

CHAPTER 4: DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview

This chapter comprises three sections. The first section reports on the results of the interviews with non-teacher-markers, markers and officers who have a stake in the dissemination and utilisation of marking board information. The second section gives the results of the questionnaires, which elicited teachers' views, experiences, feelings and misgivings about the importance of the marking board information. Section three presents statistical information on students' results in selected schools to show whether there has been an improvement or decline in results over a period of five years after localisation of marking (1998-2002). Again the purpose is to determine whether there are correlations with teachers' claims about improved results.

4.2 Results of Interview Questions

Responses to questions used in the interview (Appendix B+) will be discussed under the following themes:

- Dissemination of ERs
- Utilisation of ERs
- Students' Results
- Effects of localised marking
- Students' strengths and weaknesses
- Involvement in marking
- Suggestions for improvement of COSC English language teaching and learning

Responses from all stakeholders in relation to the above-mentioned themes will be given in table 2 on the next page , followed by an analysis of the responses.

4.2.1 Dissemination of Examiners' Reports

Stakeholders' responses on the above issue are presented in a tabular form below and then followed by a discussion.

<i>Non-teacher-markers</i>	<i>Teacher-markers and senior-team-leaders</i>	<i>Heads of departments</i>	<i>Principals</i>	<i>NCDC and ECOL officers</i>
-School A, Two NTMs said they had not received ERs. -School B, the two NTMs said they seldom see ERs. These four teachers claimed that they have used marking board information from colleagues at meetings and workshops. School C, the two NTMs here said they had regularly seen and used ERs.	-All the ten markers agreed that after marking, ERs are written by markers and then compiled by the examiners and ECOL, but ERs do not reach teachers. -ECOL is supposed to send ERS to schools. -Marking board information is disseminated through meetings and workshops. -Apart from ERs, passlists provide useful information to teachers. -Teachers at schools complain that ERs do not reach them.	-All the three HODs from schools A, B, C said that the ERs come to their schools occasionally or late in the year sometimes not at all. - They said they facilitate meetings where ERs and/or other information from marking board is discussed and reflected upon.	-All the three principals from schools A, B, C, said they receive ERs from ECOL though they arrive irregularly. -Sometimes they come as late as September. School A, said he put ERs on centre table for consumption by all subject teachers. School B, the principal claimed he made copies for all subject teachers. -School C, the principal said ERs	-All the three officers (NCDC SO, ECOL SO, and ECOL Registrar) agreed that ECOL is responsible for the dissemination of ERs. -Subject officers at ECOL ensure that ERs are ready and send to teachers. The pre-marking meetings and workshops are used for conveying information. -Passlists contain information under the title the Examiners' Eye' -NCDC officer felt that ECOL does not send ERs to schools as regularly as it should.

Table2: Stakeholders' responses on dissemination of ERs

Discussion on dissemination of ERs

All the responses with regard to the dissemination of ERs indicate that there is a problem in the flow of marking board information to teachers. It is evident that ERs do not reach certain schools as regularly as it is expected. Non-availability of these reports implies that they cannot be fully utilised by teachers. If they arrive at schools as late as September, their use is highly limited. One HOD from school A said she hardly saw local reports except the ones from Cambridge. In her own words she said,

I am saying—these reports have to come every year so that we know about our own experiences here in Lesotho—we get these reports from Cambridge which are general about all the candidates who write their exams throughout the world—we don't get local reports and we would so much love to get them—now we don't know what is happening (HOD School A) (October 2003).

However, teachers from school C in Maseru, which is near ECOL, are the ones who enjoy access to ERs. One wonders what happens to teachers in other districts far from Maseru. This is a serious problem to be addressed by relevant bodies. ECOL assumes that ERs are sent to teachers but they do not seem to be making any effort to follow-up on the dissemination of ERs. The problem here is that there is an overlap of responsibilities among ECOL, NCDC and the Central Inspectorate, so none of them seem to take responsibility in monitoring the dissemination of ERs. Kellaghan and Greaney (1992) argue that in order to foster positive washback effects, the powers that be, ECOL in this case, should provide detailed and timely feedback to schools on levels of pupils' performance and areas of difficulty in public examinations. Shohamy (1992) points out that in order for marking board feedback to lead to change it should have high systemic validity and be translatable into instructional activities and actual strategies for teaching and learning.

4.2.2 Utilisation of Examiners' Reports

All the stakeholders were questioned on what they thought about the utilisation of ERs. The purpose was to find out if teachers regard ERs as useful tools in their pedagogical practices and what other people, especially administrators think happens with marking board information. The researcher was also interested in finding out the roles of different stakeholders in ensuring the use of ERs. A table of responses with regard to utilisation of ERs follows and then a discussion.

	Fully utilised	Not fully utilised	Total
Non-teacher-markers	5	1	6
Teacher-markers/Senior-team-leaders	7	3	10
Heads of Departments	3	0	3
Principals	2	1	3
NCDC/ ECOL officers	0	3	3

Table 3: Stakeholders' responses on the utilisation of ERs

Discussion in relation to the utilisation of ERs

The above table indicates opposing views of stakeholders on the utilisation of examiners' reports. A large majority of non-teacher-markers and markers felt that the reports are used beneficially by the teachers. Their responses show how, where and when the ERs are used. For example, they pointed out that the ERs are useful in that

they reveal students' errors and their reactions to questions. Furthermore, ERs are used in departmental meetings, in planning and scheming. In addition, in the Northern District, the teachers said local common COSC examinations are written as a result of the information from ERs and the marking board. The HODs agreed with the other teachers and indicated that they themselves facilitated the use of ERs through meetings and workshops. The principal from school B was certain that ERs were used. This is evidenced by the improving results at his school. The principal from school C agreed with the group of interviewees who believed that ERs are not fully utilised by the teachers. As a matter of fact only a small percentage of teachers thought that their colleagues are not using information put forward in the ERs.

It is interesting looking at the above data to notice that those who thought ERs are not utilised fully fall in the category of administrators. There are two STLs who consists of teachers' advisors, and inspectors and there are also the curriculum developer and the examinations' officers. This tendency to shift the blame on the juniors is common in school situation. For example, principals blame HODs, the latter blame teachers, and teachers blame students. The fact is that it might be true that ERs are not fully utilised by some teachers as exemplified by the response from one NTM from school B. My contention is that there might be other factors which hinder full utilisation of the ERs. For example, if they arrive as late as September, not many teachers will be in a position to use them fully. This was reiterated by the principal of school C who said that even though they receive ERs every year but they arrive late. Therefore, it can be concluded that optimum utilisation of the examiners' reports is hampered by

among others, their non-availability, and non-accessibility to teachers and maybe their late coming to certain schools. This state of affairs is indicated in section 4.2.1 above.

4.2.3 Students' Results

Teachers, both markers' and non-markers' attitudes and views on factors that contribute to students' poor results were sought. Since there is an overlap of responses, a combined presentation of their responses will be given first in a tabular form, and then a discussion will follow.

Student-related factors	Teacher-related factors	System-related factors
-Lack of spoken English among students -Students good in spoken - English but poor in written English -Poor expression because of lack of exposure -Negative attitudes toward English/demotivated -Lack of exposure to reading – results in poor comprehension and limited vocabulary -No listening to standard English, but their own 'local' English -Students have intrinsic and extrinsic fears about English -Students lack interpretation skills -Lack of exposure to the writing process	-Teachers lack exposure to Cambridge criteria -Teachers do not read ERs -Teachers lack critical appreciation skills -Negative attitudes towards English -Most teachers lack confidence -There is not enough teaching of writing as a process -Many teachers are resistant to change -Teachers do not read, except textbooks -Some teachers do not attend workshops -Some teachers are not qualified to teach English -Students weaknesses reveal poor planning and preparation for English language teaching and exams -inadequate teacher-training	-No libraries at schools – where there are –stocked with old fashioned books -Weak teachers produce weak students -Individual school's English language policy -Not enough in-service training for teachers -Illegal schools -MOE not supplying reading materials to schools -Not enough time for the teaching of English language -A monolingual society, makes English the language of the classroom -Tertiary institutions failing to equip teachers with L2 skills -Irrelevance of COSC exams – Cambridge system foreign to us -marking memos restrictive

Table 4: Factors contributing to poor performance according to teacher-markers and non-Teacher-markers

Discussion

An attempt will be made here to summarise the major concerns about poor COSC results as shown in the responses in the table 4.

