non-local markers and two meals to local markers because markers are not allowed to leave the premises. The latter measure is strictly for security purposes. These markers are representative of all five districts in the Northern Cape (see Figure 2). The completion of a secrecy declaration is compulsory for all persons involved in the marking, including temporary appointments of Examination Assistants (NCDoE 2014f:1).

4.3.1 APPOINTMENT OF MARKERS

The marking process is done in accordance with the *NSC Regulations* and the *PAM* (2003:Chapter E). The NSC marking process starts with the appointment of markers. In this regard, the DBE (2013:Section 6.4) states that the core business of assessment is to measure learners' intellectual abilities through an appropriate assessment instrument. The marking system must therefore produce reliable and valid scores. The

DBE (2013:Section 6.4.1) further mentions that stringent quality controls have been entrenched in all marking processes over the years. However, with regard to marker appointments, it seems that equity in gender and race are more prominent than the issue of language competency. In this regard, a lengthy description outlines the reasons for appointment based on equity in race and gender, and the PAM (2003:Chapter E, Section 4.1) states that 'cognisance must be taken of the general need to build capacity among serving educators in order to attain equity in respect of race and gender'.

When Section 4.1 is compared with Section 4.4 (3), which merely states the words 'language competency' as part of the appointment criteria, the immediate inference is that the policy places more focus on equity with regard to race and gender than on language competency. The approach in the policy regarding race and gender equity compared to language competency during marker appointments is very different despite language competency having a more substantial role in the marking process.

Language, however, plays a crucial role during the appointment of markers in the Northern Cape. While the province is predominantly Afrikaans speaking, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is both English and Afrikaans; thus, the province must appoint both Afrikaans and English markers (NCDoE 2014a:1).The NCDoE makes provision for language equity in the application form and markers are expected to fill in their language competency. This, however, becomes complicated when markers do not complete the section on language or provide false information to secure their selection. If equity with regard to language is not properly implemented in all areas of the appointment process, unequal representation of one language group will be disastrous in the Northern Cape (NCDoE 2013:1).

While overrepresentation of teachers from performing schools might be to the advantage of the marking process, so can overrepresentation of teachers from underperforming schools be detrimental to the marking process (NCDoE 2014a:1). However, some of these markers have been included in the marking process due to the limited number of markers available in the Northern Cape (NCDoE 2015a:1).

4.3.1.1 Performance reports and competency tests

With regard to quality control, the *NSC Regulations* (DBE 2014:Section 6.4.1) states that 'in addition to the criteria in the PAM document, a performance report of prospective markers and a report on previous performance as markers are added to the criteria and [should be] strictly applied'. However, it is not clear what is meant by a 'performance report' and a 'report on previous performance as markers'. While a report on previous performance might refer to an evaluation of markers during the last marking session, it seems to be verbal advice which is not recorded in a specific manual. This uncertainty has, nonetheless, been clarified in 2015 when the DBE (2015:Section 7.5.1) stated that 'performance report' refers to performance at school level. In the Northern Cape this implies that, to be considered for appointment, marker applicants must have obtained a minimum pass rate of 60% in the last three years. But this criterion was removed from the application form because, nationally, the South African Teachers' Union (Sadtu) has strongly opposed it as one of the requirements for marker appointments (Phakati 2013: 1-2). The Northern Cape was no exception and also removed it as part of the criteria for marker appointments NCDoE.2014a:1).

The Western Cape appears to be the only province to use a competency test as an additional criterion to the PAM (Western Cape Education Department 2014:01). Provinces are currently awaiting a formal written decision regarding the implementation of the *Draft Amendment Policy to Provide for a Competency Test to be Used in the Selection of Markers for the National Senior Certificate Examination* (DBE 2012:1–6). Thus, the NCDoE does not use a competency test as a criterion for the selection of markers currently, nor does it use teachers' pass percentage as an additional criterion. This viewpoint emanated from the influence of the biggest Teacher Union (Sadtu), who is strongly opposed to the use of additional criteria such as a competency tests and pass percentages in the appointment of markers (Phakathi 2013:1–2).

In order to compensate for the lack of a competency test, the NCDoE applies a ranking process. Markers are ranked according to their abilities and performance as markers during the last marking session (NCDoE 2014e:1). These selection panels consist of Subject Advisors from the provincial and district offices of the NCDoE, as well as

Internal Moderators and Chief Markers of the previous marking session. The Internal Moderators and Chief Markers constitute a combination of teachers and curriculum officials from provincial and district offices across the province. The ranking process is relatively new and has been applied since 2014 only (NCDoE 2014b:1). For 2015 the process has been slightly adjusted and markers were given scores, according to which they are ranked from the highest to the lowest. Depending on the number of markers who have applied and are required for the subject, the lowest-ranked markers are excluded during appointment. This is, however, not always the case, especially in subjects where a larger number of markers are required. An additional strategy since 2014 has been to incorporate subject-specific qualifications into the appointment criteria as per directive from Umalusi.

4.3.1.2 Language competency

The importance of language competency is recognised in Section K of the *NSC Regulations* which is an annexure to the PAM (DoE 2003: Chapter E, Section 4.4 no. 3). As mentioned previously, the issue of language competency in the Northern Cape plays a crucial role during the appointment process. Language competency comes under the spotlight when markers are unable to mark scripts in a particular language. English and Afrikaans candidates enrol for the examination, therefor arrangements for marking should include markers who can mark both English and Afrikaans scripts. In this regard the NCDoE (2014a:1) makes provision for marker applicants to indicate their language preference while, as a precautionary measure, the LoLT at a school is also considered during marker appointments seeing that markers might falsely claim to be competent in both languages.

The importance of appointing the correct number of markers for each language group is critical and causes serious problems when markers cannot mark in a specific language (NCDoE 2014a:1). Based on the critical role of language competency in the quality of marking, the expectation is that the *NSC Regulations* should have detailed the discussion, emphasising the devastating effects that non-compliance to language competency has on learner assessment specifically during the marking process. However, this seems not to be the case seeing that Section K, which is an annexure to the *NSC Regulations* (cf. 3.2.2.1), merely mentions the term ‘language

competency'. The crucial role of language competency is further illustrated in cases where an English marker who is not competent in Afrikaans records marks incorrectly. For example, in English the number 86 are read from left to right (eighty-six) and in Afrikaans the number is read from right to left ('ses-en-tagtig'). English markers have difficulty to correctly understand, read and record numbers in Afrikaans, which can either unfairly advantage or disadvantage the learner if 68 ('agt-en-sestig') is incorrectly recorded as 86 (eighty-six) or vice versa. For this reason, the NCDoE (2013:1) had, on numerous occasions, stressed the correct interpretation and recording of numbers.

Language competency is, however, not only applicable to language as a subject, but also as a medium of communication, and is of critical importance during the marking of other subjects in the Northern Cape. With regard to language as a subject the chronic shortage of markers in Afrikaans Home Language in the Northern Cape, which is a pre-dominantly Afrikaans-speaking province, has drastically increased over the last few years. Other languages also offered in the province and affected by these shortages include English Home Language, Setswana, isiXhosa and Sesotho (NCDoE 2014d:1).

Marker shortages in languages exist because of the ratio of language teachers per school versus what is needed at the marking centre. South African Home Languages and First Additional Languages consist of three papers (NCDoE 2014d:1). One educator teaches all three papers at school level, which means the ratio is 1:3. However, during the NSC marking, one teacher is required for each paper, which effectively means a ratio of 3:3. This simple mathematical calculation, however, seems to have been ignored for years on end. Based on this calculation, a marking centre, irrespective of province, will never have enough markers for languages (Gauteng Department of Education 2015:4).

The fact that Second Additional Languages only consist of two papers does not address the shortage of markers in languages because the principle remains that one teacher teaches all the papers at school while, at the marking centre, the papers are split into individual components which require more markers (NCDoE 2014d:1). The

DBE is silent in this regard and has not yet addressed, or realised, the shortage of language markers, although it seems to be a national problem affecting other provinces (NCDoE 2014d:1; Gauteng Department of Education 2015:4). Also, the *NSC Regulations* makes no mention of additional measures to deal with marker shortages in languages.

The problem of marker shortages seems to affect all subjects that consist of more than one paper. This is evident in a subject such as Accounting, which has proven that, with only one paper, there has never been a shortage of markers. This claim is further supported by the fact that, for years, the NCDoE has never experienced a shortage of markers in Economics. However, since 2014, when Economics was split into two papers, the Province has begun experiencing a shortage of markers. The same principle which is applicable to language teaching is also applicable to subjects with more than one paper: The same teacher is responsible for teaching both papers and, although a marker is required for each paper, the same teacher cannot be appointed for both papers at the same time (NCDoE 2014d:1). This has, however, changed in 2015. In an effort to solve the shortage of markers, one paper had to be marked before the start of the formal marking process and language markers have been appointed for a maximum of two papers. In this way the same markers was then re-appointed to mark the remaining papers (NCDoE 2015a:1).

For the appointment of senior positions, however, marking officials must be competent in both languages since report writing must be done in both Afrikaans and English and they must also be able to moderate scripts in both languages. Senior Markers who perform the first level of moderation are therefore appointed according to the number of language entries in a specific subject.

4.3.1.3 Subject-specified qualifications

While reference was made to a competency test as part of the appointment criteria, the hope is that the much-debated competency test will address both language and subject competency during marker appointments. A competency test seems to be the only way to determine the level of subject competency which, in turn, has an impact on quality marking. While subject qualification is important, it is no guarantee for

subject competency. Instead, it would be more beneficial to the marking process if, in addition to the relevant subject qualification, markers showed an acceptable level of subject competency. The idea is, therefore, that subject qualifications be supported by a competency test and, in this way, a competency test would serve its rightful purpose. However, the PAM (DoE 2003:Chapter E, Section 4.4) does not adequately address the importance of subject qualifications, despite the fact that both Umalusi and the DBE focus on these areas during their provincial visits (DBE 2014:Chapter 5:35–45). There is also no guarantee that provinces are implementing the recommendations made by the authoritative bodies such as Umalusi and the DBE.

In subjects such as Accounting, the selection of markers with subject-specific qualifications seems to be paying dividends because no major re-marking problems in the Northern Cape have been experienced since subject-specified qualifications have been implemented as part of the criteria (NCDoE 2014a:1). This implies that educators with a higher subject-related qualification receive preference above educators with the minimum qualification requirements, especially in more senior positions. However, the biggest challenge appears to be human subjectivity during ranking. In other words, markers can be disadvantaged during the ranking process if the person doing the ranking is subjective. The possibility also exists that Northern Cape district representatives might be promoting only candidates from their respective districts during the ranking or selection process (NCDoE 2014b:1).

In certain subjects the NCDoE experiences extremely low enrolments. These subjects are referred to as ‘small subjects’. Small subjects are marked outside of the Province by the nearest province or a province with higher enrolments in the specific subject (NCDoE 2014c:1).

4.3.2 APPOINTMENT OF CENTRE MANAGERS

In the previous chapter it was indicated that the *NSC Regulations* is silent with regard to the appointment process relating to Centre Managers and Examination Assistants (cf. 3.4.1). However, while there is no national guidance in the policy regarding the said appointments, the NCDoE (2015b:1) has its own criteria for the appointment of

Centre Managers and prefers to appoint departmental officials from the curriculum directorate.

In addition to the markers, the NCDoE (2015b:1) also appoints Centre Managers who are responsible for managing the marking process. Centre Managers, and Professional and Administrative Deputy Centre Managers are appointed per centre. Centre Managers are overall in responsible for the smooth operations at the marking centre. Two Deputy Centre Managers are appointed, one as Professional Deputy Centre Manager to provide professional assistance, and one as Administrative Deputy Centre Manager to supervise and oversee the Examination Assistants and accommodation. The supervision of Examination Assistants is an important part of the marking, since Deputy Centre Managers, together with the Examination Assistants, deal with mark sheets (NCDoE 2014f:1). At the end of the marking, Centre Managers are expected to submit a detailed report regarding all issues during the marking, including the suitability of the marking centre**,** training of markers, liaison and management of Examination Assistants, control *and* management of mark sheets, checking of scripts for errors, irregularities, Internal Moderators and Chief Markers reports, maintenance of the norm time, monitoring and moderation, accommodation and catering, security, tuck shop, challenges and possible recommendations*.*

As part of the responsibilities of the Centre Managers they oversee the marking process and release markers as they complete the marking. After all the marking has been completed, only the Centre Manager can declare the marking centre closed, provided that he or she has returned all scripts to the provincial office. For this purpose, a checklist is used in the Northern Cape to ensure that all scripts, relevant reports, claims and documentation have been submitted and that no examination-related material has been left in any of the rooms (NCDoE 2015b:1).

4.3.3 APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS

Examination Assistants are appointed to perform clerical duties (NCDoE 2014f:1). They are appointed from the ranks of tertiary and unemployed graduates and students. An advert is placed in local and free community newspapers. Only second-, third- and fourth-year students from the Province are appointed, irrespective of the institution at

which they study. Unemployed matriculants are appointed for tasks where no skills are required, such as moving scripts from one room to another.

Examination Assistants are trained before they assume duty. Their main tasks are checking the adding up of totals, the correct transfer of marks from the inside to the cover page and whether all questions have been marked. Examination Assistants are allowed to use only a pencil to check marks. They are provided with a separate error sheet to indicate the errors, after which the responsible Internal Moderator or Chief Markers should correct the marks before scripts can be accepted as final (NCDoE 2014f:1).

While the role of Examination Assistants is crucial during marking, the *NSC Regulations* does not in any way address their appointment nor their role. In addition these EA's are seasonal employees entrusted to handle live scripts of candidates during which many irregularities might take place, for example, the fraudulent changing of marks. Because their involvement in the NSC examinations is not clearly defined in the *NSC Regulations*, would their involvement in the NSC marking not constitute a serious irregularity when considering the following:

(a) Any evidence indicating that an examination official or a marker has engaged in the following acts constitutes an irregularity-

(b) Failure to adhere to the criteria and the prescribed process for the appointment of markers, senior markers, chief markers, examination assistants and other persons involved in examination-related work, as prescribed in the *National Education Policy Act*, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996) (DBE 2014:Section M4.6).

4.3.4 NATIONAL MARKING GUIDELINE DISCUSSIONS

Just after the written examinations, before the start of the marking process, all Internal Moderators and Chief Markers attend a provincial pre-marking session. At this session a maximum of 20 scripts are pre-marked in preparation for the national marking guideline (memorandum) discussions (NCDoE 2014e:1). The Internal Moderators and Chief Markers complete the pre-marking according to a preliminary marking guideline

which they have prepared themselves. After completion of the pre-marking, they make copies of the pre-marked scripts in preparation for the national memorandum discussions.

Attendance of these discussions is compulsory for Internal Moderators and Chief Markers because this is where the national marking guidelines are discussed, standardised, adjusted and finalised. All nine provinces are represented at these memorandum discussions. During these discussions Internal Moderators and Chief Markers are trained in marking. All marking officials are expected to mark within a pre-determined tolerance range set by the DBE. Marking within a set tolerance has been implemented since 2014. Marking within an acceptable tolerance range during national marking guideline discussions determines whether Internal Moderators and Chief Markers are capable of leading the marking in their respective provinces (NCDoE 2014e:1).

4.3.5 PREPARING TO MARK

Marking in South Africa, thus including marking in the Northern Cape, is still done the traditional (manual) way, which means that markers use a pen to mark the actual scripts by hand (NCDoE 2015b:1). A national 'per question' marking process is followed which implies that a marker does not mark the entire script but only one or two questions per script. Markers are divided into groups according to a national ratio of 1: 5 where one Senior Marker is responsible for overseeing and supervising five markers. One Deputy Chief Marker is appointed according to a ratio of 1:7 to oversee and supervise seven Senior Markers. However, the small number of enrolments in the Northern Cape does not always allow for Deputy Chief Markers (NCDoE 2014c:14), which ultimately have a negative impact on the quality of marking because one layer of moderation is missing in the process. The Province seems unable to solve this challenge because markers would not mark additional scripts without additional remuneration. Furthermore, the norm time (DBE 2014:1) would not allow markers to mark for longer hours in an effort to compensate for the missing level of moderation. Appointing more markers is also out of the question because the NCDoE is already faced with marker shortages and any additional officials would mean additional costs.

4.3.5.1 Marker and administrative training

On day 1 of the marking, generic training takes place during which all senior marking officials are briefed about the logistics and day-to-day operations; the handling of mark sheets and claims; the distribution, collection and flow of scripts; irregularities; report writing; monitoring; and general marking guideline discussions. After the generic training, subject-specific training of the national memorandum discussions takes place. Internal Moderators and Chief Markers who attended the national memorandum discussions lead the provincial memorandum discussions (NCDoE 2014e:1). The training session lasts for at least eight hours. In-depth discussions of the national memorandum are cascaded to Deputy Chief Markers and Senior Markers. After the memorandum discussions Internal Moderators and Chief Markers use dummy scripts to train Deputy Chief Markers and Senior Markers to mark within the nationally determined tolerance range. In each subject, at least five scripts have to be marked during the training, except in subjects with small enrolments where only a maximum of three dummy scripts are marked (NCDoE 2014e:1).

On day 2 the training is cascaded to the rest of the markers in their specific subject training, which includes administrative processes and dummy script marking according to the national tolerance range. The marker training starts from 10:00 until 20:00 or until all markers are able to mark according to the national tolerance range (NCDoE 2014e:1). Administrative processes include the transfer of marks from the inside to the front cover of the answer script or from the front cover to the mark sheet, the completion of a mark sheet and the completion of an irregularity form.

Apart from the training of markers on the first and second day of marking, the NCDoE has an additional training session in place for Internal Moderators and Chief Markers during October each year as part of their preparation for the new marking season. During this training session a ‘post mortem’ of the previous marking sessions is held and new ideas are discussed as to how to circumvent previous mistakes and improve the following marking session (NCDoE 2014e:1). Internal Moderators and Chief Markers train markers on all relevant administrative documentation that needs to be completed. Clear instructions are given regarding the allocation of English/Afrikaans scripts: English markers mark English scripts and Afrikaans markers mark Afrikaans

scripts. Internal Moderators and Chief Markers may also allocate additional administrative duties to markers who show potential (NCDoE 2014e:1).

