

https://dspace.org/

An investigation of feedback to secondary schools from The Cambridge overseas school certificate(COSC) english language examinations in Lesotho

Tlebere, Maleshoane Matheko

2006-04-24
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/348

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

AN INVESTIGATION OF FEEDBACK TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS FROM THE CAMBRIDGE OVERSEAS SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (COSC) ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS IN LESOTHO

Maleshoane 'Matheko Tlebere

A research report submitted in the faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in English language in the discipline of Applied English Language Studies.

JOHANNESBURG, FEBRUARY, 2005

Abstract

This study investigates how feedback from the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) English language examinations marking board is transmitted to the teachers and other stakeholders for effective teaching and learning in Lesotho secondary schools. The aim was to discover teachers' and other stakeholders' views, feelings and reactions to examiners' reports. The focus was also on the general information that comes from the marking board. In carrying out this study, interviews, questionnaires and documents were used to examine the extent to which teachers access and make use of this information in improving their pedagogical practices. End of year results, from selected schools, covering a period of five years, were analysed. The major findings of the research revealed that there was a correlation between the feedback and students' results. Based on feedback from the marking board there were positive washback effects on teaching methods and on teachers' perceptions, resulting in improved students' scores. Nevertheless, there were contradicting views on the issue of washback effects and this situation simply highlighted the ambivalence of the concept of washback, especially on the high-stakes tests such as the COSC discussed here. One major discovery was in relation to the issue of full localization of COSC. An overwhelming majority of the respondents suggested that localized marking of the COSC has positive washback effects on teaching and learning of English language in the context of Lesotho, and more positive results are envisaged with full localization of such examinations and the curricula. It is hoped that the MOE, will make informed policy modifications using some of the findings in this report.

List of Abbreviations

COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
ECOL	Examinations Council of Lesotho
ERs	Examiners' Reports
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HOD	Head of Department (English Language)
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
JC	Junior Certificate
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCDC	The National Curriculum Development Centre
NUL	The National University of Lesotho
NTM	Non-Teacher-Marker
STL(s)	Senior-team-leader(s)
SO	Subject Officer
TM	Teacher-Marker
UBLSEC	The University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Examinations Council
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

Contents

Dedication (i)

Acknowledgements (ii)

Declaration (iii)

Abstract (iv)

List of Figures and Tables (v)

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Overview 1

1.2. Purpose of the Study 1

1.3. Context and Background to the Study 2

1.4. English and Colonialism 5

1.5. Localisation of Examinations in Lesotho 7

1.6. Aim 12

1.7. Research Questions 12

1.8. Rationale 13

1.9. Limitations of the Study 17

1.10. Overview of Chapters 18

Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Theoretical Background to the Research

2.1. Overview 20

2.2. Assessment 20

2.3. Assessment of English Language in Lesotho 24

2.4. Dilemmas of Washback 25

2.4.1. Strategies for Promoting Positive Washback 29

2.4.2. International Empirical Studies on Washback 31

2.5. High-Stakes Testing 33

2.5.1. Local Experiences with High-Stakes Testing (Southern Africa) 38

2.5.2. International Empirical Studies 40

2.6. Teacher Change and Innovation 44

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Overview 47

3.2. Research Approach 47

3.3. Methods of Data Collection and Selection 49

3.3.1. Research Site 49

3.3.2. Participants 50

3.4. Data Collection Tools and Strategies 51

3.4.1. Semi-Structured Interviews 51

3.4.1.1. Interviewees 52

3.4.2. Questionnaires 54

3.4.2.1. Respondents to the Questionnaires 55

3.4.3. Documentary Sources 55

3.4.3.1. Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) Results 1998-2002 56

3.5. Ethical considerations 57

Chapter Four: Data Description and Analysis

4.1. Overview 59

4.2. Results of Interview Questions 59

4.2.1. Respondents' Views on Dissemination of Examiners' Reports 61

4.2.2. Utilisation of Examiners' Reports 63

4.2.3. Students' Results

4.2.4. Teachers' Views on Effects of localized marking on Teaching and Learning and on the Results 68

4.2.5. Teachers' Views on Students' Strengths and Weaknesses 70

4.2.6. Teachers' Involvement in Marking 71

4.2.6.1. Positive Washback Effects of Teachers' involvement in marking 72

4.2.6.2. Negative Effects of Teachers' involvement in marking 75

4.2.7. Stakeholders' suggestions for Improvement of COSC 78

4.3. Results of the Questionnaire 83

4.3.1. Overview 83

4.3.2. Profiles of Teachers who responded to the Questionnaire 84

4.3.3. Teachers' Responses about Feedback from Marking Board 86

4.3.4. Teachers' Views on Utilisation of ERs 89

4.3.5. Positive Effects of ERs on Teaching and Learning of English Language 91

4.3.6. Teachers' Views on Impact of full Localisation on Classroom Instruction 92

4.3.7. Teachers' Suggestions for Improvement in Marking and Dissemination of Feedback 94

4.3.8. Teachers' Views on Recommendations from Examiners' Reports 96

4.3.9. Overview 96

4.3.10. Students' Writing Skills 96

4.3.11. Codeswitching as a pedagogical Tool 97

4.3.12. LI Interference 98

4.3.13. Exposure to Spoken and Written English Language 99

4.3.14. Suggestions for Teaching Situational Composition 100

4.3.15. Solutions to Summary Writing 102

4.3.16. Dealing with Inferential Questions 103

4.3.17. Teachers' General Comments on Recommendations 104

4.3.18. Addressing Grammatical Errors 106

4.3.19. Teachers' Comments on ERs 106

4.3.20. Information lacking in ERs 107

4.4. Analysis of COSC Results from November 1998-2002 108

4.4.1. Overview 108

4.4.2. Statistical Presentation of Schools' Results 108

4.4.3. Analysis Of School Results 111

Chapter Five: Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1. Overview 115

5.2. Reflections on the Main Isssues of the Study 115

5.2.1. Major Findings: Positive Effects 117

5.2.2. Availability and utilization of ERs 117

5.2.3. Benefits of Detailed Scores 118

5.3.4. Usefulness of ERs 118

5.2.5. Opposing Views on full localization of COSC Examinations and Curricula 118

5.2.6. Selection and Training of Markers 119

5.2.7. Teachers and Students' Negative Attitudes 119

5.2.8. Threats to Students about English Language 120

5.2.9. Positive effects on Teaching Methods 120

5.2.10. Central Inspectorate must Monitor Dissemination of ERs 121

5.3. Recommendations 121

5.4. Recommendations for further Research 123

5.5. Conclusion 124

References **127**

Appendices A-E