- Teachers lack exposure to relevant marking board information such as ERs and marking memoranda.
- Lack of full control over COSC examinations lead to irrelevant examinations which place Basotho students at a disadvantage.
- Teachers and students have negative attitudes towards English language as a subject.
- Lack of reading and teaching materials and facilities hinders smooth teaching and learning of English.
- Teachers are ill-equipped for L2 teaching and the teacher-training institutions are held accountable.
- Poor performance as a result of non-exposure
- Teachers' resistance to change

Discuss above points

4.2.4 Effects of localised marking on teaching and learning and on the results

Stakeholders views in relation to the effects of localised marking on teaching and learning and on the results are presented in a table 5 in the next page and this will be followed by a discussion.

	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Uncertainties and challenges</i>
Non-teacher-markers	-Five NTMs said that marking board information has influenced their work positively. -Teachers are able to identify and rectify students' errors and teachers weaknesses. -Students' performance has improved.	One NTM said that marking board information has influenced her work negatively – she was helping students to pass examinations.	With regard to the effects of localised marking on results the NTMs gave these responses: School A NTM1 results have improved, NTM2 felt results have deteriorated. School B Both NTMs said that there was no improvement in results. School C NTM1 said the results were the same, NTM2 said results were not improving.
Heads of Departments	-Three HODs thought that localised marking has positive results. -Teachers now know the expectations of the COSC exams through experience. -Markers share their experiences with other teachers.		
Principals	School A the principal here thought that localised marking has positive results. School B Drastic increase in results makes it difficult for him to decide. School C It should contribute positively if teachers were reading and applying information in ERs. -It is a good thing.		Principal of school B is not sure about the effects of localised marking but he said his teachers are using the recommendations from ERs and he knew that by looking at the results (to be discussed further in discussion section)
Officers	-All three officers felt that localised marking has positive effects on teachers and students. -Teachers have access to marking memoranda. -It brings about professional development of teachers. Students have benefited through local grading since 1997. -Students are writing English articles for local newspapers. -The reading culture has improved steadily.	-NCDC officer felt that although there are goods results of localised exams, there are also negative results. - Teachers are teaching to the test, examinations seem to control what is taught in classrooms the officer said.	- These officers stated that there were some challenges facing localisation of marking: *lack of co-operation among teachers and lack of co-operation between NCDC and ECOL. *The education system lacks L2 qualified staff.

Table 5: Stakeholders' views on effects of localised marking

Teacher-markers and senior-team-leaders' responses to the question on effects of localised marking will appear in section 4.2.6 because they are related to their involvement in marking.

4.2.5 Students' Strengths and Weaknesses

Both the strengths and weaknesses raised by the teacher-markers correspond with those that appear in the ERs (Appendix A). According to these markers, few candidates exhibit the strengths mentioned by markers. The teacher-markers and senior-team-leaders affirmed that the majority of candidates' work is characterised by language weaknesses as exemplified by the poor results. There was a mismatch of ideas on the issue of students' merits. With regard to the strengths though, TM 3 (P1) observed that the so-called merits (strengths) are to master the examinations not mastery of the language itself. She posits that

The examination has its own focus—and the language merits are another thing. Students who get credits are those who have the mastery of the examinations—not the mastery of the English language---they don't have communicative English at all. (October 2003).

This assertion is in line with what is posited by Shohamy (1992) when she talks about 'test language' that is, "only the language skills and tasks that were likely to appear on the tests" (1992:514). This assertion implies the negative effects of high-stakes examinations. TM 2 (P1) mentioned the occurrence of rehearsed introductions which are often irrelevant. Concerning this point, Madaus (1988) argues that even though students may sometimes fare well in that examination, the results are not the true reflection of students' language skills. He also observed that some students tend to write stories not discursive compositions. The senior-team-leader (in personal conversation) had a similar observation which she shared. She pointed out that it

seems some teachers teach what is suitable and easier for themselves and students without considering the syllabus or the requirements of the examinations. Indeed they ‘dumbdown’ the instruction (refer to section 1.5 for more input on this). This practice tends to place students at a disadvantage for if they have difficulty dealing with a topic on story writing, they may not have any choice.

4.2.6 Teachers’ Involvement in Marking

When asked whether their getting involved in marking would influence their teaching in any way, the non-teacher-markers all said that that experience is likely to influence their teaching in a positive way. “I will know students’ problems. I will teach my students to avoid such errors” (NTM2 school B) (October 2003).

Effects of teacher-involvement in marking on their teaching and other teachers’ work will now be discussed. Eight of ten teacher markers asserted that their involvement in marking has helped them improve their teaching methods and strategies and those of others. Two teacher-markers however, said that their participation in marking has affected their work both negatively and positively. However, they thought it has affected their colleagues’ work positively. The latter have acquired skills that help them to assist their students to perform better. A discussion of the positive effects of teacher involvement in marking COSC English language will follow.

4.2.6.1 Positive washback effects of teachers' involvement in marking

The teachers' involvement in marking has benefited teachers as individuals and as groups. The benefits have been extended to learners whose performance is said to have improved over the years after localisation of marking. They said teaching methods and strategies have also improved. The teacher-markers feel that they have grown professionally because of the experience they have gained through marking.

STL (P1) said, "People I train as markers are always surprised of themselves".

One teacher-trainee confessed, "I only realise now that I have not been doing the right thing".

TM2 P2 said,
Before I participated in marking, I was teaching in the dark—now I know and see where I am going.The experience gained has given me insights into the exams' requirements (TM 2 P2) (October 2003).

The above quotations are in accordance with what Resnick (2000) considers as some of the positive effects of high-stakes tests. Both teachers and students have benefited for they invite markers to their schools where they sometimes talk to students about information contained in the ERs.

One teacher-marker indicated,

I know the expectations of the exams—I teach my students to meet them" (TM 3 P2)
(October 2003).

A senior-team-leader said,

We work as a team – the advisor and markers disseminate marking board information to teachers at regional level (STL P2) (October2003).

In relation to teaching methods and strategies, one teacher-marker commented,

My teaching strategies have changed from giving students a composition title and leaving them to fend for themselves—to teaching composition writing as a process –

step-by-step, guiding them through. The same is true with summary writing—we work on each question step-by-step (TM 2 P2) (October 2003).

She continued,

Last year I was not teaching Form E (COSC) but they (students) did well in the English language exams—I think this is because of the information I give to my colleagues from the marking board (October 2003).

The STL (P2) said,

In those schools where teachers do use the skills and information we have shared with them—their results do improve—like in 2002 most schools have improved (October 2003).

The impression created here is that teachers and students have benefited, since students' performance has improved over these years (1998-2002). These claims, especially the one about results, stand to be tested against the actual analysis of statistical data of students' scores. According to other respondents, there are, however, other negative effects of teacher involvement in marking which were raised in this study.

4.2.6.2 Negative effects of teachers' involvement in marking

Two teacher-markers said that they found both negative and positive influences of localised marking on their teaching. They asserted that they used to work hard to teach their students to master the English language, but ever since their involvement in marking examinations, they were now focusing on the examinations, not necessarily on language knowledge. This state of affairs highlights the ambivalence of the concept of washback. This is again an indication of the existence of both positive and negative washback effects of examinations.

I think I no longer teach students to attain knowledge of the subject—but now I concentrate more on what is required by the exams—that means I skip some aspects of the language which I know will not appear on the exams (TM3 P2) (October2003).

However, another teacher said,

It has helped my colleagues positively—in fact, it has also helped me to know how the exams could be mastered (TM 3 P1).(October 2003)

Teachers' success is judged through the performance of students in the examinations. So striving to see their students doing well in examinations is the teachers' ultimate goal. It was seen in Chapter Two that high-stakes tests, such as the COSC demand accountability on both teachers and students. These tests exert more pressure on teachers of English language in Lesotho where English is a 'failing' subject.

Discussion

The contradictory responses in relation to the question of effects of localised marking on results could be attributed to the fact that there has been an inconsistent trend in examination results with little improvement at national level and considerable improvement at school level at some schools. It is interesting to discover that the teacher who thought the ERs affected her teaching negatively again thought that her involvement in marking could yield positive results. By referring to a 'drastic' change in results, the principal at school B seems to be looking at results at school level. Actually his school is one of the best performing schools in the country. However, there are elements of uncertainties and contradictions in his responses. He asserted that,

This is rather a difficult question—ever since marking has been localised—there have been drastic change in the results of the schools to the extent that one may—in comparison to the previous time when marking was done overseas---that in fact what

they did was to cut as much members as they could from the candidates so much that not many could pass—it could be in one way or the other—the marking is not the genuine marking—so for that reason—I cannot say whether it has contributed positively or negatively (Principal school C) (October 2003).