Practical training is offered by providing dummy mark sheets to show how marks should be transferred or calculated at different stages. Focus is also placed on continuous record keeping and tracking of all scripts through the marking process. The Chief Marker hands out a marker manual to markers (NCDoE 2014e:14). During training markers get a chance to practically apply their knowledge onto dummy scripts and dummy mark sheets. Senior Markers pay special attention and render additional support to novice markers.

4.3.5.2 Allocation of questions

The *NSC Regulations* does not indicate any processes or requirements regarding the distribution of questions to markers. Unlike Hong Kong and England, there is no additional method to determine the competency of markers before the commencement of the actual marking process. The lack of any form of competency testing complicates the allocation of suitable questions to markers and leaves a huge gap in the marking process.

Bearing in mind that no official competency test is done in the country, the NCDoE (2014e:1–2) selects and allocates certain questions to each marker based on their previous experience and previous marker evaluation and not according to their level of subject competency. Although it is not the best method, the easier questions are usually allocated to novice markers (NCDoE 2014e:1). This method leaves room for errors because previous experience alone is no guarantee of subject competency. Furthermore, marker evaluations are also not appropriate if used alone as an indicator of subject competency, especially because Internal Moderators and Chief Markers use only the terms ‘good/excellent/poor’ in evaluation reports to describe markers’ performance (NCDoE 2014e:1). Each marker is given a question/s to mark according to their abilities, which might be problematic since abilities cannot be determined without some sort of test. In addition, it is crucial that Chief Markers take informed decisions regarding the allocation of questions (NCDoE 2014e:1).

During the distribution of scripts/questions to markers, cognisance should be taken of the language capabilities of each marker. As mentioned, Afrikaans-speaking markers mark Afrikaans scripts and English-speaking markers mark the English scripts. However, if Chief Markers are convinced that a marker is competent in both languages – usually due to first-hand knowledge of the language competency of previous markers – they might allocate both English and Afrikaans scripts to that marker. In addition, Senior Markers are allowed to moderate scripts only in a language in which they are competent and are therefore not allocated scripts of a language in which they are not competent. The appointment of Senior Markers is subsequently done in accordance with the number of scripts in a particular language (NCDoE 2014c:1).

It should, however, be mentioned that, during 2010, the NCDoE conducted an extremely successful testing of markers although it was under the pretence of a marker workshop. From the evaluation which markers completed at the end of this training, it became clear that markers were literally hungry for the type of training which was offered. The training involved the writing of a test, and previous Grade 12 supplementary examination question papers were used to test markers. The results were not only extremely helpful, but also proved to be an eye-opener because they brought to light the levels of content knowledge of each marker. The test also included a section which tested the administrative knowledge and skills of markers, which play an equally important role in the marking process (NCDoE 2010:1).

4.4 ACTUAL MARKING

After all training regarding actual marking and administrative procedures has been completed the Chief Marker will indicate whether markers can continue.

4.4.1 MODERATION OF SCRIPTS AND THE ROLE OF MARKING OFFICIALS

Script allocation is determined by using a formula which takes into account the norm time of each subject, number of markers and number of marking days. Markers are not allowed to mark or moderate the scripts of the centres where they are teaching or those of immediate family members. For that reason, all markers must declare any relations with candidates. Markers with children who write the same examination are

allowed to mark but not in any senior position. Each level of marking and moderation uses a different colour pen to differentiate between the different levels (NCDoE 2014e:1). Markers do the general marking of scripts. As mentioned previously, the national approach to marking in South Africa is the 'per question' approach. The number of markers are determined by the number of candidates per subject and paper, as well as the norm time. As mentioned previously, the number of Senior Markers are determined at a national ratio of 1:5, while Deputy Chief Markers are determined at a ratio of 1:7. The appointment of Deputy Chief Markers in the Northern Cape is not a regular occurrence because of the small number of candidates in the Province compared to the high volumes in big provinces. One Chief Marker and one Internal Moderator are appointed per subject and per paper. Although only one Chief Marker is appointed per subject and paper, there is an exception for all Paper 2 Home Languages in the province where two Chief Markers are appointed because of the different genres in the prescribed literature.

A minimum of 10% of all scripts per subject and paper are moderated which are randomly selected from moderated and unmoderated scripts from subordinates. This means that a script should have a maximum of four levels of moderation, but because only 10% of scripts are moderated not all scripts undergo all four levels of moderation (NCDoE 2014e:1).

4.4.2 MONITORING AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKING

Monitoring of marking is done by Provincial Examination Officials. However, this monitoring is confined only to generic monitoring because these officials are not subject specialists. Provincial monitors use a monitoring tool which is in line with national prescriptions (NCDoE 2014e:1). Additional monitoring is also done by subject specialists from Umalusi and the DBE as per their specific mandates although DBE also performs monitoring of a generic nature.

Examination Assistants who perform administrative checking are supervised by the Deputy Centre Manager responsible for administrative tasks. Scripts are individually checked to ensure that the correct marks have been transferred from the inside of the script to the front cover of the script, that marks have been correctly added up, that all

questions have been marked and that marks on the front cover of answer scripts correspond with marks on the mark sheet. Examination Assistants copy all mark sheets before returning them to the provincial office for safe keeping (DBE 2012:13).

4.5 POST-MARKING CHALLENGES

The re-marking period is nationally determined after the release of the NSC results during the first week of January the following year. Immediately after the release of results, candidates can register for re-marking. The registration period is nationally determined and re-mark applications are accepted up to the end of January (DBE 2014:Chapter 9, Sections 43–44). A nationally determined fee is charged per subject and candidates can register between one and seven subjects, as well as additional subjects for some candidates (NCDoE 2014d:1). Provinces complete all re-marks within five days of the first week in February, after which Umalusi first verify information before granting approval to release the results.

The reviewing and rechecking of marks fall within the same period as the re-marking, but are different processes with different tariffs (DBE 2014: Chapter 9, Section 43–44). However, a review/recheck might lead to a re-mark depending on whether the candidate is satisfied with the results of the reviewing/rechecking. The re-marking period is the time during which the most valuable evidence of the quality of the marking in the Northern Cape is revealed. Based on errors picked up only during re-marking (NCDoE 2015c:1), and not during quality control (moderation) by Senior Marking Officials and Examination Assistants, it appears that re-marking has not received sufficient attention and the errors should rather be kept hidden away from the rest of the world as Cesare, Loock and Govender (2007:2) claim.

Re-marking is still regarded as part of the same examination and marking cycle, although it is performed during January of the next year. Because moderation is a process of quality control, it implies that all levels of moderation is deemed necessary to illuminate the re-marking process. Notwithstanding the important link between moderation and the re-marking process, the *NSC Regulations* does not sufficiently emphasise the critical importance of moderation under marking procedures, but merely mentions it in Section L3c as ‘the moderation by senior markers’. In this regard,

the NCDoE (2014d:1) confirms that scripts that went through all the different levels of moderation have never shown a change in marks when compared to scripts that were marked only once by a marker. This serves as an important indicator that, in order to illuminate the re-marking process, all scripts must go through all levels of moderation.

The re-marking process has proved to be extremely valuable in determining the marking quality. By implication, it means that the Northern Cape is gravely disadvantaged by the system seeing that Deputy Chief Markers are appointed based on the number of Senior Markers. Based on the nationally determined ratios for the appointment of Senior Markers (1:5) and Deputy Chief Markers (1:7), it is practically impossible that the Northern Cape would ever have Deputy Chief Markers because of the small number of candidates in the province. This means one level of moderation is lacking in the Northern Cape. While bigger provinces, thus, have four levels of moderation, the Northern Cape only have three levels, with a negative impact on the quality control of the marking process. In this regard 'more seems better', because the more marking officials to moderate, the better the quality of marking seems to be. Unfortunately, the South African examination process only allows for re-marking after the release of the results in which the *NSC Regulations* indicate various stipulations in Section 43.1 (DBE 2014: 43.1). Had re-marking been part of the normal marking process and used as a quality control measure, instead of as a post-marking activity which serves no clear purpose, the quality of marking could drastically improve and, in turn, change the lives of hundreds of candidates.

While the main focus of this study was on the quality of the NSC marking and not on the quality of education *per se*, the two issues cannot be separated. The quality of marking of such a high-stakes examination as the NSC could be seen as a subdivision of the broader education quality. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, mentioned on numerous occasions during her Budget Vote Speech on 6 May 2015 the importance of quality in education, which was further expressed in the theme of her speech, namely *Repositioning the Basic Education Sector for Accelerated Quality, Equity and Efficiency* (DBE 2015a:1). Still on the issue of quality education, an article titled 'Radical matric reform on the cards' in *Sunday Times* on 3 August 2014 reported that:

> *the proposals are likely to be welcomed by education experts, who say poor quality of the matric certificate and the generally low level of education offered at South Africa's public schools are handicapping South Africa's young people and not properly preparing them for the world of work.*

In yet another article titled 'Pandor speaks out on SA's poor quality of education' on 12 February 2015 on *Moneyweb*, the poor quality of the South African public education system was confirmed by Minister Pandor.

Although the importance of quality education is expressed in the various articles mentioned above, the term 'quality' appears in a negative context which casts even more doubt on the NSC qualification of which the NSC marking forms an integral part. Spaull (2013:24) blames poor teacher content knowledge as a main reason for poor quality education in South Africa. He further states that teachers are, and have always been, the primary focus of schooling systems around the world and that the single most important element of an education system is the quality of its teachers, which is intensely related to the quality of its education system (Spaull 2013:24). According to Spaull (2013:24), there is considerable research to support his claim and he summarises his view stating that 'the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers'

Modisaotsile (2012:2) attributes the poor quality of public education in South Africa to a number of reasons, which include poor teacher training and unskilled teachers, as a hindrance to good quality teaching. Spaull's (2013:24) pertinent reference to 'poor teacher content knowledge' has a direct relation to marking quality of which content knowledge forms the corner stone (cf. 3.2.2.1). In this regard, the DBE (2010:3.2) states that 'a teacher with low subject knowledge … would be unable to handle problem solving and critical thinking of learner responses'.

The mentioned views on poor quality education strengthen the various media articles (cf. 1.2) which persistently report negatively on the quality of the NSC marking process and fuel the controversy regarding the marking process. The DBE (2009:Section 1.5) states that the main drivers of quality in the NSC is the setting of clearly defined standards, while the *NSC Regulations* (DBE 2014:Chapter 7, Sections 35–38 and

Section L) does not reflect these clearly defined standards with regard to marking. Therefore, the question arises against which quality standards are the NSC marking being done?

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the quality of the NSC marking process with specific reference to the Northern Cape Province. Various aspects were discussed, in alignment with the *NSC Regulations* and the prescriptions in Chapter E of the PAM (2003). Issues that came to the fore in this chapter included the absence of a language competency test, and the fact that the appointment of Centre Managers and Examination Assistants is not dealt with in the *NSC Regulations*. It has been indicated in this chapter that preparation for actual marking includes national marking discussions, as well as marker and administrative training and the allocation of questions to suitable markers. Also, it has been highlighted that, during the actual marking process, the focus is on the role of marking officials during the moderation of scripts, administrative checking of the marked scripts and monitoring of the marking. One of the major post-marking challenges was indicated as being the re-marking process.

In the next chapter the focus will be placed on the experiences of the various role players in the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape.

CHAPTER 5: ROLE PLAYERS' EXPERIENCE OF NSC MARKING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters dealt with international and local perceptions on the quality of marking in exit-level examinations. A critical policy analysis of the policy which guides the local NSC marking was also conducted. In a sense the previous chapters acted as a forerunner to this chapter regarding the role players' experience of NSC marking.

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to explore the realities of various role players in the marking process in an effort to determine what the perceptions of quality are in the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape. For this purpose, empirical research was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews in an effort to gain insight into the topic under investigation. Empirical research is described as the use of research methods in which empirical observations or data are collected in order to answer particular research questions. While primarily used in academic research, empirical research can also be useful in answering practical questions (Moody 2002: 393).

The focus of the chapter is on the analysis of the data gathered from the empirical research. In addition, a summative description of the research methodology, data generation strategy, issues of integrity, data analysis and data presentation will be presented. Finally, the chapter will present the findings of the interviews to validate the perceptions which pertain to the quality of the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape. This will provide the answer to the research question.

5.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.2.1 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative research produces descriptive data in the participants' own written or spoken words (Seep-Aims 2000:5). A qualitative method captures participants' in-depth description of their experiences in their own words. In this study, a qualitative approach would therefore present marking officials the opportunity to give account of

their own meanings, experiences and perceptions regarding the quality of the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape.

5.2.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The qualitative researcher employs purposeful or criterion-based selection of participants with characteristics relevant to the research question (Nastasi 2007:1). This means that specific types of individuals are selected purposefully to include only those with particular experience or characteristic relevant to the research question. In this study, the research question addressed the quality of the NSC marking process and therefore specific types of individuals involved in the NSC marking process were selected. According to Nastasi (2007:1), specific types of individuals are selected for qualitative research. This selection included eight participants representing all levels in the NSC marking hierarchy. The specific type of individuals which have been selected for this study include Grade 12 educators with current and previous NSC marking and teaching experience. So although participants were involved at different levels during the NSC Marking, their mutual experience makes them rich with information appropriate for this study. Administrative officials have not been included since they are not involved in the actual marking process, which is a professional aspect of the marking. The selected participants, irrespective of their different roles, are all educators who teach or have taught Grade 12 learners at some stage. Their involvement and experience in Grade 12 and specifically in the marking process of the NSC exit-level examination made them information-rich candidates who could add much value to this study.

Purposeful selection in qualitative research is used to identify and select cases which are rich in information (Palinkas *et al.* 2013:1). The inclusion of marking officials at different levels of the marking process is therefore intended to maximise efficiency and validity during the interviews. To obtain a sense of the perceptions regarding the quality of marking, relevant stakeholders at different levels in the marking process had to be interviewed.

Participants with knowledge of the marking process were therefore randomly selected from the ranks of markers, principals, Grade 12 educators, teacher union members and curriculum officials.

5.2.3 DATA-GENERATION STRATEGY

Semi-structured interviews is a qualitative method of data gathering in which pre-planned core questions are asked by the researcher (Thomas 2010:314). The intention with semi-structured interviews is to capture the subjects' views on a specific issue which consist of meaningful relations that must be interpreted. Moreover, qualitative research interviews try to understand something from the subjects' point of view and to uncover the meaning of their experience (Kvale 1996:88). For that reason standardised, open-ended, face-to-face interviews were employed in an effort to determine the views of the marking officials regarding the quality of the NSC marking in the Northern Cape. Based on the mentioned claims of Kvale (1996:88), the aim of the interviews was to gather first-hand information and different opinions from different role players on the realities regarding the quality of NSC marking in the Northern Cape.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:315) claim that semi-structured interviews are organised based on a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. The most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research is the semi-structured in-depth interview which allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006:315). Similarly, Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush (2006:1) contend that semi-structured interviews are useful when there is a need to collect in-depth information in a systematic manner from a number of respondents. The semi-structured interviews in this research were organised based on a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions pertaining to NSC marking.

5.2.4 ISSUES OF INTEGRITY

While ethical considerations were dealt with extensively in chapter 1, some additional aspects regarding issues dealt with in this chapter should be highlighted, namely integrity. Korenman (2006:1) defines integrity during qualitative research as an ethical principle which includes honesty and trustworthiness. Research integrity also means to examine the data with objectivity and be guided by the results rather than by pre-conceived notions. This implies a commitment to intellectual honesty and personal responsibility for one's actions, as well as active adherence to the ethical principles in research. Some of the characteristics of responsible research include:

1. Honesty and fairness in proposing, performing and reporting research;
2. Accuracy and fairness in representing contributions to research proposals and reports; and
3. Protection of human subjects in the conduct of research.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:54) claim that each stage in the research sequence raises ethical issues caused by the nature of the research project itself, methods of data collection or the type of data collected (sensitive information) and what is to be done with the data. Thus, while ethics are concerned with right and wrong or good and bad, the researcher must at all times consider how the research in its entirety adheres to ethical principles and practices.

Integrity in qualitative research refers to trustworthiness and, according to Elmusharaf (2013), several criteria have been established for both quantitative and qualitative research to evaluate their trustworthiness or rigor. Elmusharaf (2013) argues that, in order to measure the truth value in qualitative research, trustworthiness of the data and data analysis should be reflected in strategies such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

5.2.4.1 Credibility

Credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible, believable or trustworthy from the participants' perspective. Because the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand events of interest through the eyes of the participants, they are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results Trochim (2000:1). Elmusharaf (2013) is of the opinion that credibility relates to whether the researcher has really measured what was set out to be measured. Credibility is therefore the ability of the research to capture what the researcher really aimed to study, in other words, ensuring that the results are not the product of research design errors, misunderstandings, or the influence of unknown factors.

5.2.4.2 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. The researcher can enhance

transferability by thoroughly describing the research context and the assumptions central to the research. However, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the person doing the generalisation. In other words, the person transferring the research results to a different context is responsible for making the judgment as to how sensible the transfer is (Trochim 2000:1). Transferability also relates to how applicable the results are to other subjects and other contexts. Because transferability is naturalistic in nature, transferability depends on similarities between sending and receiving contexts. This means the researcher collects sufficient detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with sufficient detail and precision to allow judgments about transferability by the reader (Elmusharaf 2013).

5.2.4.3 Dependability

According to Trochim (2000:1):

> *The idea of transferability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study.*

The question is thus raised: Would the findings be the same if the research were replicated in the same context with the same subjects? Dependability therefore relates to consistency, which means an investigation must provide the same evidence if it were to be replicated with the same or similar respondents in the same context (Elmusharaf 2013).

5.2.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or validated by others. There is a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Another researcher could take an opposite approach with respect to the results by documenting them and then describing them *negatively* to contradict prior observations. After the study, a data audit can be conducted to examine the data collection and analytical procedures and make judgements about the potential for bias or distortion (Trochim 2000:1). Neutrality relates to confirmability and is the degree to

which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of researcher bias. An adequate trail should be left to enable the auditor to determine whether the conclusions, interpretations and recommendations can be traced to their sources and whether they are supported by the inquiry (Elmusharaf 2013).

With regards to this study, *the researcher* has compared the responses of the interviewees with related documents from the NCDoE marking to ensure the credibility, *transferability, dependability and confirmability* of responses provided by the interviewees. In doing so, I ensured adherence to research integrity and was guided by the results rather than by pre-conceived notions (Korenman 2006:1).

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This section first explains how the qualitative data will be analysed and then presents the qualitative data gathered from all different levels of involvement in the NSC marking process.

Qualitative data analysis

Lacey and Luff (2009:321) are of the view that the most important feature of qualitative analysis is text (qualitative data) rather than numbers. The 'text' that is being analysed in qualitative data is often transcripts of interviews or notes from observation sessions, but text can also refer to pictures or images that the researcher examines.

Qualitative text analysis can be a way to understand what participants 'really' thought, felt or did in some situation or at some point in time. Qualitative data analysis describes textual data in ways that represent the setting from the participants' viewpoint, and not with regard to pre-defined measures and hypotheses which the researcher brings to the study. During the data analysis, important categories in the data, as well as patterns and relationships, are identified through a process of discovery.

5.4 CONDUCTING THE STUDY

5.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

Interviewees in this study consisted of a Senior Marker, a Chief Marker and an Internal Moderator. I did not consider involving markers in this population since the mentioned officials all serve as markers and are exposed to the same experiences and conditions as markers. In addition, I included one curriculum official, a Deputy Centre Manager, a high school principal and representatives from different teacher unions. I regard these respondents very knowledgeable when it comes to the NSC marking. In total I interviewed eight respondents. Respondents were representative of three districts of the Northern Cape, namely Namaqua, ZF Mgcwau and Frances Baard. On request from the participants, all interviews took place in Kimberley which is also the central location for the NSC marking in the Frances Baard District. Three of the interviewees were English speaking while the rest (five) were Afrikaans speaking. The gender representation of interviewees include five females and three males, as well as a representation of the racial groups during the Northern Cape NSC marking with four coloured persons, one white person and three black persons. However, although a very small number of Indians are also involved during the marking in the Northern Cape, no Indians are included in this sample. It should also be noted that females outnumber the males during NSC Marking in the Northern Cape.

5.4.2 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

Interview questions (annexure A) were structured to represent the interviewees' different levels of involvement in the NSC marking. A total of 23 questions were asked to the different groups of interviewees. Group A1 consisted of the Internal Moderator, Chief Marker and Senior Marker, while group A2 consisted of the Deputy Centre Manager and curriculum official. Group A3 comprised the school principal and the teacher union representatives. Although questions were structured based on the supposed involvement and duties of interviewees, the focus was on their experiences of the NSC marking process. A clear distinction will be drawn between the responses of the different respondents. However, some questions have been asked to more than one group.

Questions were grouped together based on their similarities and placed under the four themes indicated below:

Teaching and marking experience of respondents

Involvement and duties of marking officials

Selection and appointment process

Quality of the marking

5.5 THE REALITIES AND EXPERIENCES OF ROLE-PLAYERS

5.5.1 TEACHING AND MARKING EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS

Interviewees were asked about their teaching and marking experience as well as the grades and subjects they teach. These questions were asked to determine the level of experience of the respondents during the NSC marking.

From the interviews it appeared that respondents had various years' teaching and marking experience, and that they had taught various subjects over the years. Where respondents 5 and 6 respectively indicated 32 and 33 years teaching experience, three respondents have between 18 - 25 years teaching experience, while the remaining two respondents only have 14 years teaching experience.

Concerning their marking experience, three respondents indicated their marking experience as 20, 23 and 25 years respectively, while another respondent have 16 years marking experience and four respondents only have between 10-11 years marking experience.

5.5.2 INVOLVEMENT AND DUTIES OF MARKING OFFICIALS

Respondents were asked to indicate their involvement in and duties during the NSC marking process. This question was asked to establish the extent to which the respondents were indeed involved in the marking process and at what level.

Respondents indicated that they performed various functions and that they have different responsibilities during the marking process. Respondents were involved in the NSC marking as Internal Moderator (Respondent 1), Chief Marker (Respondent 2), Senior Marker (Respondent 3) and Centre Manager (Respondent 4). One respondent also served as a curriculum specialist (Respondent 5), principal (Respondent 6) and union representatives (Respondents 7 and 8). These respondents performed various functions during the entire marking process. The Chief Marker and Internal Moderator are involved during the ranking of markers as well and the Chief Marker is in charge of the marking room and the moderation of scripts of the Senior Markers. The Senior Marker oversees a specific group of questions and is responsible for the moderation of particular markers' marked scripts.

The Centre Manager is overall responsible for the smooth running of the marking centre, the Examination Assistants and the checking of errors during the marking process. The Examination Assistants do the actual checking of errors. The curriculum manager not only serves on the selection panel, but is also responsible for the approval of marker applications from Subject Advisors who are curriculum officials. However, the curriculum manager is not actively involved in the current marking of scripts. The duties and responsibilities of the school principal appear to be confined to the signing off of the initial marker application forms and the recommendation of competent markers.

Teacher union representatives seem to be involved as panel members of the selection committee during the selection and appointment of markers. At the end of the marking process, they also look at the reports and make suggestions and recommendations to the Department based on the reports from the marking. However, from the responses of union representatives, unions seem to be contributing a great deal during the selection meeting. One union also indicated that even before the selection meeting they iron out some of the issues with the department.

5.5.3 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

On the question as to how involved they are during the actual appointment of markers and what mechanisms are in place to ensure that the best possible candidates are selected for marking, respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1 indicated that he/she is involved in the ranking of the markers. **Respondent 2** indicated that they rank the markers from the one who is deemed to be the strongest to the weakest, but that the actual selection of markers appears not to be conducted according to the ranking list.

> *There were times that I felt this person should have been appointed and not that one, but I don't know what criteria are used during the selection. Because it is not always that they appoint according to the ranking, for example number 10 is not appointed but number 20 which is unfair for me. But we don't know what the department and the unions decide why the person is not appointed because you see someone who have been ranked low on the list and that person have been appointed, so I think it is unfair that number 10 falls out but number 20 gets appointed. And the department never gives reasons and there is no platform to raise these issues.*

Respondent 3 indicated that he/she is involved during the evaluation of markers at the year-end marking where they evaluate the markers according to their performance during the marking. This evaluation is to assist in the recommendation of markers for the next marking session.

Respondent 5 indicated that a selection committee is established consisting of departmental officials from examinations and curriculum, as well as members from teacher unions.

Concerning the criteria used during the selection process, **Respondent 2** indicated that the selection panel looks at the *experience of teachers regarding their marking, as well as their results over the past three years.* It further appears, from the response of **Respondent 5**, that the Department wants to use pass results as a criterion for selection, but that one teacher union do not agree with this. As **Respondent 2** indicated:

> *I guess that more or less to assist in meeting them halfway because the department wants to use the results and nothing else. So in the new intake of people that had to be empowered in the marking, that is where we as the department would compromise to the unions where say … maybe name X was given from the applicants because of the proven record of results, then they would take somebody else instead*.

From the above, it appears that markers are involved in various ways in the selection process and that particular criteria are used during the selection of markers for the NSC examination. However, the respondent indicated that if an applicant's name appears on the list based on his/her proven track record, the NCDoE would then according to the respondent, reach a 'compromise' with a specific union and take another name.

As is clear from the above, teacher unions are involved in the selection process of potential markers. **Respondent 7** asserted:

> *We are invited to the selection meeting during which we look at the experience, qualifications and the grades taught by applicants. The department does not request additional information regarding the subject, for example the previous subject results of candidates.*

Similarly, **Respondent 8** observed:

> *As a union we make sure that the right people are appointed and assist the department. Because you know how teachers are they like to take chances even if they have never taught Grade 12.*

However, it appears that one of the union representatives interviewed were not satisfied with selection and appointment processes used by the NCDoE. In this regard **Respondent 8** noted:

> *There is that weighting to weigh the teachers according to their marking before. So we make sure there is a balance in the novice markers. The people who have been doing the ranking are the Internal Moderators and Chief Markers based on*

their experience of the marking. Then of the fact that we don't actually even know what informs the ranking, I don't think we should consider this when doing appointments. And that is why I feel no let us take this number 10 and move it to number 1. Whereas we believe that it might be actually the number 1 because of the position that he/she occupies in the department.

When asked how convinced they are that the best candidates are selected for marking, respondents had the following to say:

Respondent 1: *The ranking system is ok but I don't like the point system* [score system used by the DBE] *because your strong markers fall out with this scoring. The new system is good but not the points because your good markers get low scores with this system and the weaker markers get more scores.*

Respondent 3: *I am not convinced because some markers who have been evaluated as poor during the previous marking session just get re-appointed and even promoted to the next level in the marking. Personally I think at the end of the year there is a form where you evaluate the markers. For the past three years when I was involved as chief I completed the evaluation of markers and senior markers on a scale. There you evaluate them according to their skills. I personally think that the evaluation is not considered and I don't know whether the department pays attention to that evaluation form.*

Respondent 6: *From my school's side I am convinced that those markers I recommend from my school are indeed competent before I sign the application forms.*

Respondent 7: *I am of the view that personal feelings from departmental officials play a big role during the selection and appointment which compromise the validity of the entire marking process. I am therefore not convinced that the best possible markers are appointed.*

Respondent 8: *Coming to the ranking of markers we are not convinced that really it was the right decision taken by the department and that will always be the problem for us.*

With regard to the role and involvement of teacher unions in marker selection and appointment processes, **Respondent 2** indicated that:

> *Teacher unions are supposed to be observers only. The fact that they are only observers I came to learn later. But as far as I am concerned for all the time that I was there, they were fully taking part in the selection of markers.*

Respondent 3 claimed:

> *As a union we make sure that the right people are appointed and assist the department.*

From the above, it seems that the selection panel looks at the experience, qualifications and the grades taught by applicants. However, it also seems that the NCDoE does not request additional information, for example, the previous subject results of candidates. In addition, it appears as if personal feelings of departmental officials play a big role during the selection and appointment of markers. This, of course, casts doubt on the objectivity of the selection process.

5.5.4 APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS

When asked about the requirements for the appointment of Examination Assistants, respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 4: *According to the advert in the newspaper the department use 3rd and 4th year students who studies towards a teaching qualification.*

Respondent 5: *My understanding is that those who have applied should be student teachers as well as other students at a second or third year level. The criteria are that those people must be studying towards an education qualification.*

5.5.5 FAIRNESS AND CONSISTENCY OF CRITERIA

On the question whether the criteria are fair and applied consistently, the following response was given:

Respondent 4: *Whether the department apply those criteria I would say no. How they select I don't know but I would criticise the department because the department must first ensure if it is not better and safer to rather appoint other FET teachers … for example grade 11 teachers for this position because they understand the bigger picture. Also I criticise the department for the criteria because I know that last year not all were 3rd and 4th years, not all were studying teaching and not all were from the Northern Cape.*

From the response it seems that the respondent was not involved in the selection and appointment of Examination Assistants. Although the respondent appears not to be sure about the study-year level of the applicants, he indicated that applicants must be students who are studying towards a teaching qualification.

To further explore the realities with regard to the NSC marking in the Northern Cape, questions were asked about the marker selection criteria. On the question about whether the requirements for markers are consistently applied, participants responded as follows:

Respondent 1: *A person must at least have taught the subject for minimum 3 years before that person can mark. And the person must have the content knowledge and you must know how to interpret and read the questions and answers.*

Respondent 3: *I personally think the person must be qualified and must teach the subject. I agree he must at least have 2 years' experience of teaching the subject before they come to mark.*

It appears from their responses that the participants have various ideas regarding the minimum criteria for markers.

About whether they think the selection process and criteria are fair respondents indicated:

Respondent 2: *I think in my subject it is relatively fair. The only problem I have is that you must consider all districts. So even if all your strong markers are for example from Frances Baard then we have to accommodate other districts also. This means that you sometimes have to swop a good marker for one who is not so good.*

Respondent 6: *I think it is a little low but absolutely fair.*

Respondent 7: *The criteria this year is a little more acceptable than previous years.*

Respondent 8: *As a union we don't agree. You know the criteria so far had been fair besides the ranking which to us was really unfair. The ranking and the 60% is a serious issue to me.* (The 60% which is referred to is the pass results per subject obtained by educators at school during the final examinations and which had been suggested as additional criteria for the selection of markers.)

Respondents also suggested some additional skills they think should be considered and required for selection:

Respondent 1: *I would say minimum 3 years of teaching in the specific subject before that person can mark.*

Respondent 2: *I also think markers should have a subject related degree which helps you to have a better understanding of the content knowledge.*

Respondent 3: *I personally think the person must be qualified and must teach the subject. I agree he must at least have 2 year experience of teaching the subject before they come to mark. That person must work out the memo before coming to marking then you get a sense of what are the areas the person cannot mark good.*

From the above, the respondents seem to agree that the current criteria are fair but, regarding qualifications as a requirement, they have divergent views. It also appears that respondents have particular ideas about what skills are required to be able to serve as a marker.

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they think criteria are applied during marker selection:

Respondent 1: *The criteria are applied throughout, and the best qualified candidates are selected from the list.*

Respondent 2: *Sometimes your strong markers are from the same district but then you must swop (change) them for someone from another district. This means that because of district representation you must swop a good marker for a bad marker.*

Respondent 3: *Personally I don't think so. I know we must accommodate all districts but at national level it is a panel who are appointed for 3-4 years so the same rules should be applicable here with us.*

Respondent 7: *The unions are just involved to a certain extent and thereafter we don't know anything, nor are we informed about anything after the selection meeting regarding the final appointments. There is no transparency from the department. I think the criteria are sufficient but the pass results are very important for quality marking and should be included in the criteria. I get the feeling some markers are being left out because you would notice a name during the selection meeting but afterwards markers would come and complain to us. But because we complete confidentiality forms you cannot say anything to the markers.*

Respondent 8: *Yes, I think it is fair because there was not a selection meeting where markers are under qualified. We make the point that all makers meet the minimum criteria.*

It appears from the responses that some participants are not convinced that the selection criteria are applied during the selection process. Moreover, it seems that representation has a negative impact on the selection and appointment of markers. Unions also accused the NCDoE of not being fair and transparent in the selection and appointment of markers.

5.5.6 QUALITY AND COMPETENCE OF MARKERS

On the question 'Do you think in general, and from your experience, that the markers appointed are qualified enough to serve as markers?' respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1: *The qualifications are something that needs to be worked on, or something should be put in place. But also consider subject content knowledge.*

Respondent 2: *My biggest problem is that Senior Markers change every year, I think they should be appointed at least for 3 years, so that they can develop and find their feet. Senior Markers must be strong to lead and support the markers which cannot happen if they change every year. The changes in Senior Markers influence on the marking because they are still trying to find themselves and then a new Senior Marker is appointed every year*.

Respondent 3: *Yes I think so. I believe they are qualified.*

Respondent 7: *No because issues of representivity, equity and the likes are the cause that teachers who are not competent be appointed. Especially regarding the language where markers cannot mark the Afrikaans scripts. They are adamant that they have been appointed but they cannot mark Afrikaans scripts. This becomes a serious problem when one marker marks more than the other but at the end they claim the same amount of money.*

When asked 'Do you sometimes have reservations about the quality of markers who are appointed?' respondents indicated as follows:

Respondent 6: *Yes I do have doubts because I know of markers who just couldn't cope. That is why I feel the minimum 3 years teaching experience is not enough.*

Respondent 8: *As I've mentioned earlier markers are qualified enough so I don't have any reservations although not all are committed.*

The responses indicate that respondents deem markers in general to be qualified sufficiently to serve as markers. However, some respondents feel that markers must have a subject-related qualification because this improves a person's understanding of subject content. Respondents further indicated that the annual appointment of different Senior Markers are not in the best interest of quality marking because markers must first find their feet during the first year as Senior Marker. The respondents are further of the opinion that Senior Markers should be appointed for at least three to four years so that they can make a positive contribution to the marking.

5.5.7 COMPETENCY OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS

When asked about the competency of Examination Assistants and their suitability to check scripts, respondents had the following to say:

Respondent 4: *I like the training which is given to the EAs but I doubt their competency to do the job because of the mistakes that they make although some are committed. The committed ones are usually the more mature ones and the younger ones are not as committed as expected. As far as the Examination Assistants are concerned there should be a trial to test their abilities and what they can actually do. The younger candidates are there just for the money. I sometimes pair the weaker ones with the stronger candidates to improve the quality control but they even sleep when they are supposed to check the errors.*

Despite the good training Examination Assistants seem to be receiving, the respondent still doubt the competency and suitability of some of them to check the scripts.

5.5.8 NEED FOR STRICTER APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

On the question as to whether they think there is a need for stricter application requirements for markers, all the respondents responded positively.

When asked what, according to them, would be stricter application requirements, respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1: *They must look more thoroughly to qualifications, years of experience, results, and the positions markers have occupied.*

Respondent 2: *Two years of experience for me is not enough.*

Respondent 3: *Language is a problem. You cannot because of a shortage then you appoint markers who are not competent in a language. This is even more important because especially in the Northern Cape more learners are Afrikaans speaking. I think markers must be competent in both languages to be able to mark.*

Respondent 7: *The pass results are very important for quality marking and should be included in the criteria.*

Respondent 8: *Yes I think it is fair because there was not a selection meeting where markers are under qualified. We make the point that all makers meet the minimum criteria.*

From the responses it seems that most respondents are in agreement that the criteria should be stricter. Respondents cited qualifications, years of experience, the positions markers have occupied, results, and language competency as a necessity, especially for the position of Senior Marker. There were complaints from some respondents that the NCDoE is not transparent during marker appointments.

5.6 QUALITY OF THE MARKING

5.6.1 RELEVANCE OF THE COMPETENCY TEST

Respondents were asked about the relevance of a competency test before the appointment of markers.

Both respondents indicated that they are in favour of such a test:

Respondent 2: *[It] would be the only fair process to appoint markers … but it must just not be used to discriminate against markers.*

Respondent 3: *Yes I think we must do a competency test even if it is a shortened version. It should determine the content knowledge of markers. Even the times I went to Pretoria at national level the Internal Moderators and Chief Markers do a competency test where we had to answer a question paper to determine our subject knowledge.*

The respondents agreed to a competency test for markers before appointments are made. According to Respondent 3, such a test could be used to determine the specific-subject content knowledge of the markers. However, Respondent 2 appeared to be worried that such a test might be used to discriminate against markers.