This was a response the principal of school B gave when answering a question about the effects of localised marking. Indeed the national results have improved slightly (Appendix D). A close analysis of annual results does not show evidence of a drastic change. There is a 4-7% increase in the number of credits, and a 30-40 percent pass rate at COSC (refer to 2001 Passlist: (ii) Table 1 – on the Comparative Analysis of COSC O’Level Examinations (1997-2001) Appendix D). Although there is evidence of noteworthy improvement of results as is shown by the three schools’ results analysed in this study (refer to section 4.4), the national results tell a different story. There is still something lacking to bring about real change in the results. Both the HODs and the principals concur with the teachers, both markers and non-markers, that localised marking and feedback from it has had beneficial effects. However, it seems localised marking alone does not seem to provide the solution to the poor results.

The teacher- markers believed that not only they but their colleagues also have grown professionally. Their perceptions have changed positively and they feel more confident in their work. They also maintained that as a result of their experiences, students’ performance has improved. However, there are two contradictory views still.

When talking about the negative results of localised marking the NCDC officer indicated that,

What happens is that teachers tend to teach what is in the exams—whereas it should be the other way round—because we are not teaching students for exams –but for their own personal development—for various reasons—more focus seems to be on exams—which means that now we are exam-oriented—Apparently, exams seem to control what is taught in classrooms and mastery of the language or rather giving students knowledge skills is at the background (October 2003).

She went on to give an example of what is happening in classrooms.

For example, there are different syllabuses for Form D and Form E—Form D is supposed to be a preparation class for Form E—But what happens is that students are given Form E tasks—teachers start giving these poor kids real exams question papers (for Form E) before they could prepare them—in other words we are not teaching them—but we are cheating them –different types of questions require certain skills which learners have to be taught—but this does not happen (October 2003).

According to Madaus (1988) and Cooley (1991) ‘teaching to the test’ implies negative washback hence it is not beneficial to students. These opposing views from teacher-markers and non-markers and different other stakeholders on the effects of feedback from marking is undoubtedly an indication of the dilemma of the concept of washback on high stakes examinations. These tests tend to have both beneficial and harmful effects (Bucks, 1988; Shohamy, 1993; Bailey, 1996; Brown and Hudson, 1998; Brown, 1998, 2002). The negative washback effects raised here concurs with what Stake’s (1992) report exposes:

Although tests did make teachers more focused in their teaching, they also resulted in narrowing the scope of the subject matter taught because the teachers were teaching primarily to achieve better results (Stakes in Shohamy 1992:514).

There is the need for a careful consideration of how the concept of washback works. This is in line with Alderson and Wall’s (1993) assertion that further research into the washback effects is still necessary, and that observation of actual classroom should be incorporated.

All the respondents here seem to agree that localisation of marking has brought about good results. However, the NCDC officer believed that there have been negative effects of examinations. This corroborates the views of NTM1 school B and TM3 P1 and TM3 P2. As I have indicated in the preceding section these contrasting positions assumed by the three participants presented above concur with literature on washback, that it could either be positive or negative. One of the challenges is lack of cooperation and collaboration between agents of localisation, such as ECOL and NCDC. This hampers the progress of the localisation process (Nketekete, 2002).

4.2.7 Stakeholders' suggestions for improvement of COSC

There are many similarities between stakeholders' suggestions with regard to the improvement of COSC hence, their responses will be presented together. The responses revolve around the following themes: localisation of COSC, dissemination of feedback, teacher-training, teaching methods and strategies, material support, exposure to assessment criteria, motivation, role of schools and policy. The presentation of the responses will follow:

- Localisation – True localisation of the curriculum and assessment is necessary to meet the educational needs of Basotho children.
- Dissemination of ERs should be prompt and regular and it has to be followed by monitoring of the ERs by Central Inspectorate.
- Teachers should be trained in COSC criteria and other information pertinent to their teaching practices.

- Teachers should be exposed to COSC expectations for example, the marking memoranda.
- Policy- The MOE policy on education should revisit the decision on making English language a ‘failing subject’.
- Codeswitching was suggested as a viable option for teaching in an L2 classroom where communicative teaching and learning approaches are in use.
- Schools should supply teaching and learning resources and ensure the use of English language across the curriculum.
- Both teachers and students should be remotivated because they seem to be demotivated. Giving teachers back-support and engaging students in participatory learning is imperative.

Discussion

It has been established throughout this dissertation that teachers do not have access to relevant information pertinent to the teaching and learning of English language in Lesotho secondary schools. There are number of points related to the dire need for teacher training raised by the respondents here. This situation bears evidence to the importance of giving teachers feedback not only from examinations, but also on other matters related to the improvement of English language instruction. The key word here is – back-up support. According to the respondents, the issue of examinations, where and how they are controlled and administered, is of vital importance in order to render them beneficial to teachers, learners and the administrators. The relevance and validity of the curriculum and examinations become crucial. This is related to

Fredricksen and Collins concept of 'systemic validity' as cited by Shohamy (1992:515)

[T]esting is a dynamic process in which systemic change takes place according to feedback obtained from tests....thus tests used to improve learning can be effective only if they relate to the whole educational system and not if they are used in isolation (1992:515).

There is the need for alignment between the syllabus, teaching and examinations (Biggs, 1999) if success in COSC results is envisaged. It is evident from the points raised in section 4.2.7 that other factors play a crucial role in improvement of students' results. A contradiction of opinions is observed when some teachers talk about a joint effort by Basotho and Cambridge University in the administration of examinations on the one hand, and the desire for full localisation of both the examinations and the syllabus on the other. The apprehension concerning full localisation has been expressed earlier in this report by the Assistant Registrar of ECOL.

According to the above suggestions there is a call for a corresponding teacher change as a result of the feedback they gained from the localisation reform. Loucks-Horsley *et al* (1987) as cited by Delano *et al* (1994) (refer to section 2.8 for a more substantial discussion) argue that teacher development can be realised when the following requirements are met: availability of resources, flexible working conditions, support and recognition, and these can assist teachers to improve their practice.

The principal at school B thought that the remedy for poor results is ‘going back to the basics’. He thought that teachers should return to the teaching of the language structure. The principal of school B, supports Shohamy (1992) that emphasis should not be on tests to create change but focus should be on teaching. Moreover, Shohamy (ibid) posits that positive effects could not be achieved if teachers’ focus is mostly on proficiency and less on the means to achieve it. Going back to the basics is in contrast with what is suggested by other teachers and the ECOL Registrar. It also contradicts contemporary theories of language teaching that emphasise communicative language teaching and testing rather than teaching the form of the language solely.

The above responses have revealed that there are many factors that could contribute to the desired improvement in students’ performance in English language. Fully-fledged localisation is one of the main requirements according to these respondents. Although there is a lot of evidence in this study with regard to the significance of marking board information and the dissemination of ERs it is apparent here that other factors (teacher-training, motivation, curriculum review and policy) play a crucial role as well.

Conclusion

To summarise, all respondents except ECOL officers were in agreement that ERs are hardly available at schools. The reports reach certain schools but not others, and when they do arrive it is often very late in the year. This hinders full and constructive utilisation of ERs. Therefore, teachers cannot be blamed in this instance. It has also

been demonstrated that ECOL takes for granted that ERs reach teachers every year without making any follow-up on them.

Teachers' view that there has been slight improvement of results has also been revealed. The factors that contribute to this revolve around students-related factors, teacher-related factors and system-related factors. The last two factors relate directly to the major issues such as *feedback* about COSC examinations and the issue of *localisation* of the same examinations. It is also apparent that other factors play a vital role in washback of examinations. With regard to the effects of localised marking, there are contradictory views. This contradiction is a clear indication of the dilemma of the concept of washback. Teachers find themselves in ambivalent situations. On the one hand, they claim to derive benefits from the examination information, while on the other hand they talk about negative effects. This ambivalence was alluded to by the NCDC subject officer too.

Lastly the section has highlighted localisation as central to the whole question of the improvement of results. However, the suggestions made by all stakeholders in the study suggest that there are other factors which are important if we aspire to see better results.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.3.1 Overview

A questionnaire, which was distributed to teachers, was used to elicit teachers' views, experiences, feelings and beliefs concerning the accessibility, and importance of examiners' reports to teachers of English language. The teachers' responses to the questionnaire are divided into three sections. The first section deals with teacher-respondents' profiles. They answer questions (1-8) of the questionnaire (Appendix C). The second section here (questions 9-21) discusses teachers' views, experiences and feelings about the effects of feedback from the marking board in relation to: accessibility and utilisation of ERs; effects of ERs on COSC results and on English language teaching and learning; teachers' suggestions for improvement in marking and dissemination of COSC feedback. The last section focuses on teachers' views on recommendations from ERs (refer to questions (22-39 -Appendix C).

4.3.2 Profiles of teachers who responded to the questionnaire

Teachers from seventeen (17) schools in the three districts (Leribe, Maseru and Mafeteng) were issued with questionnaires. This exercise took place in October of 2003. The schools are labelled from A-Q. The teachers are labelled T1-T34. An average of two teachers from each of the selected schools filled in the questionnaires. Twenty-eight of the thirty-four (82 percent) of the teacher-respondents were teaching English language at COSC level in 2003. Four of the thirty-four (12 percent) respondents were not teaching that level, while two teachers (6 percent) did not indicate. The responses show that ten of thirty-four (29 percent) of the teachers were

males, while twenty-three, of the thirty-four (68 percent) were females. Only one teacher (3 percent) did not indicate their sex. There are more female teachers teaching English language.

According to the results of the questionnaire, there was no teacher under the age of twenty-one (21) who responded to the questionnaire. There were more teachers from the age of 31 years to above 50 years teaching English language at COSC in this study, that is, there are more middle-aged personnel in the teaching of English language in this study. Ideally this is an energetic group which is expected to implement feedback from the marking board briskly over a longer period that they may spend in the teaching service. There are more teachers who have (1-16 years) teaching experience, while fewer teachers have experience above 16 years. This situation implies that most of the teachers of English in this study are relatively new to the field.

The table below presents information about English language teachers' qualifications:

Qualifications	Number of Teachers
BA	2
BA+ PGCE	3
BED	18
BAED	5
HONS. PSYCHOLOGY	1
PGDE	1
MA	1
MED	1
No response	2
Total	34

Table 6: Teachers' highest qualifications

Results in table 6 reveal that teachers of English language in this study are adequately qualified to teach the subject as we can see that all of them except (two who have a general BA degree and two who have not indicated) have a higher degree qualification in education. This is in contrast with what is claimed by the principal at school C, and the ECOL subject officer that teachers of English language are not well qualified.

The responses also indicate that of thirty-four respondents, 12 teachers (35 percent) have zero marking experience, while nine teachers, (27 percent) have JC marking experience. Only thirteen teachers, (38 percent) have COSC marking experience ranging from one year to ten years. The question that comes to mind is whether there is collaboration between those who have marking experience and those who do not. Forty questionnaires were distributed to teachers in the districts of Maseru, Leribe and Mafeteng, refer to section 3.3. I administered these questionnaires in person to the teachers in selected schools, thus ensuring a high return rate.

4.3.3 Teachers' responses about feedback from marking board

4.3.3.1 Influence of feedback on classroom instruction and on students' performance

The teachers' views on the influence of feedback from localised marking of the COSC English language examinations on the teaching of English and on students' performance appears in table 7 on the next page.

	Positive	Negative	Total
No. of teachers	29	5	34
Percentage	85%	15%	100%

Table 7: Influence of feedback on instruction and students' performance

The results above show that a large majority of teachers (29 of the 34) thought that feedback from the marking board has positive effects. The reasons advanced for positive effects varied. Firstly, as a result of localised marking, teachers know exactly the examiners' expectations through experience in marking. Secondly, exposure to examinations requirements enables teachers to improve their teaching methods. Teachers tend to know students' strengths and weaknesses and hence know where to place more emphasis. Teachers' experience helps improve students' performance. In addition, teachers asserted that ERs help them align their teaching to assessment requirements. Two teachers asserted:

If teachers know what is being required by the exams, they will gear their strategies and content towards that (T23).

Basically, markers are teachers and this gives them the opportunity to understand the examiners' expectations—teachers will know why students fail and they will address the problem (T26).

The third teacher pointed out that that information from the marking board is readily available to teachers “if one of your teachers is a marker” (T 18).

Five teachers of the thirty-four thought that localised marking has negative effects on English language instruction. They said that if marking memoranda and reading comprehension passages are still done in a foreign culture there can be no meaningful positive impact, students become frustrated by these examinations. Another teacher

thought that localisation was not done to improve results but for other reasons such as political and economic reasons. T32 insists:

The exams papers are still set abroad, and that means that the expectations are still the same as far as content goes. The methods and strategies will change because there is a light as to how marking is done.

The table below shows the teachers responses to questions of accessibility of ERs.

	Number	Percentage
Accessible	27	79%
Not Accessible	7	21%
Total	34	100%

Table 8: Teachers' responses to ERs accessibility

Below is a discussion in relation to the above table. Although a large majority, 27 of 34 (79 percent) of the respondents here said that ERs are accessible, there are only 50 percent of teachers who claim to see the reports every year. Another 50 percent claim they see them sometimes. (11percent) of the latter 50 percent claimed they have never seen ER. These figures confirm the general claim by interviewees that ERs are not readily available to teachers. For that matter, this 21percent of teachers who claimed ERs are not accessible is a matter for concern considering that only seventeen schools were involved in the study when there are about 200 secondary schools in Lesotho. Moreover, the study covered schools near the district towns. The reasons put forward for claiming accessibility of reports by the respondents are:

- Reports are sent to schools for teachers to read and improve their skills.
- They are sent annually, although too late in most cases.

- Workshops are held and examiners, the advisory services¹ and markers share marking board information with teachers.

The other views to the accessibility of reports were expressed in these words:

ERs are made available to teachers but marking memoranda and schemes are kept from them (T26).

Reports are sent to various schools even though some of the teachers never get to see them, let alone, read them. Marking memoranda on the other hand, have been highly used and proved to be helpful (T32).

It is interesting to come across these contradicting positions of teachers. It reveals that certain information, either the ERs themselves or the marking memoranda are not made available to teachers. The question is, Who is to blame?

It has been indicated above that about 50 percent of teachers thought that ERs are not accessible and they seldom see them. The reasons are:

- ERs are usually vague.
- Markers talk about confidentiality of marking board information. This means that there is certain information which is not disclosed to teachers
- ERs occasionally come, and when they do, they are always late.
- Principals are sometimes blamed for non- accessibility of the reports.

In their own words the teachers' asserted:

At times ERs do not reach other teachers and schools. We know this from colleagues at the workshops (T23).

Occasionally reports from Cambridge reach our school and often very late. Local ERs never come (T24).

These never reach schools only those who are involved in marking have that advantage as they are responsible for writing those reports (T29).

Another noteworthy response was given by T14. When asked whether ERs are accessible and how often he had seen them, he said, "Not sure, I do not know" Yet he

¹ Advisory services refer to a department in the MOE which is responsible for giving professional advice to teachers at school level and at regional level. It has four sections - that is, English, Mathematics, and Science and the fourth is, Administration.

has been teaching for 15 years at a school in Maseru, near ECOL. One wonders whether this case confirms the administrators views that teachers do not care about examiners' reports.

In relation to the timing of dissemination of ERs, all the teachers felt that ERs should be sent to schools as early as the beginning of the year, by February or not later than March. If this is done, this will enable teachers to know where they need to put in more effort. Moreover, this will enable teachers to learn from the comments in ERs. Teachers could also use recommendations in their teaching throughout the year. This would enable teachers to prepare teaching and learning materials well ahead of time. All in all, the general feeling was that ERs should be sent to schools as early as possible to enable non-markers to utilise such information in time. This concurs with Shohamy's (1992) study of timely feedback. She says that feedback must be timely in order to foster positive washback.

4.3.3.2 Teachers' views on utilisation of ERs

The table below represents views of teachers on whether they thought ERs are used by teachers at schools or not.