5.6.2 IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCY AND SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE IN QUALITY MARKING

When asked about the importance of language competency and subject knowledge in quality marking, respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1: *Language competency is a great headache especially in the Northern Cape which is predominantly an Afrikaans-speaking province. English-speaking markers disadvantage the candidates when they cannot interpret and comprehend what learners are saying in their responses. They fail to recognise synonyms which learners are using and regard it as not the correct word that is used in the memo therefore marking it wrong. Afrikaans scripts are more than English scripts but markers claim the same amount which is unfair.*

Respondent 2: *A lot of comment questions appear lately in question papers where learners must write a comment and English markers disadvantage the candidates because they do not understand the language. What worsens matters is the use of regional language especially with learners from Namaqualand. These learners use a different type of Afrikaans expressions than for example the Kimberley learners but their answers are not wrong. However, the English markers do not understand and therefore disadvantage the learners unfairly and cause huge mark differences. If you request markers to indicate whether they are Afrikaans or English competent they would falsely claim to be Afrikaans competent because the Afrikaans scripts are more*.

Respondent 3: *Content knowledge is very important but the lack of content knowledge is not the only thing which disadvantage learners. … Senior Markers does not moderate all the scripts. Only 10% are moderated, so what happens to the unmoderated scripts? … because markers struggle with the language they don't understand and penalise the learners unfairly*. *This happens especially with the huge number of Zimbabwe and other English-speaking marker appointments.*

Although content knowledge is of equal importance, all three respondents were absolutely in agreement that language competency is a major hindrance to quality during marking in the province. Respondents further felt that particular learners are unfairly disadvantaged because of the perceived incompetence as far as language is concerned. It seems as if it is particularly Afrikaans-speaking children who are disadvantaged by the English markers.

5.6.3 THE NOTION OF QUALITY MARKING

Respondents were asked about their perception of 'quality marking'. Although respondents did not answer this question clearly, they put forward particular ideas on what factors they regard as having an impact on the quality of marking.

Respondent 1: *It is not always the desired outcomes since at the marking centres everything seems hunky-dory but at the re-mark session you realise the*

mistakes markers have made which unfairly disadvantaged learners. The 10% moderation is not enough to track down all mistakes of markers. A bigger number of scripts need to be moderated.

Respondent 2: *Although the tolerance range is relatively acceptable during marking you still get mistakes by markers. Especially after lunch the quality of marking is not the same and deteriorates after every meal break. To be honest, I think the marking day should be shortened.*

Respondent 3: *There is room for improvement. It is good but can improve. I will give the markers 8/10 for quality … [I am] concerned that markers are too in a rush to get finished and miss out on the importance to do a proper job.*

Respondent 4: *If I say it is of a quality, it is not of a good quality. As the process proceeds then you realise that you have called for example maybe a specific subject more than other subjects for corrections. As the marking proceeds the markers become tired and then you compromise the integrity of the marking.*

Respondent 5: *Based on my involvement in the selection of markers, I think the current marking is up to scratch.*

Respondents claim that, during the marking process, everything seems fine and only during the re-marking of scripts one fully realises the mistakes markers have made during the marking. It also appears that marker concentration, and thus marking quality, deteriorates during particular times of day, which is after lunch and supper times. In addition, markers' eagerness to complete marking and go home cause them to mark hastily and make more mistakes, which inevitably impede on the quality of marking. These references clearly suggest the quality of marking is not up to the expected standards of the senior marking officials who seem to expect a much higher quality of marking.

5.6.4 VIOLATION OF MARKING ETHICS

Respondents were asked about their knowledge of gross violations of marking ethics. Although some respondents preferred not to answer this question, Respondents 3 referred to an incident he/she remembered vaguely.

Respondent 3: *I am not sure what the reasons were but officials from the department gave instruction that the scripts had to be rechecked and zoomed into after marking was completed. What I am certain of is that Umalusi and DBE came during the last day of marking to check on the remaining subjects because some markers have allegedly phoned them with a complaint. Umalusi and the DBE claimed the mark sheets were copies and not originals which I was not aware of.*

5.6.5 IMPORTANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS

Participants were particularly asked about the importance of administrative skills during the marking process and what the consequences are of poor administrative skills. In response to this question, respondents answered as follow:

Respondent 1: *Administrative skills should be a strong point for seniors in that room since they are the ones who keep record. If someone is not good in administrative tasks they might transfer the marks of candidates wrongly. Even if you are a very good marker but you transfer the marks incorrectly then the good marking is of no value since you still disadvantage the learner.*

Respondent 2: *Administrative skills is extremely important because of the transfer and adding up of marks. Learners can be disadvantaged when marks are added up incorrectly or transferred incorrectly. Therefore the 10% moderation is not enough and more scripts needs to be moderated in order to eliminate the mistakes done by markers.*

Respondent 3: *A marker who is good and consistent in his administrative task is an added advantage. A consistent marker is very good. They assist with keeping of records but if they cannot do it correctly they might disadvantage the learners. Handwriting also plays a crucial role during transfer of marks. Some markers write a 7 that looks like 1 and during*

the adding up of totals you will realise there are a difference of 5 marks which is caused by the incorrect re-writing of marks due to poor hand writing. Also markers write 0/8 as the mark which is in fact the question number and not the totals.

Evidently, respondents regarded administrative skills as extremely important for all markers, although Respondent 1 also felt it is an important skill for senior officials. However, he/she feels good marking is of no value if marks are transferred incorrectly. From the responses, it appears that poor administrative skills (specifically incorrect adding up of totals and incorrect transfer of totals) grossly disadvantage learners. Handwriting was identified as an administrative skill and singled out as a potential threat to quality marking.

5.6.6 QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES DURING MARKING

On the question as to what quality control measures, in their view and from their experience, are in place to ensure good quality marking, respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1: *By pairing the new and inexperienced markers with old experienced and strong markers but also to allocate certain questions to certain markers according to their ability and by double checking the marking. However, that only happens to the moderated scripts.*

Respondent 2: *The moderation is actuality the quality checking measures.*

Respondent 3: *The individual memo of markers should receive more attention because only by having it checked before the marking can one determine what kind of markers you are dealing with and what questions to allocate each of them.*

When asked what else they think should be done during the marking process to enhance the quality of marking, respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1: *To get quality would then be to moderate and mark more scripts more accurate and within the norm time.*

Respondent 2: *However, to have more scripts moderated would be a stronger measure. Having more scripts moderated is the only way to improve quality and that can happen if we have more senior markers.*

Respondent 3: *Dummy scripts must be selected more carefully and thoroughly to represent all three levels good, average and poor so one get the feeling of higher order questions. The selection of dummy scripts was not good during the last marking.*

From the responses, it seems that the moderation of 10% of the scripts is not sufficient and that more scripts need to be moderated to pick up more mistakes. It is also the view of Respondent 2 that more Senior Markers should be appointed to add value to the moderation process. Furthermore, it seems that the selection process of dummy scripts needs to be revised, as well as individual preparation prior to the marking by means of preparing personal memoranda.

5.6.7 QUALITY CONTROL DURING ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKING OF SCRIPTS

The respondent was asked his/her views on how to enhance quality control during administrative checking of scripts, to which they responded as follows:

Respondent 4: *Currently there is no quality control measures from the side of the department. What I'm doing to double check is something that I've learnt and developed for myself because of my experience with the checkers. The quality of marking is not good but here and there are a few subjects which perform good. I have therefore implemented a double checking system where the Examination Assistants check each other's work. I call this strategy 'check the checker'. However, the marking is not good and you only find here and there is a subject that performs good when marking.*

According to **Respondent 4**, there seems to be no measures in place to ensure quality control during the checking of scripts. The respondent has therefore developed his/her own strategy which is to double-check the errors on the scripts. From the response, it

appears that many errors are made during the marking of scripts and that the quality of marking of only a few subjects can be described as good.

As to the question of what their experience of the NSC marking process is, the respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 6: *I think major changes have taken place over the years up to when I was still marking in 2012. I don't think there are big flaws because the systems are there to have a really good marking process. The only thing is that the mind sets of all involved must be right. The focus should not be on the performance of the province during the results, but instead on justice in the entire system to have a credible marking process.*

Respondent 7: *Teachers sacrifice a lot away from home and should be really comfortable.*

Respondent 8: *The department should do more to make the markers comfortable.*

According to **Respondent 6**, major changes have taken place over the years, but more still needs to be done. According to the respondent, changes in the mind-set of all involved need to take place so that the focus is not on how the Province score, but on justice and credibility of the NSC marking process and the final results.

5.6.8 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF MARKING

On the question of what factors they think influence the quality of marking respondents answered as follows:

Respondent 1: *A lack of experience and the gain of money.*

Respondent 2: *Content knowledge, tiredness, too long sessions, lunch breaks, concentration, ability to sit still and concentrate for certain periods of time, listening skills during training, haste to get done and go home/not complying with the norm time.*

Respondent 3: *Shadow marking.*

5.6.9 CONFIDENCE IN THE QUALITY OF MARKING

To test the respondents' confidence in the quality of marking they were asked whether they would have any reason to doubt the quality of marking should their child be in Grade 12. Respondents had the following to say:

Respondent 1: *Yes and no. If my child's marks differ from what he usually get throughout the year then yes I would doubt the marking. Also because my involvement with the re-marks show how many mistakes slipped through during the grave hour.*

Respondent 2: *Yes I would doubt it because of the mistakes that I've picked up during the re-mark sessions. I've seen during re-marking the errors which was made by the markers. Especially languages where there is a shortage of markers.*

Respondent 3: *I knew my child was a level 7 candidate and therefore requested a re-mark when he got 2% lower than level 7. In addition, my child is Afrikaans speaking and my fear of the English speaking markers who are incompetent in the language forced me to request for a re-mark. With the scarcity of experienced mathematic teachers it happens that teachers with only 2-3 years Grade 12 experience marks.*

Respondent 6: *There would always be doubt and the possibility that someone could make mistakes.*

Respondent 7: *No I don't doubt the marking because I believe that teachers do have a conscience.*

Respondent 8: *No, I don't doubt the quality of marking but would request for a re-mark if there is a huge differences between the marks throughout the year and much lower marks at the end of year.*

From the responses, it is clear that some of the respondents doubt and mistrust the marking quality. The reasons for the respondents' doubt include the many mistakes they have seen during re-marking, fear of language incompetency by markers, and inexperienced subject teachers.

5.6.10 QUALITY OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Respondents were also questioned about the physical environment where marking takes place. This question was asked to establish whether respondents feel that the physical environment might have an impact on the quality of marking. The following responses were received:

Respondent 1: *The physical environment was acceptable with no problems.*

Respondent 2: *Schools with no air conditioning, but also the number of markers per room which was not considered by the department … have an impact on the marking. I know of at least one person who fainted because of the heat. Markers keep on taking breaks to get some fresh air because of the heat.*

Respondent 3: *The schools where marking took place had air conditioning and it was fine. Although the department could have arranged extra fans because not all schools have air conditioning therefore I believe the heat have an impact on the marking.*

Although **Respondent 1** did not seem to have a problem with the physical environment, **Respondents 2** and **3** complained about the size of the marking venues and the number of markers per room. The respondents were also of the view that the high temperatures had an impact on the marking and that air conditioning is important during marking to prevent markers from fainting and exhaustion.

5.6.11 REASONS FOR HUGE MARK DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE INITIAL AND RE-MARKED SCRIPTS

Respondents were also questioned about their perceptions of the reasons why such a large number of re-marks during the re-mark session usually result in in huge mark changes.

Respondent 1: *Like I said it's the mistakes which slip through during that grave hour. The checkers should have picked up the mistakes. So there are factors which cause those big differences which are only picked up during the*

re-mark from those markers who struggle with the content in the marking.

Respondent 2: *If more scripts could be moderated that problem could be solved because then all the mistakes can be picked up. I have also picked up big differences in the marking. Markers read 6 300 wrongly as 3 600 which could be because of the strain on their eyes and the long hours.*

Respondent 3: *As a parent I think it is because the universities make such a big fuss about the M-scores that is why we re-mark also. But markers also spread the news and encourage people to request for re-marks because of the huge number of Zimbabwe markers who don't understand the Afrikaans language. Also the pressure at the end of year marking with the MEC and all those people and the speeches and things put unnecessary pressure on the markers but with the re-marks it is quiet.*

Respondent 4: *Checkers only check the ticks not the answers and cannot be responsible for mistakes that slip through because of incorrect marking. The markers are therefore to be blame for poor quality marking and the checkers for poor checking. During the first week the errors are minimal but after the first week marking officials rush to go home and do not want to return to the hall to correct their errors and this is when the errors increase. Markers get more relaxed as the marking progress and then loiter around on the stoep and to the cafeteria. So the monitoring must be stricter and more intense after the first week.*

Respondents seem to be of the opinion that, if more scripts could be moderated, all the mistakes could be picked up. Other factors deemed to be barriers to quality marking included eye strain, long hours and language proficiency. Respondents further cited the rush to go home, and loitering, which seems to occur due to insufficient monitoring of the marking process.

5.6.12 FINANCIAL GAIN AND QUALITY MARKING

Do you think commitment to quality marking versus the financial gains has an impact on the quality?

Respondent 4: *Yes money does play a role especially near the end of the marking then you can see how relaxed and don't care the markers have become with regards to the importance of their duties. Regarding the Examination Assistants they are just there to earn extra holiday money because sometimes they are so tired that I have to release them to get some fresh air outside.*

Respondent 5: *Unfortunately the money part will always be the driving force.*

Respondent 6: *I think that the finances definitely impacts on the marking … Yes some are there for the marking but others are there just for the money.*

Respondent 7: *Some are committed but there are also those who are just there for the sake of the money because of the lots of mistakes committed by them.*

Respondent 8: *There are good and not so good and the salary definitely has an impact on the marking because they are just there for the money.*

Respondents seem to agree that financial gain is an important factor for some when applying to be markers. It therefore seems that, while some are there for the actual marking, others are there just for the money, which is why they make plenty of mistakes.

5.7 DISCUSSION

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the analysis of the responses from the interviewees. Findings are presented according to the themes identified from the responses.

5.7.1 TEACHING AND MARKING EXPERIENCE

From the responses, it appears that some respondents have between 10 and 20 years' teaching experience, while other respondents have more than 30 years' teaching experience. Similarly, the majority of the respondents have between 10 and 20 years' marking experience, while two respondents have more than 20 years' marking

experience. Respondents have experience at all levels of the marking hierarchy including marker, Senior Marker, Chief Marker and Internal Moderator. Based on the mentioned findings I regard the respondents as knowledgeable and experienced regarding teaching in general and specifically with regard to the NSC marking process.

5.7.2 INVOLVEMENT AND DUTIES OF INTERVIEWEES

It was found that interviewees were involved at different levels during the marking process, including Internal Moderators, Chief Markers, Senior Markers and Deputy Centre Managers. Teacher union representatives were also involved in the selection and appointment of markers. It was found that, although the respondents were involved at various levels, not all respondents were currently involved in the actual marking process.

Interviewees revealed that Centre Managers are overall responsible for the marking centre, the logistics of the marking process and the overall well-being of the markers and the Examination Assistants. From the interviews, it was found that panel members of the selection committee were involved only during the selection of markers, while high school principals were involved only in the initial marker applications which they signed off and recommended at school level.

It further became evident that the selection panel consisted of examination officials, curriculum officials and teacher union representatives. Responses indicate that teacher unions were involved in various ways, not only in the selection process but also at the end of the marking process, when they look at the reports and make suggestions and recommendations to the Department based on the reports from the marking (cf. 5.5.2).

5.7.3 APPOINTMENT PROCESSES AND CRITERIA

The findings indicated that particular criteria were followed during the selection of markers for the NSC examination. Although all respondents were involved in the marking process, not all were involved in the selection and appointment of markers. Based on the responses, it was found that only teacher union representatives and curriculum officials were involved in the selection and appointment of markers, together with the Examinations and Assessment Section which seems to be managing

the selection panel meetings. It further became clear from the responses that different stages had preceded the selection and appointment process, namely the ranking and evaluation of markers.

The participants appear to have different views about whether the best candidates are selected for marking. One of the respondents felt the ranking system is adequate, but not the scoring part (point system), because good markers receive low marks and poor markers receive high marks, causing good markers to fall out. Respondents indicated doubts as to whether the best candidates are selected from the ranking lists. Similarly, the respondents seem to be unsure about the criteria the Department and teacher unions use for the appointment of markers seeing that markers are not always appointed according to the ranking list prepared by Internal Moderators and Chief Markers.

One respondent seemed unconvinced that the current strategies effectively ensure that the best candidates are appointed because the marker evaluation which they had completed at the end of the previous year was apparently ignored by the Department. The respondent substantiated this claim by indicating that markers who performed poorly previously were re-appointed and even promoted to higher positions during the next the marking session. The findings further point to the initial recommendation of markers by principals. This appears to be a crucial stage in the appointment process because the respondent was convinced that the markers recommended at his/her school have the experience and competency to be good markers.

With regard to the role of teacher unions during the selection process, indications from respondents were that representatives are supposed to be observers only. However, due to the representatives' active participation in the selection of markers, some selection panel members seem to be unaware of the fact of that teacher unions should only have an observer status during marker selection processes. This is corroborated by another finding which suggests that, in cases where consensus could not be reached, the NCDoE entered into agreements with a particular union.

Indications are that the selection panel does consider the experience, qualifications and the grades taught by applicants. However, it appears that the NCDoE does not

request additional information, for example, the previous subject results of markers, which the respondent feels should be part of the selection criteria. It was also found that respondents believe that personal feelings of departmental officials play a big role in selection and appointment which, according to them, compromise the validity of the entire marking process.

Respondents were therefore not convinced that the best possible markers are always appointed. The findings point out that certain teacher unions ensure that the 'right' applicants are appointed seeing that they request ranked markers to be 'swopped' based on their believe that the top ranked markers have been placed there because of their positions in the Department. The reason for this action seems to originate from the specific teacher unions' disagreement with the ranking process prior to selection, as well as from their view that the Department does not make the right decisions.

With regard to the criteria for the appointment of markers, participants seemed unsure as to what the minimum criteria for markers are. Most of the respondents agreed that the criteria are inadequate and set too low. They suggested a number of additional skills or criteria for the selection of markers, for instance, a minimum of three years' Grade 12 teaching experience, qualifications, the positions markers have occupied, results and language competency.