Response	No. of Teachers	Percentage
Yes	18	53%
No	16	47%
Total	34	100%

Table 9: Teachers' responses on utilisation of ERs

Fifty-three percent of the respondents believed that ERs are used beneficially by the teachers. A little less than half of the teachers, 47 percent, asserted that ERs are not fully utilised by teachers. They gave the following reasons:

- ERs are not used in departmental meetings.
- Teachers do not read and check ERs or even implement what is suggested in them.
- They simply ignore them.

However, another teacher asserted that ERs are used as a reference and guideline for teachers.

The respondents also mentioned that:

- Teachers are able to align their teaching to the requirements of the examinations. Teachers try to adapt lessons to examiners' expectations.
- In departmental meetings errors are discussed and future mistakes avoided.
- After reading ERs, a different approach is used so as to eradicate the problems noted by the examiners.

These responses are in agreement with what was said by the two NTMs at school C and markers that ERs are fully utilised although sometimes they arrive so late they are used just once, in the whole year. This was confirmed by the principal of the same school.

Discussion

The position held by the 16 teachers (47 percent) concurs with what was claimed by the ECOL Registrar, the principals, STLs and two teacher-markers that some teachers, make use of the ERs while others do not. This lack of motivation and interest in ERs calls for a further inquiry into feedback dissemination. Could lack of motivation and interest in ERs be related to the reasons why teachers mark external examinations or could it be related to the content of the ERs as one teacher had referred to their vagueness? The majority of respondents twenty-three teachers (68

percent) thought that teachers are eager to mark mainly though not exclusively to get experience but also for economic reasons – to supplement their meagre salaries. Prestige is one of the reasons advanced by respondents. Above all, these teachers felt that teachers join the marking board so that they could learn some strategies other teachers use in English language teaching through interaction with others.

4.3.4 Positive effects of ERs on teaching and learning of English language

All the respondents felt that marking board feedback can foster positive results if:

- There is timely feedback and exposure to examinations expectations.
- ECOL send ERs to schools at the beginning of every year.
- Workshops where ERs are disseminated are held in all ten districts at regional and national levels so that all teachers have fair access.
- There is rotation of marking board staff so that others have direct personal marking experience.

In support of the above suggestions the teachers said:

The Feedback needs to be as detailed as possible (notes have to be made as each script is marked) (T 21).

Workshops can be organised to give teachers verbal and written feedback (T30).

According to these teachers indeed ERs are potentially useful with a few gaps here and there. Another limitation on ERs is lack of communication between the producers - markers of ERs and the consumers - teachers.

4.3.5 Impact of full localisation of examinations (marking and setting) on classroom instruction

Response	No.of Teachers	Percentage
Positive	18	53%
Negative	13	38%
No Response	3	9%
Total	34	100

Table 10: Teachers' responses to impact of full localisation

The table reveals that 18 teachers (53 percent) felt that full localisation would influence teaching and learning in a positive way, while others (13 teachers) held the view that the impact would be negative. Only three teachers (9 percent) did not respond to this question.

Views about positive impact of full localisation of COSC

These teachers who are positive argued that with full localisation, which implies control over the curriculum and assessment, examinations would be fair. Reading passages would be about familiar things not 'ferry boats' and 'seas' and 'aeroplanes'. Examinations would have cultural relevance, because examiners would know the needs of the students and other local language problems. One teacher posited,

Teaching would be geared towards the requirements of the exams without jeopardising standards—and to demystify the subject (T23).

There will be a standard syllabus that teachers will follow (T15).

With external setting the syllabus is still foreign. The respondents further claimed that teachers' questioning skills could improve. Another teacher said,

That 'political' sense of doing it for the whites would die, and a more relaxed and yet, productive atmosphere would develop; the subject would stop to be seen as a monster but rather as a subject like other subjects. Hence the desire to do well would replace the idea of 'what is it I'm not doing right' (T34).

Lowering Standards

Those whose view is that full localisation would impact negatively argue that standards will be lowered.

One teacher said,

For purposes of maintaining international standards, setting should be done elsewhere but local people should be involved in preparing memos and in marking (T20).

Standards could go down—as we will look at the calibre of our students and set questions with that in mind (T25).

One wonders, whose standards? It seems students' needs will be compromised in an attempt to maintain standards. Those who have apprehensions about fully-fledged localisation expressed fears that this endeavour would lead to the lowering of standards. They thought that teachers would make students pass the examinations – that means, local teachers will increase scores. My concern as a researcher is whether anybody has a right or power to determine standards for another country. I wonder if these teachers would say that now that Namibia and Botswana have localised their examinations, their standards have gone down. I wonder whose standards are safeguarded and for whose interests? Packer (2003) has warned educators against setting standards which assume that all children are the same, and should pass the same tests. Local standards could be made to conform to international standards even with full control over our curriculum and examinations.

The question that is being addressed is whether localisation of marking and feedback from it have improved instruction and students' performance. The responses from the interviews and questionnaires reported that localised marking had positive effects and

more positive benefits are envisaged with localised setting which implies localised curricula. With regard to the possibility of deliberate and undue increase of students' scores, when marking, Koretz *et al* (1991); Mcneil (2000); Shepard (1992) in Gipps (1994) argue that increasing scores in this way will reduce standards and the scores will not reflect real knowledge of the subject . This has a negative impact.

Another teacher thought that what we need is to improve the quality of teachers not to localise setting. I maintain that we can achieve quality of teachers if we have full control over our examinations.

4.3.6 Teachers' suggestions for improvement in marking and dissemination of feedback

Three teachers did not respond. Thirty-one respondents suggested that:

- Marking board feedback which is specific has to be sent to all schools in time.
- ECOL has to ensure that ERs reach all schools.
- Teachers should be encouraged to use ERs (not only have a look at them and send them back to the principal's office) as is the case now in some schools.
- All feedback should be sent immediately upon completion of marking.
- Teachers should be trained on marking board information.
- There should be a follow-up by the chief examiner to check that ERs have been used by both teachers and students.
- Feedback should be directed towards helping teachers with some useful approaches to addressing common problems.

These suggestions concur with what was suggested by the NTMs and the TMs and the STLs, and the NCDC SO. The suggestions revolve around ensuring speedy, meaningful feedback that is also diagnostic. Thus, there is general agreement among respondents regarding these issues.

In relation to marking, teachers suggested that:

- Rotation of teacher-markers and team-leaders should be practised over a period of three years.
- Marking time should be increased to ensure fair work.
- Localised marking should take cognizance of international standards.
- Markers should be recruited from among COSC teachers not people on study leave or working in offices.
- Markers should be recruited from all districts not only from Maseru.
- Quality control of setting and marking should be put in place.
- All teachers of English language should be trained in marking both Paper1 and Paper2.
- Internal exams at Form D level have to be monitored.

Discussion

The responses above have revealed that localised marking and the feedback therein proved to be beneficial to teachers. With that experience they focus their efforts towards improving their teaching and help students perform better. However, the dissemination of ERs remains a concern for teachers, both teacher-markers and non-teacher-markers, and other stakeholders such as heads of departments, principals, senior-team-leaders and NCDC subject officer. Examiners' reports and other information are not available for teachers because Central Inspectorate does not seem to be monitoring the ERs. The conclusion that can be drawn from these responses is that feedback could have positive impact if it is accessible, specific, and sent to schools in time. ECOL should ensure that ERs reach teachers in schools. Therefore, positive effect can be fostered if the above conditions mentioned by teachers are met.

4.3.7 Teachers' views on recommendations from examiners' reports

4.3.7.1 Overview

In this section the questionnaire was used to elicit teachers' views, experiences and perceptions about the recommendations in the ERs. Are the ERs user-friendly? Do

they provide hands-on solutions to teaching and learning? The readiness of teachers to apply such recommendations is also sought. The responses presented below are related to questions 22-31 of the questionnaire (refer to Appendix C).

4.3.7.2 Students' writing skills

With regard to students' writing skills, the respondents agreed that an essay which is too long is likely to place students at a disadvantage especially those who lack the command of the English language. They discourage students from writing longer essays than the required length because such essays tend to have more errors of punctuation, spelling, subject-verb agreement, mixed tenses, and irrelevant material. According to some teachers, what matters is quality of work not length. However, length and quality cannot be divorced from each other.

4.3.7.3 Codeswitching as a pedagogical tool

In relation to the application of codeswitching in classroom situation, there were two opposing views. On the one hand, twenty-two (65 percent) of the teachers affirmed that they use codeswitching in teaching. Cook (1991) as cited by Skiba, 1997) asserts that codeswitching may be integrated into the activities used for the teaching of a second language. These teachers argued that they do not use codeswitching randomly but at strategic points in the lesson. For example, it is used to clarify certain concepts, to establish the differences and or similarities between the two languages. This is also allowed during exploratory talk in group discussions. Students are allowed to switch to L1. Cook (ibid), says that codeswitching can be used as a pedagogical tool within a

lesson at certain key points such as during important concepts, when students are getting distracted, during revisions or when students are praised or told off. For these reasons, switching may be used as an effective strategy for second language teaching and learning (Skiba, 1997).

On the other hand, twelve teachers (35 percent) said they never switched to Sesotho, because they do not speak Sesotho. Thus they discourage the use of Sesotho, insisting that it is meaningless to teach English in Sesotho. As teachers of English they would be defeating their purpose because switching codes cannot improve the standard of English. Moreover, they said that codeswitching contributes to the use of L1 in students' writing. Research has shown that codeswitching is used when there is deficiency in L2 expression (Cook, 1991 in Skiba, 1997). I maintain that codeswitching should be used with care in L2 teaching as it helps clarify and explain certain concepts. I consider these approaches as one of the accommodations that needed to be taken into account for ESL learners.

4.3.7.4 L1 Interference

Factors that contribute to the use of Sesotho, according to the teachers, are among others, lack of appropriate vocabulary and expression to convey particular intended meanings. Some teachers attribute this problem to the fact that Basotho are a monolingual society, and English is a second language. Students are not used to it except in the classrooms. This point was raised by teacher-markers as one of the contributing factors to poor performance in the English language. For example, a

candidate would write '*A frog jumps for itself*'. This is a direct translation of a Sesotho idiom. Codeswitching is employed to clarify the differences between the two languages. Another reason they mentioned was that students do not read widely or extensively and thus lack creative and mechanical accuracy in the target language. Skiba (1997) said that codeswitching can cause interference in a language if it is not utilised carefully as a teaching method. He concluded that "when codeswitching is used to compensate for a language difficulty it may be viewed as interference and when it is used as a socio-linguistic tool it should not" (page 5 of 6).

Apart from L1 interference, students use slang, colloquialism and 'local' English in their writing. The teachers felt that the reasons for this deviation is the influence of the media, such as television and some magazines and newspapers. The students are also exposed to peer group language (argot). Apparently some students do not know the difference between standard and non-standard English.

4.3.7.5 Exposure to spoken and written English language

Limited exposure to speaking and reading of English literature is another problem. The respondents also placed the blame on teachers. They said that teachers themselves cannot distinguish between informal and formal writing, they cannot differentiate between local and standard English, hence teachers seemed to condone this deviation. This deficiency among the teachers was also raised by the principal at school C. He even pointed out that teachers are lacking in second language teaching techniques. This was reiterated by STL (P2) and ECOL SO when the latter said that

teachers are ill-equipped for L2 teaching. This problem goes beyond the classroom. It is a problem to be addressed at Ministerial level. Back-up support for teachers is the key issue here. The need for teacher-training and support was raised by both the interviewees and the teachers who responded to questionnaires. Hughes (1989) asserts that where necessary assistance should be provided to teachers to help them understand the assessment problems and align them with their teaching practices if positive washback is envisaged.

When asked what they thought could be done to address the above-mentioned problems, the teachers felt that students should read more books and other writings in English. Students should be taught English idioms and those that have similar meanings in their mother-tongue and be taught about the differences in the languages and this can be achieved through codeswitching. They should also be taught that every language has its own idioms peculiar to that language. Hence, direct translation from one language to the other leads to communication breakdown.

Teachers should stop using other 'Englishes' but the Standard English so that our students can also use it (T 17).

They went on to indicate that teachers emphasis should be 'placed on Standard English for examination purposes. The practicality of strict adherence to Standard English in a monolingual society where English is by and large a foreign language is problematic. Looking at the situation in Lesotho it seems English is practically the language of the classroom. So the issue of non-exposure to that language is real and it needs more attention. The teachers suggested that exposure to reading materials could

provide a solution, but it has been discovered through the interviews as well, that teachers are complaining about lack of teaching and learning materials. The MOE is supposed to be supplying these reading materials but it is not. The schools also have a role to play in providing learning materials for students. Teachers further suggested that students should be exposed to listening to BBC news and reading English magazines such as the 'Times'.

4.3.7.6 Suggestions for teaching situational composition

In relation to what strategies and methods teachers use to teach situational compositions, they felt that students should be trained to identify given situations, thus reading the instructions carefully. They also felt that students need to be exposed to various daily local experiences and situations and demand that they respond to such situations. Taking them on excursions could help them write better because they will be writing about their own experiences. Bailey argues that positive washback can be promoted by building authenticity of the test and test tasks. Doye (1991) as cited by Bailey (1996:269) defines authenticity as follows:

An authentic test is therefore one that reproduces a real-life situation in order to examine the student's ability to cope with it.

Wesche (1993) in Bailey (1996) posits that

By making our test more reflective of the kinds of situations, language content and purposes for which second-language speakers will need their skills, we will be able to make more accurate predictions about how they will be able to function using the target language in 'real life. ... Such testing is likely to have dramatic effects on the format and content of second language curricula as well, and to improve student motivation through its increased relevance (1996:269).

The underlying problem here is how to ensure authenticity of tests when the syllabus is not localised, when setting of examinations is done by an external body in a foreign culture. Teachers may give their students topics to write about local situations but the examinations will be about something else. As one teacher pointed out students are sometimes asked to write about their trip in a desert riding a camel, yet they have never been in a desert in their lives. These suggestions simply reiterate what was said by Bailey (1996) and Wall (1996) when they talk about using authentic tasks and tests in order to foster positive washback. In that way these suggestions do not mean that Basotho students should be parochial. That means they should not be confined to strictly local materials in their examinations.

4.3.7.7 Solutions to summary writing

With regard to summary writing, T31 said,

Teachers of English lack strategies of teaching summary writing. Teach teachers first.

Another teacher held the same opinion that teachers should be helped with how to approach this task. Heyneman and Ransom (1990) and Shohamy (1992) argue that teachers and other stakeholders should be provided with feedback in order that meaningful change can be effected. What they said is in agreement with the view of NTM School A that the ERs are lacking in that they do not show how to teach summary writing and comprehension. This appeal concurs with what was said by STL (P1) and ECOL SO when they said that teachers are inadequately prepared for teaching English as a second language.

This problem can be addressed at a higher level according to this teacher. But some teachers felt that this problem can be addressed at classroom level. One teacher said that students should be helped step-by-step, to collect relevant points for summary writing and to present them correctly (T25). This is in line with what was said by TM2 (P2) that marking experience has assisted her to teach summary writing as a process.

Proper methods of summary writing should be taught – substitution and paraphrasing of key words be done before writing the entire summary without distorting the original meaning (T23).

Other teachers suggested that students be given practice to write summaries of their own passages. They could also be asked to read short stories and summarise them as frequently as possible.

What I realised as I went through the questionnaires is that eight teachers, of the thirty-four (24 percent) did not respond to these questions which required them to indicate how they use information from ERs. Perhaps these teachers did not know what to write because they lack those teaching strategies likely to help them teach summary writing and situational compositions.

4.3.7.8 Dealing with inferential questions

In relation to the problems posed by inferential questions, twenty-one (62 percent) teachers agreed that these are problematic for the students. They indicated that students should be drilled on finding the contextual meaning of the given expressions or words. This problem is also attributed to lack of extensive reading. Therefore,

there is the need to expose students to a variety of passages and constructions of different meanings. Frequently students have to be given questions that will require them to reason. T26 said, “Their reasoning power and argumentative spirit should be worked on”.

Students should be encouraged to make interpretations such as that they read the author’s mind. Always try to find out what the author means by what he writes (T29).

The fact that some teachers did not state what they do to address the students’ problems with examinations, may be an indication that they too lack knowledge, sufficient information and skills that could help them address students’ weaknesses as far as COSC English language is concerned. There could be other reasons though.