While they agreed that the current criteria are fair, respondents indicated divergent views regarding qualifications as a requirement. Respondents were also of the view that markers should have a subject-related degree, because it gives a better understanding of the subject content, and that markers should work out the memorandum before coming to mark. It furthermore seems as if marking criteria are not always consistently applied and that dissatisfaction exists with the 60% pass rate and the ranking of the markers.

Although they agreed on the fairness of criteria, respondents were not convinced that all markers have the required content knowledge. There seems to be scepticism as well on the part of one of the teacher unions regarding the bona fides of the NCDoE, who is also accused of not being transparent in the selection and appointment of markers. Respondents further indicated that the annual rotation of Senior Markers is

not in the interest of quality marking since Senior Markers must first find their feet during the first year in this position.

Most respondents aired doubts regarding the quality of appointed markers especially since some markers had been unable to cope during marking sessions. Respondents felt that adherence to the principles of representivity and equity, also with respect to districts, has a negative impact on the selection and appointment of markers and that it sometimes results in the appointment of incompetent markers. For some respondents, the issue of language proficiency is critical during marker selection and appointment.

From the responses, the inference is drawn that Examination Assistant applicants must be students who are second-, third- or fourth-year students studying towards a teaching qualification. However, respondents appeared not to be certain of the minimum requirements. While it appears that they were not involved in the training of Examination Assistants themselves, the respondents seemed to be impressed with the training Examination Assistants had received from the Department. But despite the apparent good training, the respondents still doubted the competency and suitability of some Examination Assistants. The latter appear to lack commitment, especially the younger candidates who, according to the respondents, do the job just for the extra money. Indications were also that younger candidates sometimes sleep on the job instead of checking the scripts. Centre Managers seem to work around challenges with inexperienced Examination Assistants by pairing them with stronger candidates. In this regard, the respondents suggested that the Department should instead make use of Grade 11 teachers for the checking of scripts.

5.7.4 QUALITY OF THE MARKING

All respondents appeared to be in favour of a competency test for markers before appointments are made. One respondent was of the view that such a test could be used to determine the specific-subject content knowledge of the markers. However, another respondent raised concern that such a test might be used to discriminate against potential markers.

Although content knowledge is of equal importance, respondents appeared to agree that language competency is a major hindrance to quality in marking in the province. Respondents felt that particular learners are unfairly disadvantaged because of the perceived incompetence of markers as far as language is concerned. Particularly Afrikaans-speaking children seem to be disadvantaged by the English markers.

Respondents put forward particular ideas on what factors they regard as having an impact on the quality of marking, for example, the pressure from the provincial department placed on markers. It also appears that marker concentration, and thus marking quality, deteriorates during particular times of day specifically after lunch and supper times. Markers' eagerness to complete marking and go home also seem to result in their marking hastily and making more mistakes, which inevitably impede on the quality of marking. Overall, the quality of marking seems not up to the expected standards of the senior marking officials. In general, respondents held the view that the quality of marking is not good.

Respondents regarded administrative skills as extremely important for all markers, including senior officials. Respondents were of the view that good marking is of no value when marks are transferred incorrectly. The responses point to the fact that poor administrative skills (specifically incorrect adding up of totals and incorrect transfer of totals) grossly disadvantage learners and impede on the quality of marking. Handwriting of all marking officials, especially during the transfer of marks or completion of mark sheets, was identified as posing a potential threat to quality marking. Findings also suggested that the moderation of 10% of the scripts appeared to be grossly insufficient and that more scripts need to be moderated. Respondents indicated also that, except for the moderation and administrative checking of scripts, there are no additional quality control measures in place to ensure quality of marking.

Respondents mentioned a few factors which influence the quality of marking, namely a lack of experience, gain of money, a lack of content knowledge, tiredness, too long sessions, lack of concentration after lunch breaks, listening skills during training, haste to get done and go home, inability to comply with the norm time, shadow marking, interference from teacher unions (resulting in good markers' being swopped for those not so good), a lack of language proficiency and the inability of markers to interpret

and understand correct answers from learners, a lack administrative skills, and illegible handwriting. Respondents in general appeared not to regard the marking quality as up to standard. Although some respondents seemed to have no problem with the physical environment, some respondents complained about the size of the marking venues and the number of markers per room. The majority of the respondents were of the view that the high temperatures in the Province had an impact on the marking and that air conditioning is important during marking to prevent markers from fainting and exhaustion.

Differences in marks between the initial scripts and re-marked scripts appear to be related to a lack of content knowledge, fatigue, unnecessary pressure by various bodies during the marking, and language proficiency, which all served as barriers to quality marking. It also appears that, because markers themselves doubted the quality of the marking, they would encourage others to request re-marks. This finding concurs with the general mistrust from schools and parents regarding the quality of marking, which might be a possible reason why both schools and parents doubt the final marks of candidates and would consequently request re-marking of scripts.

All respondents seemed to agree that financial gain plays an important role in markers' decision to apply. Findings indicated that major changes have taken place over the years, but that much more still needs to be done. Respondents were of the view that the mind-set of all involved in the marking still needs to be changed so that the focus is not on how the Province score, but on justice and credibility.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter was on the personal experiences and realities of the various role players in the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape. In an effort to determine what the perceptions of quality are regarding the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape, interviews were held with various role players. In these interviews many issues were discussed including teaching and marking experience of respondents, involvement and duties of marking officials, appointment processes and criteria, and the quality of the marking. The interviews highlighted several perceptions and experiences of the role players regarding the NSC marking process in the Province.

The next and final chapter will discuss the conclusions drawn from the findings, focusing on the perceptions of quality in the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The overarching aim of this research was to explore perceptions regarding quality in the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape. In order to achieve this research aim, the following steps were taken:

- In **Chapter 2** I conducted a literature study which highlighted existing perspectives on quality assessment marking internationally;
- In **Chapter 3** I performed a critical policy analysis to explore policy imperatives for quality marking in South Africa and I investigated the stipulations of the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examinations* (2014) as guiding policy for supporting and promoting quality marking and assessment of the NSC;
- In **Chapter 4** I focused on and considered issues of quality in the NSC marking in the Northern Cape Province; and
- In **Chapter 5** I explored, through interviews, role players' perceptions of the NSC marking process.

This chapter is the culmination of the study. It synthesises the findings from previous chapters and draws conclusions aimed at answering the question: *What are the perceptions about quality in the marking process of the NSC in the Northern Cape?* Conclusions are presented according to the themes and their sub-sections reflected in chapter 5, namely *teaching and marking experience of respondents*; *involvement and duties of marking officials*; *appointment processes and criteria*; and *quality of the marking*. First, I will provide an overview of the findings of the marking process and administration as they unfold in Hong Kong, England and South Africa, as well as of the articulation of the concept of 'quality' in marking as it pertains to these countries.

6.2 GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF MARKING

The marking of high-stakes examinations, such as exit-level examinations, and the concomitant duty of education authorities to safeguard the quality of marking and examination results place particular responsibilities on these authorities to ensure a smooth and well-organised marking process.

From the research it appears that countries such as Hong Kong and England run very extensive examinations (cf. 2.2 and 2.3). The literature review revealed that both countries write exit-level examinations equivalent to the NSC examination in South Africa. In Hong Kong this qualification is referred to as a Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) (cf. 2.2), while that of England is referred to as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (cf. 2.3).

While the administration of exit-level examinations in England appears to be the responsibility of different examination boards (cf. 2.3), in both South Africa and Hong Kong, these type of examinations are centrally managed by the respective national education departments which, in the case of Hong Kong, is the HKEAA (cf. 2.2.1) and in South Africa the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) (cf. 3.1). However, due to the nature of governance in South Africa, Provincial Education Departments administer their own examinations (cf. 3.2.2.4; 4.3). Furthermore, where marking is conducted at a number of venues identified by Provincial Education Departments or administration agencies in South Africa (cf. 4.3) and Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.1), in England the vast number of scripts make it difficult to assemble a large number of markers in one venue and marking is therefore conducted at home (cf. 2.3.2). This enables markers to mark in the convenience of their homes and at appropriate times, unlike in South Africa where markers are subjected to very long marking hours (cf. 4.3). Concerning the marking venues – where markers in South Africa are assembled during the marking period – it needs to be emphasised that the NSC policy does not set out basic standards or guidelines to which venues should adhere, although it does refer to the physical infrastructure needed for marking (cf. 3.2.2.4). The lack of guidelines in this regard was alluded to by respondents who particularly complained about not only the unbearable summer heat which they are subjected to during

marking (cf. 5.6.10), but also the very long hours they are expected to sit and mark (cf. 5.6.8) in these venues.

With regard to marking approach, it was found that, in both England (cf. 2.3.8) and Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.4), the majority of marking is done electronically, or via Onscreen Marking (OSM), while only a few subjects are marked manually. In contrast, South Africa still follows a manual marking approach for all subjects (cf. 4.3.5). While marking in England is conducted at home, the electronic marking of scripts enables markers in Hong Kong to arrange with their individual schools to have shortened school days in order for them to go to the marking centres (cf. 2.2.1). One of the advantages of OSM is that it allows continuous monitoring of the quality of marking (cf. 2.2.4) and thus contributes towards an improved quality of marking.

Although the format of marking in Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.4), England (cf. 2.3.9) and South Africa (cf. 4.3) differs, all three countries follow the same 'per question' marking approach. With this approach one marker only marks a particular question and not an entire question paper.

Indications were found that, in Hong Kong and England, as well as in South Africa, a hierarchy of markers ensure that quality marking takes place. In Hong Kong Chief Examiners and Assistant Examiners (cf. 2.2.4; 2.2.5.3b), and in England (cf. 2.3.4) Principal Markers, Principal Examiners and Team Leaders are, to various degrees, responsible for monitoring and controlling the marking. Similarly, South Africa employs Senior Markers, Chief Markers and Internal Moderators (cf. 4.4.1) to perform important quality assurance functions by monitoring the marking.

6.3 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESSES AND CRITERIA

6.3.1 GENERAL CRITERIA

The marking process in all three countries starts with a marker appointment process (cf. 2.2.2; 2.3.3; 4.3.1). In Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.2) markers are recruited and selected based on a point system which takes into consideration their qualifications and marking and teaching experience (cf. 2.2.2). While a similar scoring system is used

in South Africa, indications are that it is not favoured by all parties involved in the selection and appointment of markers. Some parties claim that such system disadvantages certain categories of applicants and jeopardises equity (cf. 5.5.3). In the South African context the Internal Moderators, Chief Markers and Senior Markers are the main overseers of quality during actual marking.

Concerning the criteria for the appointment of markers, it appears that all three countries have basic requirements such as qualifications and teaching and marking experience, although they might also have additional or preferential requirements (cf. 2.2.2; 2.3.3; 3.2.2.1). For example, in addition to the basic requirements, Hong Kong subjects potential markers to a language competency test (cf. 2.2.3).

It should be noted that a sense of indecisiveness concerning the minimum requirements for markers was detected in the *NSC Regulations* (cf. 3.2.2.1), which was also evident in the responses of the participants (cf. 5.5.5). Their responses (cf. 5.5.5) confirmed that qualifications and teaching and marking experience of South African teachers form the basis of the selection of markers. However, respondents also indicated that the criteria for the selection of markers are inadequate and too low (cf. 5.5.5).

It is interesting to note that, although England makes use of in-service teachers, retired teachers and lecturers with experience in the subject are also employed to assist in marking (cf. 2.3.3). England also draws upon marker progress and performance of the previous years' marking as selection criteria (cf. 2.3.3). In this way, experienced markers are retained and the appointment of novice or inexperienced markers, who could jeopardise the quality of marking and the reliability of results, is minimised (cf. 2.3.3). On the other hand, the South African *NSC Regulations* (cf. 3.2.2.1) emphasises the inclusion of markers with the intention of building capacity. However, while the need for capacity building holds water, it also holds the risk that too many novice markers could jeopardise the quality of marking (cf. 2.3.3). In this regard, respondents referred to the need to appoint markers with both teaching experience and an acceptable level of subject knowledge (cf. 5.5.5).

Similar to England, South Africa, and particularly the Northern Cape, uses marker evaluations to assess the performance of markers during a particular marking session. However, it seems that these evaluations are not considered during the selection of markers for the following year (cf. 5.5.3). The implication is that markers who have been found to be inaccurate in any aspect of the marking process – and who are thus a potential threat to quality marking – are re-appointed for the following marking session (cf. 5.5.3). It is incidences such as these which caused particular respondents to doubt the quality of markers and that of the marking process in general (cf. 5.5.3; 5.5.6).

6.3.2 LANGUAGE COMPETENCY AS A CRITERION

As part of the appointment criteria in Hong Kong, potential markers need to meet language proficiency requirements by passing a Language Proficiency Attainment Test (LPAT) (cf. 2.2.3). The LPAT is based on the specific language needs in Hong Kong, which are English and Chinese as the languages of learning and teaching. The view in Hong Kong is that any teacher who is not competent in the required language is not competent to mark (cf. 2.2.3). The results of the language competency test therefore seem to be significant during the appointment of potential markers.

Language competency is listed in the *NSC Regulations* (cf. 3.2.2.1) as one of the selection criteria of potential markers. Language competency is regarded to be a significant attribute of potential markers especially in the Northern Cape Province (cf. 4.3.1.2; 5.6.2) which is a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking community. However, the perceptions of respondents seem to suggest that language competency in the Northern Cape is not considered during the appointment of markers (cf. 5.5.8; 5.6.2), and some markers who mark the NSC scripts do not have the basic language competency as required for the Northern Cape (cf. 5.5.8; 5.6.2). It is the perception of respondents that this situation jeopardises the quality of marking and has an adverse impact on learners' results (cf. 5.6.2). The failure to subject potential markers to competency tests, and so ensure that competent markers are appointed, could be linked directly to the silence of the *NSC Regulations* in this regard (cf. 3.4.1).

Adding to the problem of incompetent markers being appointed is the fact that, according to the respondent, the NCDoE reaches compromises with a particular teacher union to have teachers affiliated to a specific union be selected even if such markers do not comply with the minimum requirements (cf. 5.5.5; 5.5.3; 5.5.3) or language requirements. The influence of a particular teacher union in the selection and appointment of markers is also evident in their request that top-ranked – and therefore potentially good quality markers – be swopped with low-ranked markers (cf. 5.5.3; 5.5.5).

6.3.3 INFLUENCE OF TEACHER UNIONS DURING MARKER SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

In South Africa, teacher unions are important institutions that, in various ways, look after the interests of teachers and contribute towards the development of education. As statutory bodies, the powers and influence of teacher unions are guided by legislation. From the literature review, I could not detect any involvement of teacher unions in any aspect of the marking processes in Hong Kong or England. It could therefore either be that they are not involved or that their involvement is minimised by checks and balances. This is contrary to the situation in South Africa where it appears from the interviews that teacher unions are quite actively involved in the selection and appointment of markers and in quality assurance processes during actual marking (cf. 5.5.3). However, where teacher unions are expected to promote quality education, it seems that their direct influence, involvement and interference in the selection process in South Africa could, in fact, be jeopardising the appointment of quality and competent markers (cf. 5.5.3). This is despite clear directives from the *NSC Regulations* assigning observer status to teacher unions during the marker selection and appointment process (cf. 3.2.2.1; 5.5.3). The strong involvement of teacher unions in the administration of education appears to further impact negatively on quality marking because the NCDoE seems to be giving in to demands from particular teacher unions and entering into agreements with them, which are not in the interest of justice, quality marking, validity and integrity of the marking process.

The analysis of the *NSC Regulations* indicated that equity and representivity imperatives are particularly emphasised as significant principles to be considered in the appointment of markers (cf. 3.2.2.1). These principles are important constitutional imperatives aimed at ensuring non-discrimination and fairness (cf. 3.3.1). However, according to the respondents, equity targets and representivity imperatives in South Africa have a negative influence on the appointment of good quality markers (cf. 5.5.5; 5.5.6). Similarly, respondents raised alarming concerns ranging from favouritism to subjectivity on the part of departmental officials (cf. 5.5.3; 5.5.5) as significant factors which, in essence, harm the credibility of marker selection and appointment processes.

In an effort to strengthen the selection and appointment criteria – and so ensure that markers who would deliver quality marking are appointed – the NCDoE intends to use a 60% pass rate as an added criterion for the selection and appointment of markers. However, this requirement is supported by only one teacher union (cf. 5.5.3; 5.5.8), while another teacher union rejects it (cf. 5.5.3; 5.5.5).

6.3.4 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINATION ASSISTANTS AND CENTRE MANAGERS

In South Africa, Examination Assistants are appointed to assist with the administrative checking of marks (cf. 4.3.3). In addition, Centre Managers are appointed at each marking venue (cf. 4.3.2) and are responsible for the smooth running of the marking centre and the well-being of the markers. In line with the vision of the Constitution (cf. 3.2.1), South African labour practice requires transparency and fairness in the appointment of workers. However, from the responses it appears that there is no transparency regarding the minimum requirements for and the actual appointment of Examination Assistants (cf. 5.5.9). According to the respondents, there seems to be a lack of commitment by especially younger Examination Assistants who do the job just for the extra money. Respondents claimed that these Examination Assistants are irresponsible and that they sometimes sleep on the job (cf. 5.5.7). However, Deputy Centre Managers attempt to overcome these challenges by pairing *weaker ones* or inexperienced Examination Assistants with stronger candidates (cf. 5.5.7; 5.6.7).

To ensure that the best possible candidates are appointed as markers and to ensure high-quality marking, the HKEAA requests principals to recommend only the most competent teachers in their schools (cf. 2.2.2). Similarly, South African principals are expected to recommend teachers who fulfil the basic requirements for markers and whom they regard as competent to mark (cf. 3.2.2.3). From the interviews it transpired that, from their side, principals ensured that they recommend only the best potential markers for appointment (cf. 5.5.3). However, despite their attempts to recommend the most suitable candidates, principals displayed some negative feelings towards departmental selection and appointment processes (cf. 5.5.6).