4.3.8 Teachers’ general comments on some extracts of recommendations from the ERs

Questions (32-39) (Appendix C) were used with the aim of establishing the usefulness of the examiners’ reports to the teachers. I wanted to find out if the ERs are addressing specific problem areas, if they are informative and readily translatable into classroom instruction. Is the information providing room for improvement on performance and results? Are they diagnostic and detailed enough? The assumption here was that teachers would identify some of the recommendations as vague and not very helpful to the teachers who need support and guidance on the teaching of some aspects of the language, particularly, teaching summary writing and helping students manage comprehension passages. Most of the teachers thought that the recommendations were good and they accepted them in their responses. Teachers’ responses to the following recommendations will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

Recommendations from Examiners' reports:

- Students should be encouraged to read widely.
- Students should be given tasks from varied texts other than prescribed books.
- Teachers should handle reading skills thoroughly in their classroom activities.
- Figures of speech should be taught thoroughly.

All the teachers agreed that the recommendations were useful. They said that both intensive and extensive readings are encouraged because they broaden students' horizons and contact with words and expressions. This would help them to cope with comprehension passages and improve their writing skills. Moreover, teachers said that using a variety of texts for reading provides exposure to different situations, worlds and writing styles. Students could imitate other people's writings. Exposing students to various reading skills enables them to handle reading comprehensions with understanding. These teachers said that figures of speech should be taught, but in context. Students should be encouraged to discover them through their own reading. Knowledge of figures of speech helps enrich students' writing of English language.

Problems that teachers foresaw in relation to the implementation of the above recommendations were that even though some respondents were suggesting that teachers could improvise reading materials, obtaining materials such as magazines, newspapers and others is very difficult in other schools which are not situated in town and areas where those materials are easily available. Non-availability of reading materials is a big constraint to the teaching and learning of English language according to the teachers. Another problem they mentioned was that teachers do not

teach figures of speech and English idioms properly. “*The fact is they are usually poorly handled by most teachers*” (T31). The last problem they mentioned is time-constraints. Lack of sufficient time hinders ‘thorough’ teaching of reading skills and the figures of speech as teachers have to ‘perfect’ writing skills before examinations.

Only one teacher showed concern about the word ‘thoroughly’ in the above recommendations. She said,

Questions that talk about thoroughness in teaching (Q 33-35) are difficult to respond to because thoroughness in my understanding can be something else to another person (T32).

I had expected that most if not all teachers would identify problems with these recommendations. To me such recommendations are not informative enough, they lack specificity (Shohamy, 1992). For example, it is not clear what areas of reading skills should be emphasised and why. “thoroughness as T32 has indicated could really mean too many things, it is a relative word. Thus, in my view those recommendations with the word “thoroughness” are not helping teachers very much.

4.3.8.1 Addressing grammatical errors

When responding to what should be done to help students with grammatical errors, the respondents said that students should adopt a positive attitude to English language at an early stage. Teachers must pay particular attention to all students and make sure that they mark, every now and then, different aspects of grammar. With regard to punctuation these teachers said that poor punctuation hinders communication and promotes ambiguity in sentences. This should be ‘drilled’ very seriously in teaching

through more written work. They further said that in order to master spelling students should master pronunciation. Dictations could be used to address the problems of both punctuation and spelling. They argued that it is teachers' responsibility to help student decide where and when to use which type of tense.

4.3.8.2 Teachers' comments on ERs

When asked whether they had ever commented on the examiners' reports, eight teachers said yes they had, they had discussed them with their colleagues, and one of them said he sent his comments to ECOL. Nine teachers did not respond to this question. Seventeen teachers affirmed that they had not made comments on the ERs.

The reasons they gave were the following:

- There has never been room for it; not before now; I do not know how and when (T26);
- We never had workshops or seminars on such reports (T31);
- We have never seen the reports; not had access to COSC reports (T23)
- I would much like to do so—but channels of communication are non-existent (T24).

These responses indicate that indeed examiners' reports are not accessible or available. Where they are, teachers do not know how and to whom they should launch their comments or complaints. This takes us back to the comment made by the ECOL Registrar that teachers should lodge their complaints with ECOL if they do not receive ERs. If reports are not available, if teachers are not assisted as to how they should use them and comment on them, then they are not going to comment. In that case their use may be limited.

4.3.8.3 Information lacking in ERs

Teachers' responses on what information they think should be included in the ERs concur with what was given by the NTMs. These teachers needed to see information highlighting students' mistakes because some of them are teacher-induced. They needed suggestions as to how students should be drilled. Moreover, they needed to know students' weaknesses as they would be reflected in the reports. They need information that makes teachers understand why the majority of students have poor background knowledge and what could be done. The discourse analysis of the ERs , which follows in the next section is going to show that the ERs are lacking in this information which I also consider crucial in fostering change and improvement in English language teaching and learning and hence students' performance.

Teachers' general comments are in relation to the questionnaire itself – they thought the questionnaire has triggered their interest to read ERs more and to reflect on their work, workshops, teacher-training, establishment of a quality assurance body, localisation, curriculum and teaching. Excluding the first topic, all their suggestions concur with what has been suggested by the interviewees as shown in section (4.2). The next section discusses the analysis of students' scores and the discourse analysis of examiners' reports and Passlists.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF COSC RESULTS FROM NOVEMBER 1998-2002

4.4.1 Overview

In this section the impact of feedback from localised marking will be investigated not-withstanding other factors that may play a role in positive washback on students' results. Our focus here has been to find out to what extent this feedback has influenced students' performance in either a positive or a way. The statistical analysis of students' scores over a period of five years for the non-teacher-markers schools – (A, B, C) is done.

Statistical presentation of schools' results

The following are graphic representations of the results of schools A, B, and C from 1998 to 2002.