One way in which Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.5.1) and England (cf. 2.3.6) promote quality marking is by 'certifying' markers as 'qualified or cleared' to mark. The implication of this process is that markers are not allowed to mark unless they have been cleared. To obtain clearance markers are expected to write competency tests (cf. 2.2.5.1) or, in the case of England (cf. 2.3.6), be able to mark within an acceptable tolerance range set by the Principal Examiner. It should be noted that, in England and Hong Kong, meeting the basic requirements for marking do not automatically guarantee appointment as a marker. Instead, the results of the competency test or the range of marking weigh in heavily and, ultimately, influence the appointment of markers, as the appointment of markers are absolutely dependent on these results (cf. 2.3.3; 2.3.6). However, in South Africa, specifically in the Northern Cape, there appears to be no process of markers being 'qualified or cleared' or authorised for actual marking. Markers are appointed after the selection process and the appointment letter makes them 'eligible' to mark regardless of the quality of their marking. This was confirmed in the interviews where respondents referred to the various mistakes picked up during re-marking (cf. 5.6.3; 5.6.5; 5.6.10).

6.3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above exposition which suggests some flaws in the appointment of markers, the following recommendations are made:

- Robust and clear appointment measures need to be put into place, as well as strategies to ensure that provinces adhere to these measures. One way to

achieve this is to revisit the *NSC Regulations* which was found to be not only silent on a number of critical issues regarding the appointment of markers, but also unclear on this aspect.

- The *NSC Regulations* should be more vocal on the implementation of competency tests, whether in relation to language competency or subject knowledge. It is my contention that clear guidelines in this regard would not only limit provincial (mis)interpretation of directives, but also ensure uniformity in the marking of the NSC examinations throughout the country.
- Clear national guidelines should be formulated to assist provinces in developing sound provincial policies to ensure and secure the quality of marking.
- Apart from the officials from the examinations directorate and the manager of the curriculum directorate, the committee responsible for selecting and appointing markers in the Northern Cape should be expanded to include more members, for instance Subject Advisers, Senior Markers, Internal Moderators and Chief Markers on grounds of their first-hand knowledge of the abilities of markers. Because the additional officials cannot be referee and player simultaneously, clear boundaries should be set regarding their involvement and duties. A different panel could potentially select the senior marking officials.
- Although the *NSC Regulations* suggests that only in-service teachers be considered for appointment, I recommend that provinces, especially the Northern Cape which is experiencing a shortage of teachers with particular skills and language competency, be allowed to consider competent retired teachers for marking. Of course these candidates should be subjected to the same minimum criteria as in-service teachers.
- Minimum criteria should be implemented to ensure that markers know their subject content. The application of these criteria should be strictly monitored by Umalusi.
- The value of marker evaluation should not be underestimated and should effectively be applied during the selection of markers.
- Policy imperatives should be adhered to and the influence of teacher unions in the appointment of markers should be limited by forcing them to honour their observer status.

- The number of years of relevant teaching experience should be increased from three to five years, with a proven record of professional development in the said subject. It is my contention that teachers need at least five years' experience in teaching a relevant Grade 12 subject (and additional professional development in the said subject) before they could be regarded knowledgeable in the content.
- A strategy needs to be implemented to clear markers, as is the case in Hong Kong and England, in order to prevent poor marking – which seems to be successful in these countries.

6.4 MARKING PROCEDURES

6.4.1 TRAINING OF MARKERS

To ensure quality all markers should be oriented in, for example, the use and the 'reading' of the marking grid and conduct required during marking. In Hong Kong the training of markers are mandatory (cf. 2.2.5.2). Similarly, in England (cf. 2.3.5), marker training is regarded as a key activity which also involves the standardisation and amending of the marking guideline. However, while South Africa, specifically the Northern Cape, has a similar approach to training where markers mark dummy scripts (cf. 4.3.5.1), the *NSC Regulations* refers to 'training, should this be necessary' (cf. 3.2.2.2). This is of great concern seeing that training is internationally regarded as crucial to the quality of marking. Therefore, the *NSC Regulations* should be revised and specifically indicate that marker training is compulsory for all markers.

6.4.2 LIVE MARKING

The HKEAA applies both OSM (cf. 2.2.4) and a 'per question' marking approach. Marking in Hong Kong is preceded by three compulsory stages (cf. 2.2.5) of which the third stage (cf. 2.2.5.3) runs continuously throughout the entire marking process. England also uses OSM and follows similar stages during live marking. The first stage is training (cf. 2.3.5) followed by the authorisation of markers (cf. 2.3.6) and then the continuous monitoring of scripts throughout the marking process (cf. 2.3.8). In South Africa, more specifically the Northern Cape, marker training is the first step as well (cf. 4.3.5.1; 4.3.5.2), followed by live marking (cf. 4.4). From the literature no specific

measure for continuous monitoring of the marking could, however, be detected, except for moderation by the Senior Markers, Chief Markers and Internal Moderators. Moreover, when marking commences, the Northern Cape already starts without one level of moderation which is that of the Deputy Chief Marker (cf. 4.4.1). This unfortunate situation is attributed to the prescribed 1 : 7 ratio used to determine the number of Deputy Chief Markers, for which the Province do not qualify based on the number of entries for the NSC examination.

6.4.3 MONITORING OF MARKING

The monitoring of England and Hong Kong will be dealt with in section 6.5 because it appears that monitoring and quality goes hand in hand in the mentioned countries. In South Africa, although provision is made for monitoring the NSC marking, monitoring seems to be more general in nature. Respondents suggested that the *NSC Regulations* does not make provision for specific and continuous monitoring to check the accuracy of marks or for quality control measures (cf. 5.6.9). Instead, this crucial stage during the marking process is fulfilled by Examination Assistants (cf. 3.4.1). Monitoring in the Northern Cape is limited to generic monitoring (cf. 4.4.2) which seems to stem from a shortage of human resources. In addition, the respondents confirmed the lack of sufficient and thorough monitoring (cf. 5.6.11) in the NSC marking in the Northern Cape.

I already alluded to the role that Examination Assistants play in the quality assurance of marked NSC scripts. It should be noted that, despite their significant role, the *NSC Regulations* is completely silent regarding the role, duties or appointment of Examination Assistants. There is also no indication in the *NSC Regulations* as to when and by whom the marks on the scripts should be checked. It is partly expected to be done by the markers, who do not seem to focus too much on the checking of marks as they appear to be too occupied by the marking process itself. Moreover, the norm times allocated for marking do not allow for checking of marks to be done by markers. The silence on who is responsible for checking the accuracy of marks is reflected in the mistakes by markers and manifests as a lack of administrative skills (cf. 5.6.5) which, again, impacts negatively on quality marking.

6.4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings concerning marking procedures, the following recommendations are made:

- The *NSC Regulations* should be revised to clearly indicate that training of markers is mandatory. Clear guidelines as to when and by whom the training should be done, should also be given.
- The implementation of a system or procedures to check the accuracy of marks apart from the administrative checking of Examination Assistants should be considered. This might include appointing Grade 11 subject teachers as assistant markers since they have subject knowledge at a certain level and are experienced teachers. However, relevant and strict criteria should be formulated for such appointments.
- The role of Examination Assistants should be spelled out in the *NSC Regulations* as they are responsible for the administrative checking of scripts. Based on the responses from the interviewees this should include stricter monitoring measures and a specific code of conduct to eradicate laziness or greediness.

6.5 QUALITY MARKING

6.5.1 INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL VIEWS ON QUALITY MARKING

Quality is an imperative in the marking of the NSC examinations. Although the term ‘quality’ might be perceived differently by different people, in the context of education and with specific reference to marking, the definition of quality is expressed by Sallis (cf. 2.2) as referring to ‘being measured against a criterion’ and as ‘judged as being up to or not up to standard’. The literature indicates that both Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.6) and England (cf. 2.3.1) regard quality marking as an important aspect to ensure fairness in exit-level examinations. In this regard the HKEAA ensures that the marking quality of candidates’ scripts is impeccable (cf. 2.2.6). In the same way Ofqual views quality in marking (cf. 2.4) as a process of marking in which there are minimal to zero marking errors and which is characterised by accuracy and reliability.

Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.1) has certain objectives as to how to achieve quality in these exit-level examinations, one of which is to ensure that examination data and results are processed and reported appropriately and at the necessary standards of reliability and integrity. England (cf. 2.4), on the other hand, has identified indicators that should manifest in a quality and reliable marking system. Contrary to the objectives of Hong Kong and England on how to achieve quality, the South African policy has a rather broad and general objective (cf. 3.2.2) which is 'to regulate and control the administration, management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examination and assessment process'. However, where policy guidelines in Hong Kong and England particularly articulate a vision of quality marking, the *NSC Regulations* and the PAM appear to be problematic and inadequate with regard to properly articulating the quality control measures for NSC marking (cf. 3.5). These two documents seem to not define or refer to quality directly nor how to achieve quality during the marking of the NSC examinations (cf. 3.5).

In Hong Kong quality marking is further ensured by an elaborative moderation process which involves various moderators at various times of the marking process. Additional methods are employed to perform quality assurance during marking, including double-marking and check-marking which also serve as evaluation of the marking process (cf. 2.2.5.3). In England similar processes are undertaken by the various examination boards (cf. 2.3.9). In South Africa marked scripts are moderated by Senior Markers, Chief Markers and Internal Moderators (cf. 4.4.1). However, respondents indicated some reservations regarding the local moderation process, in the Northern Cape particularly, and regarding the number of scripts to be moderated by moderators especially (cf. 5.6.7).

In South African education, the idea of quality is equated to a value orientation (cf. 3.5). However, the analysis of the *NSC Regulations* (cf. 3.5) revealed no clear conceptualisation of what 'quality' in and during the marking process entails, nor does the NCDoE explicitly refer to the concept 'quality' in its directives on marking. Similarly, although they put forward particular ideas on what they regarded as factors having an impact on the quality of marking, respondents could not clearly indicate what they regarded 'quality marking' to be (cf. 5.6.3). Instead, they identified various factors

including a lack of experience and the gain of money, content knowledge, tiredness, too long sessions and lunch breaks, to name but a few, having a negative impact on the quality of marking in the Northern Cape (cf. 5.6.12). Quality marking appears further to be jeopardised by a lack of concentration, which results in the deterioration of marking quality during particular times of the day. Also affecting the quality of marking is the eagerness of markers to complete marking and go home (cf. 5.6.8). This seems to result in markers' marking hastily and making more mistakes which, inevitably, impedes on the quality of marking.

In addition, no provision is made in the *NSC Regulations* for a competency test to be written (cf. 3.2.2.1; 3.5) and the interviews confirmed the non-existence of such a test, particularly in the Northern Cape (cf. 5.6.1). Respondents appeared to be in favour of the implementation of such a test, provided that it is not used as an exclusionary mechanism (cf. 5.6.1). It should, however, be noted that the DBE requires Internal Moderators and Chief Markers to mark within a pre-determined tolerance range, which then serves as a competency test to determine whether they are capable of leading the marking in their respective provinces (cf. 4.3.4).

Indications are that the DBE is planning to implement competency tests (cf. 3.2.2.1) as a basic requirement for appointment. However, some teacher unions seem to be opposed to the implementation of competency tests and have prevented the DBE from implementing these tests (cf. 4.3.1).

It is evident that the Northern Cape strives by all means to appoint markers who would be able to enhance the quality of marking. However, the lack of a competency test in the Province (cf. 4.3.1.2), as well as other policy imperatives mentioned earlier, appears to be preventing the successful implementation of such plans.

6.5.2 QUALITY CONTROL PROCEDURES

Concerning the role of quality assurance authorities during examinations, it appears that, similar to South Africa (cf. 3.2.2.8; 4.2.3), Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.1) and England (cf. 2.3.1) have quality assurance institutions which serve as watchdogs over the quality of their examinations. While South Africa have Umalusi to assure the quality of the

NSC examination (cf. 4.2.3), Hong Kong has the Examinations and Assessment Authority Quality Assurance Framework (HKEAA QAF) (cf. 2.2.1) and England has Ofqual (cf. 2.3.1) for quality assurance and assessment standards. Doubts about the quality of marking as displayed in the Northern Cape Province (cf. 5.6.9) raise the question as to the impact of such bodies on the quality of marking in South Africa and specifically in the Northern Cape.

Hong Kong (cf. 2.2.6) and England (cf. 2.3.8) seem to have specific strategies in place to ensure the quality of the high-stakes examination marking. Among these strategies are continuous monitoring of rigorous quality assurance practices which include check-marking and double-marking to ensure each script has been marked independently by two markers to enhance marking reliability (cf. 2.2.6; 2.3.8).

The *NSC Regulations* makes no reference at all to 'quality marking' or to having 'quality' as a guiding principle. Similarly, I could not find any reference to particular quality assurance strategies in the marking processes of the Northern Cape except for the moderation processes. Respondents also confirmed that no particular quality assurance strategies exist in the Northern Cape (cf. 5.6.7) except for the moderation of scripts, which is regarded as the actual quality assurance process.

It seems that quality control measures and monitoring go hand in hand in both Hong Kong and England (cf. 2.2.6; 2.3.8). It was also established that, to ensure quality during marking, marking should be monitored continuously (cf. 2.2.6; 2.3.8). The literature indicated that continuous monitoring (cf. 2.2.5.3; 2.3.8) plays a crucial role in marking. In addition, it affords the HKEAA the chance to continuously monitor the quality of marking, while England also refers to additional checks as part of quality assurance procedures (cf. 2.3.10; 2.3.11). In England various robust quality assurance practices are in place to ensure the quality and reliability of the GSCE marking (cf. 2.3.8). In this way mistakes are corrected immediately and not after the completion of the marking process. In Hong Kong the nature of quality control procedures allows for the re-marking of scripts a day after the errors have been identified, because it is important to complete the re-marking immediately when and wherever marking are found to be problematic (cf. 2.2.5.3). England, on the other hand, has two specific

post-marking checks which include a clerical check followed by a marker check to look for any responses in the script the original marker might have missed (cf. 2.3.11). This process ensures that no mistakes were skipped during the marking. Similar robust quality control strategies appears to be absent in the marking of the NSC examination in South Africa.

6.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the quality of marking, the following recommendations are made:

- The DBE needs to seriously reconsider the implementation of the competency test for prospective markers seeing that this test appears to be a practice that has been implemented successfully in other countries.
- The *NSC Regulations* should provide more directions regarding the marking processes. Best practices regarding marking procedures of international countries might be considered, including the clearance of markers.
- A similar approach as the one in Hong Kong could be followed where assistant examiners mark sample scripts without knowing the scripts have already been marked. During this exercise the marks given by markers are compared to those of the Chief Examiner and can give an indication as to the markers' quality of marking. This exercise might also prevent shadow marking (cf. 2.2.5.2) and, in turn, have a positive impact on quality marking.
- It is my contention that the number of moderated scripts also needs to be increased from the prescribed 10% to at least 50% of the scripts. This stipulation should also be mandatory. Alternatively, the number of markers should drastically be increased, or 10% from each batch of scripts or 10% of each school should be randomly selected for moderation. This would imply strict monitoring of the process to prevent fake totals of moderated scripts.
- The *NSC Regulations* should address quality control measures and give clear directions on administrative checking. While the training given to Examination Assistants in the province seems acceptable, punitive measures should be implemented for candidates who make errors during checking or marking. The implementation of a fine or penalty for a certain number of mistakes can

be introduced. These measures are in practice in England where penalties are handed to inaccurate markers (cf. 2.3.9.2) with apparent great success.

- The *NSC Regulations* should introduce a code of practice with regard to marking procedures. Strict action should be taken against markers who do not honour the code of practice. In England markers are continuously reminded of their marking responsibilities. It should therefore be necessary in South Africa to have the Code of Practice and examination procedures displayed in marking venues so that markers are continuously reminded of their responsibilities.
- To assist with quality control and quality assurance measures, such as double-marking, the number of venues could be reduced across provinces and centralised marking might be considered. This mean that certain subjects will have to be marked in a specific province if marking is nationally centralised.
- This would imply that all markers across the country mark a certain subject at a centralised venue. It would also assist provinces that experience marker shortages in subjects.
- Action should be taken against markers who do not mark accurately within the prescribed norm times.
- At a national level an additional criterion such as a 60% pass rate for subject performance at school level should be mandatory and reflected in the *NSC Regulations.*
- The interference of teacher unions in the effective running of the NSC marking should be minimised so that important quality improvement strategies such as competency tests, as provided for in the Draft Amendment Policy (cf. 4.3.11), could be implemented.
- Re-marking as a separate post-marking process should be revisited and no script of any given learner must be subjected to only two levels of moderation. This imply that the missing level of Deputy Chief Markers should be appointed

to fulfil the second level of moderation before the Chief Marker and only 10% of scripts would be moderated by the Internal Moderator.

- Revise the appointment ratio of Senior Markers and Deputy Chief Markers, which currently disadvantages smaller provinces. Appointments at these levels should be based on the number of questions that need to be marked and not per the current ratios.
- Senior marking officials from Senior Marker upwards should at least be appointed for three to four years to ensure continuity in the marking and not on a yearly basis as is currently the practice.
- The *NSC Regulations* should address shadow marking as part of the marking procedures and guilty markers should be fined. This can only happen when strict monitoring of the marking processes is implemented and adhered to.
- The weighting of marker recommendations from high school principals should be increased for marker selection and appointment.
- The quality assurance measures during the administrative checking of scripts should be revised. Grade 11 subject educators can be used more effectively as administrative checkers and to pick up content errors.
- The marking hours should be revised to avoid exhaustion of markers especially considering the extreme weather conditions in the Northern Cape. A possible three-hour break between the two sessions should be considered so that markers could get proper rest before the next session.
- Marking room size should be specified per square meter and a standard size should be set for rooms, as well as for the total number of markers to be allowed per room. Provision should be made for extreme weather conditions during marking especially if they pose a risk to the quality of marking, for example, the extreme heat conditions in the Northern Cape during summer.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Because of time constraints my study was limited to a specific sample, although I would have preferred to include parents and matric candidates in the interview population. Having parents and learners as interviewees would have allowed me to compare their responses to those of the Internal Moderators and Chief Markers. In

turn, this would have given a clearer picture as to the perceptions of the general public regarding the quality of marking.

Another constraint was the fact that many of the prospective respondents, including markers and principals, feared possible victimisation and withdrew as participants, although they were given the assurance of identity protection. Prospective respondents highlighted their fears of being excluded from the marking process and black-listed because of disloyalty.

My personal involvement as an employee in the Education Department proved to be a hindrance to some extent. Respondents were, at times, doubtful to share with me the exact occurrence of events, which prevented a deeper search for the truth. These might be the reasons why many other prospective respondents withdrew from the interviews on short notice.

6.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because it addresses a contemporary issue. Being an exit-examination, the NSC examination is significant for various reasons, one being it serves as a door to the workplace and as entry into tertiary education. Moreover, the NSC examination is also the yardstick with which the South African education system is measured with regard to quality and effectiveness. It is, therefore, in the interest of not only the learner, but also the general SA public that both the NSC examination in general and the NSC marking process in particular be of a high quality. The NSC examination receives widespread attention from the general SA public as well as politicians. As such, quality imperatives become an important aspect of the examination and the marking process in particular. Having indicated that the quality of the NSC marking process is to be questioned, this study's value lies in its contribution towards improving the quality of the NSC marking process. It is my contention that improving the quality of the NSC marking process would not only give effect to the vision for quality education in SA, but also strengthen quality as an imperative of education. Furthermore, I also contend that improving the quality of the NSC marking process would restore the credibility of the NSC examination, as well as

the SA education system, and the quality of the qualification learners obtain through this examination.

6.8 PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The responses from participants and the reasons for withdrawal of some candidates made me realise that the roots of poor quality marking might run far deeper than meets the eye. Based on the vast literature readings done in this study and the unique educational background of the South African context I am intrigued as to when and where to draw the line between political influences and the quest for quality marking in the NSC examinations. Being fully aware that politics and education cannot be separated, especially in a country as unique as South Africa, I am further interested in the impact of political interference on quality NSC marking in education. Further research might offer different perspectives on whether political influence or interference is smothering or promoting quality in the NSC marking. Finally, further research might reveal the perspectives from parents and learners, as well as the impact of the quality assurance body Umalusi, on the quality of marking.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The overarching aim of this research was to explore *perceptions of quality in the marking process of the National Senior Certificate in the Northern Cape*. In order to achieve this research aim, the following steps were taken:

- In **Chapter 2** a literature study was conducted which highlighted existing perspectives on quality assessment marking on an international level.
- In **Chapter 3** a critical policy analysis was conducted to explore policy imperatives for quality marking in South Africa and to analyse the stipulations of the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examinations* (2014) in order to ascertain how these regulations as guiding policy are supporting and promoting quality marking and assessment of the NSC.
- **Chapter 4** focused on and considered issues of quality in the NSC marking process in the Northern Cape Province.

- In **Chapter 5** role players' realities and experiences of the NSC marking process were explored by means of interviews.

The focus of this chapter was on the conclusions derived from the findings of this study which focused on the perceived *perceptions of quality in the marking process of the National Senior Certificate in the Northern Cape*. Conclusions in this chapter were based on and derived from the research discussions and findings set out in previous chapters. Conclusions were presented according to the themes and their sub-sections identified in chapter 5. These themes were teaching and marking experience of

respondents; involvement and duties of marking officials; appointment processes and criteria; and quality of the marking. A general overview was provided of the findings of the marking process and administration as it unfolds in Hong Kong, England and South Africa, as well as the articulation of the concept of 'quality' in marking as it pertains to these countries. The findings indicated that the marking quality of the NSC examination in the Northern Cape appears not to be at the expected level. Conclusions were that various factors contribute to the poor quality of marking in the Province which stems directly from, firstly, the lack of proper and direct guidance from national policy and, secondly, the entire appointment process – which turn out to have devastating consequences for the Province.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Accredited Qualifications. 2012. (info@accreditedqualifications.org.uk) Retrieved on 1 June 2015.

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. AQA Exams Administration. 2012. (http://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration) Retrieved on 1 June 2015.

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. AQA Expert Examiners. 2015 (http://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration) Retrieved on 1 June 2015.

Baird, J., Hayes, M., Johnson, R., Johnson, S. and Lamprianou, I. 2013. Marker effects and examination reliability. *A Comparative exploration from the perspectives of generalisability theory, Rash model and multilevel modelling. Oxford: University of Oxford for Educational Assessment.*

Beeld. 2011. Matrieks: Nasiener was dronk. 17 December: 2.

Beeld. 2012. Matriek: Kommer oor onnies wat gaan nasien. 25 April:15.

Beukes, A. 2008. Language policy implementation in South Africa: How Kempton Park's great expectations are dashed in Tshwane. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics* 38:1-26.

Blumfield, B. 2008. *A timeline of South African events in education in the twentieth century.* (www.sahistoryofeducation.webs.com) Retrieved on 29 March 2013.

Bokova, I. 2014. *BRICS countries' investment in education will change the world. South China Morning* Post. 29 March: 1. (http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1596142/brics-countries-investment-education-will-change-world) Retrieved on 2 March 2014.

Boote, D.N. and Beile, P. 2005. Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher* 34:6.

Business Day Live. 2016. *SA Schools under SADTU dominion.* 20 January:1. *(*http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/2016/01/20/sa-schools-under-sadtu-dominion*)* Retrieved on 1 March 2016.

Cesare, Loock and Govender 2007. Remarking of Examination Answer Scripts – Finding a Standard for Quality Assurance. (Paper presented at the 33rd IAEA Annual conference on Mutual dependence of National estimation systems and education standards held at Baku, Azerbaiijan on 16 -21 September 2007) IAEA.

Cheung, K.M.A. 2011. Characteristics of Raters: Reliable and valid versus unreliable and invalid. (Paper presented at the 37th IAEA Conference on Assessment and the Challenge of Globalization, held at Manila, Philippines. 23 -28 November 2011) IAEA.

Cheung, K.M.A and Chang R. 2014. Investigating reliability and validity in rating scripts for standardisation purposes in onscreen marking.

Cheung, K.M.A. and Lo, Y.K.W. 2014. Role of Assistant Examiners in marker behaviour modification during onscreen marking. (Paper presented at the 40th IAEA Conference on Assessment Innovations for the 21st Century held at Singapore, Singapore on 25 – 30 May 2014) IAEA.

Cheung. K.T. and Tong, C. 2014. The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination – Challenges and Prospects. (Paper presented at the 40th IAEA Conference on Assessment Innovations for the 21st Century held at Singapore, Singapore on 25 – 30 May 2014) IAEA.

Clark, N. (Eds). 2015. World Education News & Reviews (WES). (http://wenr.wes.org) Retrieved on 30 June 2015.

Cloete, F. and de Coning, C. (Eds). 2011. *Improving public policy*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Codd, A. 1988. The construction and deconstruction of educational policy documents. *Journal Education Policy,* 3(3):235-247.

Coetzee, W. and Johl, R. 2009. Monitoring the standard of a Grade 12 English First Additional Language Reading, Comprehension, Summary and Grammar Paper. *Journal for Language Teaching.* 43(2):1-36.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison K. 2007. *Research methods in education.* 6th ed. New York: Routledge.

Coniam, D. Study in double marking of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary .2011 Education liberal Studies Practice Questions' Answers Scripts. *New Horizons in Education,* 59(2): 1-12.

Coniam, D. 2013. The increasing acceptance of onscreen marking – the 'tablet computer' effect. *Educational Technology & Society*. 16(3)119-129.

Creswell, J.W. 2003. *Research design: Qualitative,quantitative and mixed methods approaches.* 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.

CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies). 2014. *Developing or developed? A China debate by the numbers.* (cogitASIA Staff). Retrieved on 23 September 2015.

Daily News. 2010. Matric marking quality snag. 2 July:5.

De Clerk, F. 2010. *Meta-analysis of South African education policy studies: How have we fair so far and what needs to be expanded?* Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand. *(*http://wits.academia.edu/Francine DeClercq*)* Retrieved on 30 September 2015.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. 2002. The discipline and practice of qualitative research. *Journal of Critical Inquiry into Curriculum and Instruction,* 2(3):34-37.

Department of Basic Education. See RSA DBE.

Department of Education. See RSA DoE.

DiCicco-Bloom, B. and Crabtree, B.F. 2006. Making sense of qualitative research. *Medical Education,* 40:314-321.

Diamond Fields Advertiser (DFA). 2009. Dept. faces inquiry into exam marking. 7 January:2.

Diamond Fields Advertiser (DFA). 2011. N Cape folds marking of matric papers. 19 December:6.

Dowling, M. 2008. Examining the exams Assessment Services. University of Cambridge International Examinations, the international wing of Cambridge Assessment. University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). *(*http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/Media/articles/ markdowling) Retrieved on 30 September 2015.

Drave, N. 2010. Marker 'fatigue' and marking reliability in Hong Kong's Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers of English.

Easwaramoorthy, M. and Zarinpoush, F. 2006. *Interviewing for research. Imagine Canada. Canada:* Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage as part of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative.

Edwards, N. 2010. An analysis of the alignment of Grade 12 Physical Sciences examination and the core curriculum in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education,* 30(4):571-590.

Elmusharaf, K. 2013. Introduction to qualitative research. (Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research Geneva.) Geneva: RCRU –University of Medical Sciences and Technology Geneva. *(*http://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2012/research-methodology/Introduction-qualitative*)* Retrieved on 2 June 2014.

Goldkuhl, G. 2012. Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research. *European Journal of Information Systems,* 21(2):135-146.

Govender, P. 2008. Meeting the challenges of quality assurance and accountability in the new National Curriculum Statement. (Conference Paper, International Association for Educational Assessment, 35th Annual Conference 2009, held at Brisbane, Australia, 13-18 September 2009)**.** IAEA.

Greatorex, J. and Bell, J.F. 2002. What makes a senior examiner? (A paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, 12-14 September 2002, held at the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES).

Hart, M.A. 2010. Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and research: The development of an indigenous research paradigm. *Journal of indigenous vices in social work* 1(1):1-16. University of Manitoba.

Hartshorne, K. 1999. *The making of policy in South Africa.* New York: Oxford.

Hong Kong Education Bureau. 2014. Circular Memorandum No. 58/2014. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 29 January 2015.

Hong Kong. 2006. *Legislative Council.* Implementation of a centralised onscreen marking system*.* (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 28 January 2015.

Hong Kong. 2008. *Legislative Council*. Complaint against HKEAA. Office of The Ombudsman. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved 29 January 2015.

Hong Kong *Legislative Council*. 2010. Introducing the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. Questionnaire survey on examination arrangements and supply of markers. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 29 January 2015.

HKEAA.2012a. Marking and Processing of Marks. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 29 January 2015.

HKEAA.2012b. English Language Paper 1. Marking Scheme. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 30 January 2015.

HKEAA. 2013. Marking Procedure for written Papers (Category A subjects). (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 30 January 2015.

HKEAA. 2014a. Examination Administration: Circular DSE/PR4. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 30 January 2015.

HKEAA. 2014b. HKDSE Examination Regulations. Check Marking. (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 1 February 2015.

HKEAA. 2015. HKDSE Examination Regulations: Marker Applications (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 1 February 2015.

HKEAA QAF. 2011. Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) (http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en.hkdse/) Retrieved on 1 February 2015.

Ihuah, P. and Eaton, D. 2013. The pragmatic research approach: A framework for sustainable management of public housing estates in Nigeria. *Journal of US-China Public Administration* 10(10):933-944.

Isaacs, T. 2012. Assessment in education in England Institute of Education. *SA-eDUC JOURNAL*, 9(1):3.

Kinash, S. 2010. *Paradigms, methodology & methods.* Australia: Bond University.

Knopf, J.W. 2006. *Doing a literature review. Dominance through interviews and dialogues.* Monterey, CA: National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS).

Korenman, S. 2006. *Research integrity. Teaching the Responsible Conduct of Research in Humans (RCRH)*. Richmond, Virginia U.S.A: University of California Regents.

Kvale, S. 1996. *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. *Thousand Oaks California*: *Steinar Kvale, Sage Publication.*

Lacey, A. and Luff, D. 2009. *Qualitative data analysis*. The NIHR RDS for the East Midlands/Yorkshire and the Humber. Nottingham: The University of Nottingham.

Lolwana, P. 2006. *Umalusi: A historical perspective*. Pretoria: Hayes Print.

Loock, C.F. 2009. *The dilemma of equating examinations and assessment standards for the National Senior Certificate in South Africa.* Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Mackenzie, N. and Knipe, S. 2006. Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in Educational Research volume* 16(2):193-205.

Mail & Guardian. 2014. Matric markers' quality without competency tests. *(http://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-15-matric-markers-quality-satisfactory-without-competency-tests)* Retrieved on 20 November 2015.

Map of the nine provinces of South Africa. n.d. (www.search.com/Maps+South+Africa) Retrieved on 04 April 2015.

Map of the five districts in the Northern Cape. n.d. (http://www.localgovernment.co.za/provinces/view/7/northern-cape) Retrieved on 04 April 2015.

Marrelli, A.F. 2005. The performance technologist's toolbox: Literature reviews. *Organizational Effectiveness for Beacon Associates, Performance Improvement.* 44(7):40–44.

Mason, M. 2010. Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 11(3):Art. 8.

Meadows, M. and Billington, L. 2007. NAA enhancing the quality of marking project: (Final report for research on marker selection.) *(*http://archive.teachfind.com/qcda/orderline.qcda.gov.uk/gempdf/184962531X/QCDA104980_marker_selection.pdf*)* Retrieved on 04 April 2015.

Mertens, D.M. 2007. Transformative paradigm. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1(3):1-45.

Modisaotsile, B.M. 2012. The failing standard of basic education in South Africa. Policy brief. *Africa Institute of South Africa*, 72.

Moneyweb. 2015. Pandor speaks out on SA's poor quality of education. 12 February:1. Retrieved on 04 April 2015.

Moody, D. 2002. Validation of a method for representing large Entity relationship models: An action research study. Australia: Monash University Melbourne. (http://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi? article=1017&context=ecis2002) Retrieved on 14 July 2015.

NCDoE. See RSA NCDoE.

Nastasi, B. 2007. Qualitative research: Sampling and sample size considerations. Adapted from a presentation. Mixed methods in intervention research: Theory to adaptation. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1:164-182.

NCDoE. See RSA NCDoE.

Neville, C. 2007. Effective Learning Service. Introduction to Research and Research Methods.Bradford: University of Bradford, School of Management. *(http://www.academia.edu/8003753/Effective_Learning_Service_Introduction_to_Research_and_Research_Methods)* Retrieved 1 February 2014

News South Africa. 2015. Call to test markers in South Africa discouraged. 26 October. (http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/call-to-test-markers-in-sa-discouraged-1936009) Retrieved on 25 November 2015.

Ofqual, 2011. GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 January 2014.

Ofqual, 2013a. Guidance. Marking and grading in GCSE and A level exams. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 January 2014.

Ofqual. 2013b. Review of quality of marking in exams in A levels, GCSEs and other academic qualifications. Interim Report. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 January 2014.

Ofqual. 2014a. Review of marking internationally. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 January 2015.

Ofqual. 2014b. Description of the marking process used in external exams in general qualifications. UK. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 January 2015.

Ofqual. 2014c. Review of quality of marking in exams in A Levels, GCSEs and other Academic Qualifications. Final Report. UK. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 January 2015.

Ofqual. 2015. Governance Framework. UK. (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 13 December 2015.

Phakathi, B. 2013. Motshekga, Sadtu to face off over tests. (http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/education/2013/10/07/motshekga-sadtu-to-face-off-over-tests). Retrieved on 13 December 2014.

Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, S.A., Green, C.A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N. and Hoagwood, K. 2013. Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*. Volume 42(5): 533-544.

Patton, C.V. and Sawicki, D.S. 1993. *Basic methods of policy analysis and planning.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Rajasekar, S., Philominathan, P. and Chinnathambi, V. 2013. *Research methodology*. (http://arxiv.org/abs/physics) Retrieved on 13 January 2014.

Roux, N.L. 2002. Public policy-making and analysis in South Africa amidst transformation, change and globalisation: Views on participants and role players in the policy analytic procedure. *Journal of Public Administration* 37(4):418-437.

RSA DBE. 2010. *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Results, 2010.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2011a. *National Protocol for Assessment.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2011b. *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Technical Report, 2011.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2012a. *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination, 2012.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2012b. *Draft Amendment Policy to provide for a competency test to be used in the selection of markers for the National Senior Certificate Examinations.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2013. *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination. Technical Report, 2013.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2014. *Regulations pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of Assessment for the National Senior Certificate Examination* Government Gazette No. 31337 of 29 August 2008 amended as: Government Gazette No.37651 dated 16 May 2014. Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2015a. *Budget Vote Speech for the 2015/16 Financial Year.* Cape Town: Government Printers.

RSA DBE. 2015b. *National Senior Certificate Examination Report.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DoE. 1995. *White Paper 1 on Education and Training.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA DoE. 2003. *Personnel Administrative Measures*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2010. Northern Cape Department of Education. Marker Training 2010. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2013. Northern Cape Department of Education. Marking 2013. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2014a. Northern Cape Department of Education. Appointment of markers. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2014b. Northern Cape Department of Education. Ranking process of NSC markers. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2014c. Northern Cape Department of Education. Marker Statistics. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2014d. Northern Cape Department of Education. Shortage of Markers. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2014e. Northern Cape Department of Education. Marking 2014. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2014f. Northern Cape Department of Education. Examination Assistants. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2015a. Northern Cape Department of Education. Appointment of markers. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE.2015b. Northern Cape Department of Education. Marking 2015. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

RSA NCDoE. 2015c. Northern Cape Department of Education. Re-marking. Kimberley: NCDoE Printers.

Sallis, E. 2002. Total quality management in education. 3rd ed. Londen:Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Sayed Y. (2001), Post-apartheid educational transformation: Policy concerns and approaches, p.250-270, In Y. Sayed and J.D. Jansen (eds.), Implementing education policies: The South African experience, UCT Press, Cape Town.

SEEP-AIMS. 2000. Differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods. *Learning from Clients: Centre for Development and Information and Evaluation,* No.12.

Sharma, Y. 2011. How China is winning the school race. BBC News Business. (http://www.bbc.com/news/business-14812822) Retrieved on 30 January 2014.

Spaull, N. 2013. South Africa's education crisis: *The quality of education in South Africa 1994-2011.Centre for Development & enterprise.* (http://www.section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Spaull-2013-CDE-report-South-Africas-Education-Crisis.pdf) Retrieved on 31 August 2015

Sunday Times. 2014. Radical matric reform on the cards. 3 August:1.