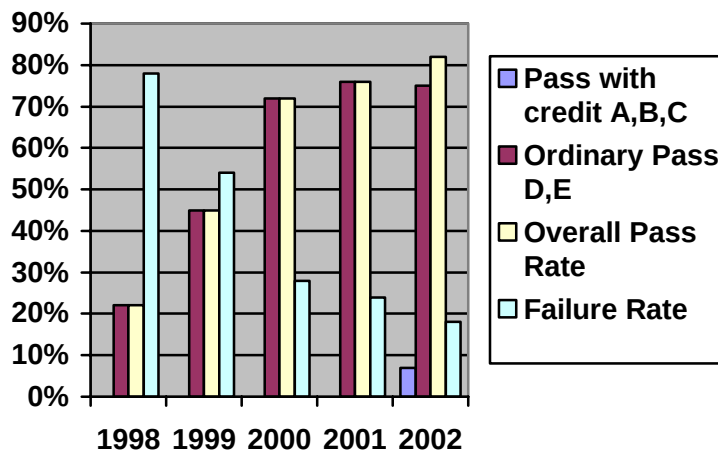


Figure 3: School A English language results over a period of five years

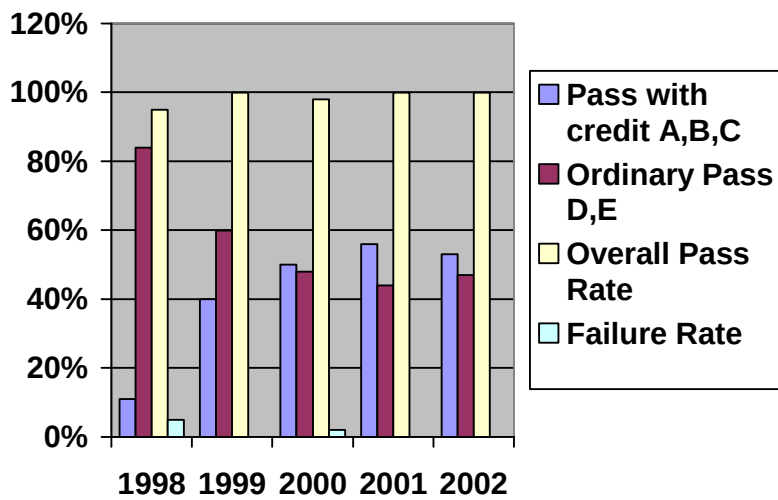


Figure 4: School B English language results over a period of five years

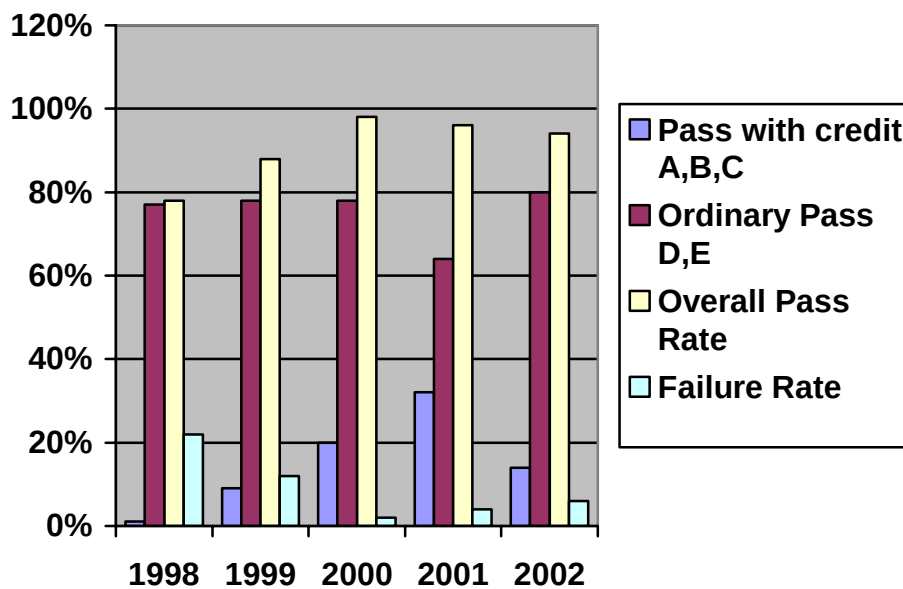


Figure 5: School C English language Results over a period of five years

Below is an explanation of the symbols and letters used in the graphs that appear in the previous pages.

Credits = A = 1, 2
 B = 3, 4
 C = 5, 6

Ordinary
Pass = D = 7
 E = 8
Fail U = 9

A pass with a credit in English language entitles a candidate to direct entry to University (NUL) if s/he meets other requirements for the discipline s/he wants to register for. Ordinary pass in English language with other requirements met, prohibits direct entry to university. It could mean rewriting English language June Examinations or joining the bridging course. A fail in English language means failing the whole examination even if there are credits and or passes in other subjects (English is a 'failing' subject).

4.4.3 Analysis of School Results

The above illustrations are meant to present data which would either support or refute stakeholders' claims about the beneficial effects of localised marking of COSC English language examinations. The stakeholders involved in this research alluded to the fact that students' performance has been improving due to feedback obtained from the marking board and this is indicated by the results² as shown in the above graphs. The findings present a true reflection of what the stakeholders have maintained concerning the washback effects of feedback from the marking board. Students' performance as indicated by the results seems to be improving over the years. However, it has to be noted that there could be other factors that contribute to the increase in scores.

² 'Results' and 'scores' will be used interchangeably in this report.

Looking at school A, which is considered a low performing school in the country, we notice considerable improvement of results over this five year period. The patterns of improvement are clearly observable. Rosenberg (1988) refers to this observable patterns. There has been an increase in the number of credits from 0% credits from 1998-2001 to 7% credits in 2002. With regard to the ordinary passes one notices another, noteworthy improvement from 22% in 1998 to 70% in 2000 – 2001 and 82% in 2002. These passes could enable students to join the University bridging course if the candidates have met other requirements to go to university. The overall pass rate has shot up from 22% in 1998 to 82% in 2002. Conversely, the failure rate has been decreasing tremendously from 78% in 1998 to 18% in 2002.

The findings concerning school B, which is the best performing school, in similar manner show a noticeable improvement in results. This is exemplified more by the number of credits which has been improving from 11% in 1998 to 56% in 2001 and 53 % in 2002. This implies that this school sends about 50% of their students directly to the University from the year 2000 -2002. The overall pass rate has been 95% - 100% over this period. The number of ordinary passes has also been decreasing year after year, from 84% in 1998 to 47% in 2002. The year 2001 seems to have been the best year for school B, while in 2002 there were fewer credits. This situation concurs with the claim made by the stakeholders that the results are inconsistent, they are rising and falling. This inconsistency however, does not refute the assertion that the results are improving. The publication of the results which are credible, believable,

and fair provides positive effects on students and teachers (Bailey, 1996). The good performance over the years tends to create a certain culture for the school. This is shown by the consistent performance by school B in particular.

According to the findings, the results of school C have been improving steadily over the five years. The same patterns observed in the results of the other two schools are noticed here. The passes with credit rose from one percent in 1998 to 32 percent in 2001. There was a drastic fall in 2002 in the number of credits but there was an increase in the ordinary passes which only reduced the overall pass rate by a mere two percent (from 96% in 2001 to 94% in 2002). Like in school B, 2001 seems to have been the best year for school C when 32 percent of their students qualified for university which is higher than in any other year, though the failure rate of four percent exceeded that of the 2000, which was two percent.

Discussion

The scores as presented in the figures above justify stakeholders' views that indeed the localised marking particularly the feedback from marking board has affected students' performance in a positive way. The inconsistencies of results, over different years, for different schools, point to an important fact that there are other factors that could contribute either positively or negatively to the scores (Kellaghan and Greaney, 1992). The focus and scope of this report was on the feedback and not the other factors that contribute to washback. The improvement of results per individual school studied here does not correspond with the national scores. Over this period-

1998-2002 there has been an increase of three to seven percent of credits nationally, while the national pass rate in English language is between 30-40%. This could be one of the reasons why some respondents said there has been no improvement or there has been slight improvement. The ECOL subject officer said that there are no tangible results of localised marking.

A. This state of affairs is an indication that localisation of marking alone is not enough to bring about considerable improvement. The solution though not a panacea might lie in full localisation of examinations as most of the respondents maintained, if the examinations and the curriculum are fully controlled locally, if not only the logistics and interpretation factors, but also the test design factors and the test content factors, these could be altered and modified by locals in order to foster positive washback (Brown, 2002). Both the test design and test content factors are the responsibility of an external examination body, (UCLES) and Basotho educationists have no control. This is what I consider the paradox of COSC examinations in Lesotho. Suggestions in relation to this paradox will be presented in Chapter Five.

4.4.6 The Hierarchy of Feedback dissemination from the marking board

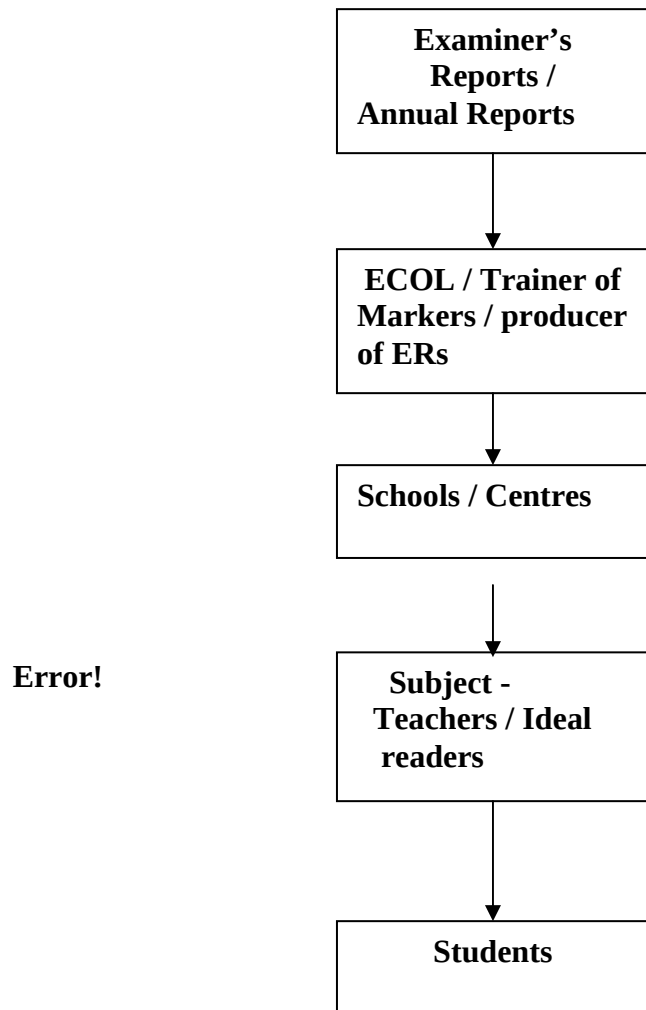


Figure 6: A Representation of information flow from ECOL