Taylor, S., Rizvi, F., Lingard, B. and Henry, M. 1997. *Educational policy and the politics of change.* London & New York: Routledge.

Thayer, H.S. 1982. *Pragmatism*. (http://www.pragmatism.org/research/Thayer-pragmatism.htm) Retrieved on 13 January 2014.

The Times. 2010. Markers cast shadow over matric results. 17 December:10.

Thomas, P.Y. 2010. Towards developing a web-based blended learning environment at the University of Botswana. *Research Methodology and Designs*. University of South Africa.

Tong, C.S. 2013, June 7th. *Understanding the work of the HKEAA: Quality Assurance.* [Power Point Slides.] Presented at the HKEAA Hong Kong.

Trochim, W.M.K. 2000. *The research methods knowledge base*. 2nd ed. Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing. (http://www.socialresearch methods.net/kb/qualval.php) Retrieved on 13 March 2016.

Trümpelmann, M.H. 1991. *The Joint Matriculation Board: Seventy five years achievement in perspective.* Goodwood: National Book Printers.

UNESCO. 2013. *Beyond 2015 – Educating for a sustainable future: Key considerations for the development of the post 2015 agenda*. *(*http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002219/221909E.pdf*)* Retrieved on 15 January 2015.

United Kingdom Department for Education (UK. DfE). 2014. *Reformed GCSE and A level subject content consultation.* UK: UK Government. *(*https://www.gov.uk/*)* Retrieved on 30October 20144.

Western Cape Education Department. 2014. Media release: Western Cape conducts competency testing for NSC markers – fourth year in a row *(*https://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/western-cape-conducts-competency-testing-national-senior-certificate-markers*)* Retrieved on 15 October 2015.

Willis, J.W. 2007. *World views, paradigms, and the practice of social science research.* Foundations of qualitative research. (http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/13885-Chapter1.pdf) Retrieved on 13 January 2014.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTERS- NCDOE

Enquiri : Patty van Wyk Date 1

Date : 06 February 2013

Contact Details : 079 076 3498

TO: HOD – MR G.T. PHARASI

CC: CHIEF DIRECTOR - DR. M. ISHMAIL

CC: DIRECTOR - MS A.P. PHUZI

CC: CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST - MR SELLO MAKETLO

SUBJECT: DECLARATION OF FURTHER STUDIES AND REQUEST PERMISSION TO USE DEPARTMENTAL / GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

I herewith wish to inform you that I have enrolled for further studies to complete my **Master's Degree** in **Policy studies and Governance.**

My intended topic for Research is: **Factors which hampers high quality marking during the NSC Examinations.**

The requested information will merely be used for research on the topic in a South African context and will not be used in any way to discredit or damage the image of the Northern Cape Department of Education or the broader National Department of Basic Education.

My research is driven by the urge to gain insight into the problems which influence Marking and in return contribute positively to work.

Yours in Education

P.S. VAN WYK
6/02/2013

Approved.
13/02/06.

1

15 OTTO STREET
HOMESTEAD
KIMBERLEY
8301

5 FEBRUARY 2015

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
MR G.T. PHARASI
NORTHERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
KIMBERLEY

SUBJECT : REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AT SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT OFFICES IN THE NORTHERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

Dear Sir

I, **Patricia Sybil van Wyk** is a registered student at the University of the Free State, Faculty of Education, Department of Philosophy and Policy Studies in Education. I am currently a final year Master's Degree student doing Policy Studies.. The title of my research is:

The marking process of the National Senior Certificate: exploring problems of quality

As part of my studies I need to conduct an empirical research consisting of interviews and questionnaires.

I herewith request your permission to conduct the empirical research in a few High Schools and at District Offices in the Province, where I will circulate questionnaires and conduct a few interviews with a selected number of participants.

All Ethical aspects will be considered and no information of any kind will be used to discredit the Northern Cape Education Department in any way.

Your assistance in this regard is highly appreciated.

Patricia S. van Wyk
.....

Date:
5/2/2015

867

Northern Cape
Department of Education
I.K Nkoane Education House
156 Barkly Road
Homestead
Kimberley 8301

Private Bag X5029
Kimberley 8300
Republic of South Africa

Tel: 053 839 6500
Fax: 053 839 6580/1
Web:ncdoe.ncpg.gov.za

MEMORANDUM

Enquiries: Ms HC Burrows
Contact No: 053 839 6701
Ref No: L4.9.1.10.2.1
Date: 9 March 2015

Ms. P. van Wyk
15 Otto Street
Homestead
Kimberley
8301

Subject: Permission to conduct empirical research in the Northern Cape Province.

Your request to conduct empirical research in High Schools and District offices in the province is herewith granted.

Please provide the Department with the findings of your research, once the study is completed.

Yours Sincerely

Dr M.I. Ishmail
Deputy Director-General: Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

APPENDIX B: ETHICS CLEARANCE

UFS·UV
EDUCATION
OPVOEDKUNDE

Faculty of Education

17-May-2016

Dear **Mrs Patricia Van Wyk**

Ethics Clearance: **The marking process of the National Senior Certificate: exploring problems of quality**

Principal Investigator: **Mrs Patricia Van Wyk**

Department: **School of Education (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2016/0091**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Juliet Ramohai
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Researcher:
Patricia Sybil van Wyk
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein
Tel: 079 076-3498
vanwykp59@gmail.com

Study Leader:
Dr K. Teise
Faculty of Education
University of the Free
P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein
Tel: (051) 491 3421
kteise@ufs.ac.za

8February 2016

Informed Consent

Dear participant

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project:

The marking process of the National Senior Certificate: exploring problems of quality

The reason I am undertaking this study is to evaluate the current marking process teaching and learning practices with the view to present recommendations that could contribute towards the improvement of quality marking during the National Senior Certificate (NSC) marking in the Northern Cape. I would like you to participate in this research because your experience/involvement in the NSC marking process are likely to give valuable information that could lead to the improvement of the NSC marking not only in the Northern Cape, but also at a national level.

You will be expected to respond, in an individual interview, to specific questions about your own marking experiences, how you perceive the quality of marking and what you think impacts on the alleged poor quality of marking in your specific subject. Please note that your identity will not be disclosed in any way in the research report. If you are uncomfortable with any question, you are welcome to refrain from responding. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you choose to take part and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time, stop your participation with no further repercussions. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it. Please note that you are free to contact my study leader (indicated above) as well.

All the responses from the various participants will be integrated in the research report and no identifiable information will be included. The aim of the study is not to expose deficits in individuals, but rather to get an overall perspective on factors which negatively impede on the quality of the NSC marking. This study seeks to positively contribute to a *reflective process at both provincial and national Education departments regarding the enhancement of the* NSC marking process. Furthermore, it will hopefully prompt recommendations that could enhance quality marking therefore, I am convinced that not only the province but the entire country could benefit from this study.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you will make.

Should any difficult personal issues arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to ensure that a qualified expert is contacted and able to assist you.

Sincerely

.....

Patricia Sybil van Wyk

1

Please complete the requested information below and return to the researcher who will provide you with a copy of this consent letter.

Research Study: The marking process of the National Senior Certificate: exploring problems of quality

Researcher: Patricia Sybil van Wyk

Name and surname of the participant: .....

Contact number: .....

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations she has indicated in the above letter.
- I understand the researcher's commitment to not identify me in any way in the research report.

Signature of participant: .....Date: .....

2

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- The interview questions consist of three sets of questions. Section **A, B** and **C** in order to accommodate the different groups of interviewees**.**
- Participants are requested to motivate all responses and explained in detail to avoid misinterpretation.
- Participants are reminded that during all our analysis data will be depersonalized, and so that responses are kept confidential.

1.	**Please tell me about yourself. Your years teaching experience and the grades you teach, marking experience and the subjects you teach.** Vertel my asb. van jouself. Jou jare onderwys en merk ervaring asook die grade wat jy onderrig en gemerk het?
2.	**Describe your involvement in and duties during the NSC marking process?** Beskryf asb. jou betrokkenheid in die NSS merk proses.
3.	**How involved are you during the appointment of markers and what mechanisms do you have in place to ensure that the best possible candidates are selected for marking? How convinced are you that the best candidates are selected for marking?** Hoe betrokke is jy in die aanstelling van merkers en watter metodes het jy in plek om te verseker dat die beste kandidate aangestel word? Hoe oortuig is jy dat die beste kandidate aangestel word?
4.	**We know that the dept. of education has certain requirements for markers when applying to mark. What is your view of those criteria? Are they fair? Are they, according to you, consistently applied?**

	Ons weet dat die onderwys departement sekere vereistes het wanneer die merkers aansoek doen vir merk. Wat is jou mening rondom die kriteria? Is dit regverdig en word dit deurgaans dieselfde toegepas?
5.	**To what extent do you think those criteria are applied during marker selections?** Tot watter mate dink jy word die kriteria toegepas gedurende die seleksie van merkers?
6.	**Do you think in general, and from your experience that the markers appointed are qualified enough to serve as markers? What is your perception about the quality and competency of the Senior markers, Chief markers, and Internal moderators?** Dink jy in die algemeen en uit jou ondervinding dat merkers gekwalifiseerd genoeg is om as merkers te dien? Wat is jou persepsies rondom die gehalte en bevoegdheid van Senior Merkers/ Hoof Nasieners/ Interne Moderators?
7.	**Do you think there is a need to have stricter application requirements? What according to you would it entail?** Dink jy daar is ’n behoefte om strenger vereistes te stel tydens aansoeke? Wat sal dit behels? Motiveer asb.
8.	**The performance of a marker influence the quality of marking. What is your view regarding a competency test before the appointment of markers?** Die optrede van ’n merker beïnvloed die gehalte van merk. Wat is jou siening rondom ’n bevoegdheidstoets (competency test) voor die aanstelling van merkers?
9.	**How important is subject knowledge and language competency and what impact does it have on the quality of marking? Describe your own experiences.**

	Hoe belangrik is vak inhoudskennis en taalbevoegdheid tydens merk en watter impak het dit op die gehalte van merk? Beskryf jou eie ondervinding**.**
10.	**What is your perception of quality marking?** Wat is jou persepsies oor gehalte merk?
11.	**During your years as Senior Marker/ Chief marker/ Internal Moderator – have you ever came across, what you would regard as gross violations of marking ethics? Explain what happened.** Het jy al ooit gedurende jou jare as Senior Merker/ Hoof Nasiener/ Interne Moderator teëgekom dat etiese merkwaardes volgens jou wantoegepas/ misbruik of misplaas was? Verduidelik wat gebeur het.
12.	**How important do you regard administrative skills during the marking process and what are the consequences of poor administrative skills?** Hoe belangrik ag jy Administratiewe vaardighede gedurende merk en wat is die gevolge van swak Administratiewe vaardighede tydens die merkproses?
13.	**What in your view and from your experience are the quality control measures that are in place to ensure good quality marking? Do you think they are effective? What else do you think should be done during the marking process to enhance the quality of marking?** Wat in jou opinie en uit jou ervaring is die maatstaf vir gehalte versekering (quality control) wat in plek is om te verseker dat goeie gehalte merk geskied? Dink jy daardie maatstawwe is effektief? Wat anders kan gedoen word tydens die merkproses om die gehalte van merk te verbeter?
14.	**What factors do you think influence the quality of marking?** Watter faktore dink jy beïnvloed die gehalte van merk ?
15.	**If your child is in Grade 12 would you have any reason to doubt the quality of marking? Please motivate your answer.**

	Indien jou kind in matriek is, het jy enige rede om die gehalte van merk te betwyfel? Motiveer asb.
16.	**What are your view on the quality of the physical environment where the marking takes place and the impact thereof on good quality?** Wat is jou siening oor die gehalte van die fisiese omgewing waar gemerk word en die impak daarvan op goeie gehalte merk?
17.	**What is your perception of the reasons why such a large number of re-marks usually result in huge mark changes during the re-marking process?** Wat is jou persepsie oor die redes waarom so 'n groot hoeveelheid hermerke gewoonlik opeindig met groot verskille tydens hermerk?

SECTION B – CENTRE MANAGER / CURRICULUM OFFICIAL	
1.	**Please tell me about yourself. Your years teaching experience and the grades you teach, marking experience and the subjects you teach.** Vertel my asb. van jouself. Jou jare onderwys en merk ervaring asook die grade wat jy onderrig en gemerk het?
2.	**Describe your involvement in and duties during the NSC marking process?** Beskryf asb. jou betrokkenheid in die NSS merk proses.
3.	**We know that the dept. of education has certain requirements for the appointment of Examination Assistants. What is your view of those criteria? Are they fair? Are they, according to you, consistently applied during selection of Examination Assistants?**

	Ons weet dat die onderwysdepartement sekere vereistes het wanneer merkers aansoek doen vir merk. Wat is jou mening rondom die kriteria? Is dit regverdig en word dit deurgaans dieselfde toegepas?
4.	**What is your perception about the competency of Examination Assistants during the administrative checking of scripts? Do you think in general, and from your experience that the Examination Assistants appointed are suitably qualified to check the scripts? Please motivate.** Wat is jou persepsie rondom die bevoegdheid van Eksamen Assistente gedurende die administratiewe kontrolering van skrifte tydens die merkproses? Dink jy in die algemeen en uit jou ervaring dat die Eksamen Assistente voldoende gekwalifiseerd is om die skrifte te kontroleer? Motiveer asb.
5.	**What do you think could be done to further enhance the quality control during the Administrative checking of scripts?** Wat dink jy kan verder gedoen word om die kwaliteit versekering gedurende die Administratiewe kontrolering van skrifte te bevorder?
6.	**How would you regard the quality of marking taking place at the marking centres? What is your experience of the quality of marking that is taking place and why? Please motivate.** Hoe sal jy die gehalte van merk tydens ’n merksessie beskryf? Wat is jou ervaring oor die gehalte van merk wat plaasvind en hoekom? Motiveer asb.
7.	**Do you think the remuneration Markers/Examination Assistants receive have an influence on their commitment to and quality (and or their marking) ? If Markers/ Examination Assistants are paid more/ less will the commitment to their work / marking quality improve?**

	Dink jy dat die betaling wat Merkers/Eksamen Assistente ontvang ‘n invloed het op die gehalte van merk / toewyding tot hul werk? Sal die gehalte van merk dieselfde bly indien Merkers/Eksamen Assistente minder /meer betaal word?
8.	**What is your perception about the quality and competency of the Senior markers, Chief markers, and Internal moderators?** Wat is jou persepsie oor die gehalte van Senior merkers/ Hoof Nasieners/ Interne Moderators?
9.	**What is your perception of the reasons why such a large number of re-marks usually result in huge mark changes during the re-marking process after the scripts have been checked by the Examination Assistants?** Wat is jou persepsie oor die redes waarom so ’n groot hoeveelheid hermerke gewoonlik opeindig met groot verskille tydens hermerk nadat die Eksamen Assistente dit kontroleer het?

SECTION C – HIGH SCHOOL PRINICIPAL / TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES	
1.	**Please tell me about yourself. Your years teaching experience and the grades you teach, marking experience and the subjects you teach.** Vertel my asb. van jouself. Jou jare onderwys en merk ervaring asook die grade wat jy onderrig en gemerk het?
2.	**Describe your involvement in and duties during the NSC marking process?** Beskryf asb. jou betrokkenheid in die NSS merk proses.
3.	**How involved are you during the appointment of markers and what mechanisms do you have in place to ensure that the best possible**

	candidates are selected for marking? How convinced are you that the best candidates are selected for marking? Please motivate your answer Hoe betrokke is jy in die aanstelling van merkers en watter metodes het jy in plek om te verseker dat die beste kandidate aangestel word? Hoe oortuig is jy dat die beste kandidate aangestel word? Motiveer asb. jou antwoord.
4.	**We know that the dept. of education has certain requirements for markers when applying to mark. What is your view of those criteria? Are they fair? Are they, according to you, consistently applied?** Ons weet dat die onderwys departement sekere vereistes het wanneer die merkers aansoek doen vir merk. Wat is jou mening rondom die kriteria? Is dit regverdig en word dit deurgaans dieselfde toegepas?
5.	**To what extent do you think those criteria are applied during marker selections and what other criteria do you think should be applicable? Please motivate your answer** Tot watter mate dink jy word die kriteria toegepas gedurende die seleksie van merkers en watter ander kriteria dink \is toepaslik? Motiveer asb. jou antwoord.
6.	**Do you think in general, and from your experience that the markers appointed are qualified enough to serve as markers? Do you sometimes have reservations about the quality of teachers who are appointed? Please motivate your answer.** Dink jy in die algemeen en uit jou ondervinding, dat die merkers gekwalifiseerd genoeg is om as merkers te dien? Het jy soms bedenkinge oor die kwaliteit van onderwysers wat aangestel word? Motiveer asb. jou antwoord.
7.	**Do you think the remuneration markers receive have an influence on their commitment to and quality (and or their marking)? If they are paid more/ less will the commitment to their work / marking quality improve?**

	Dink jy dat die betaling wat merkers ontvang ’n invloed op die gehalte van merk / toewyding tot hul werk het? Sal die gehalte van merk dieselfde bly indien hulle minder /meer betaal word?
8.	**What is your experience of the NSC marking process?** Wat is jou ervaring van die NSS merkproses?
9.	**If your child is in Grade 12 (matric) would you have any reason to doubt the quality of marking? Please motivate your answer.** Indien jou kind in Graad 12 (matriek) is, het jy enige rede om die gehalte van merk te betwyfel? Motiveer asb.

Your participation during this interview is highly appreciated. Thank you very much.

Jou deelname word opreg waardeer. Baie dankie.

APPENDIX F: APPROVED EDITING

evm
TAALPRAKTISYN | LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

1 July 2016

I, Elmarie Viljoen-Massyn, hereby certify that I have language edited the MEd dissertation titled, *The marking process of the National Senior Certificate: exploring problems of quality*, by Patricia Sybil van Wyk.

I am a language practitioner registered at the South African Translators' Institute (member number 1001757) and my highest qualification is an MA Language Practice.

Please contact me should there be any queries.

Elmarie Viljoen-Massyn

Elmarie Viljoen-Massyn | 076 7401 367 | elmarie.viljoen@gmail.com
BA (Hons) Psychology | MA Language Practice (Translation)
PO Box 39044 | Langenhoven Park 9330