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The implementation of moderation of assessment policy at a school and district: A case study

**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of the degree of Master
in Education**

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

2011

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DECLARATION

I, Jaywant Ambaram Parbhoo, hereby declare that this work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited or referenced.

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.....
JA PARBHOO

DATE:

DEDICATION

For providing me with a solid educational background and for their unending encouragement and love, I dedicate this study to my parents, Ambaram and Mani Parbhoo, and my beloved family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I thank my supervisor, Dr Heather Jacklin of the University of Cape Town for her continual and unwavering support, insightful and constructive advice and positive encouragement.

My heartfelt thanks goes to my wife, Anita and children Jatin, Janisha and Bhavika for their ongoing support, love and patience. I love you all very much.

My thanks to the School of Education at UCT for their patience in allowing me to complete this study.

Further thanks go to family and friends that have supported me in this journey.

Thanks to the Western Cape Education Department, in particular my director Mrs Zodwa Modimakwane, for supporting my study leave which allowed me to complete the study. Thanks also to Mr T.J. Magwaca who managed my departmental duties while I was on study leave.

A special thank you goes to the teachers and officials who spoke so candidly about their practice thereby contributing to this study.

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MODERATION OF ASSESSMENT POLICY AT A SCHOOL AND DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY

Moderation of assessment is a quality control mechanism that formed part of the traditional examinations system. With the compulsory introduction of school based assessment in grade 12 in South Africa, moderation of assessments other than examinations came into the forefront of policy discourse. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) introduced a Moderation Policy which was developmental in its approach of quality assurance of assessment.

Curriculum and assessment policies were revised during a time when forms of accountability in government shifted. The external quality assurance agency, Umalusi, announced that they would inspect provinces in terms of Umalusi's assessment requirements. The directives of Umalusi led the WCED to release a circular regarding the moderation process in which a three meeting approach was introduced. This study aimed to describe how the policy was understood and implemented at a school and a district.

Leaning on the theoretical approach of Spillane et al, a conceptual framework was developed which informed the design and analysis of the study. Data sets were derived from observations and interviews as well as policy texts. These were analysed in terms of the tasks of moderation, the enactment of these moderation tasks, the relationships that were associated with moderation, the artefacts of moderation and sense making during moderation.

Results from this study showed that moderation was indeed implemented though not as intended by the policy. In many instances, there was only partial implementation of the policy and in other instances, a lack of understanding of the intentions of the policy meant that the approach to moderation was closer to older practices than it was to that envisaged by the new policy.

Key emerging insights from the study were as follows: There were tensions between the compliance and the developmental aspects of moderation. Implementation practice became less elaborate as one moved from the level of the district to the school. The district officials appeared to have a greater understanding of moderation than the school officials. This 'thinning out' of implementation can be explained partly in relation to the nature and use of artefacts and differences in depth of understanding of agents.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AC	Assessment Co-ordinator
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CA	Curriculum Adviser
CASS	Continuous assessment
CTA	Common Tasks for Assessment
C2005	Curriculum 2005
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
EMDC	Education Management District Centre
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FET	Further Education and Training
GENFETQA	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurer
GET	General Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
HOD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
QSA	Queensland Studies Authority

RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
Safcert	South African Certification Council
SBA	School Based Assessment
UCT	University of Cape Town
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Moderation of assessment is a quality assurance activity performed in order to uphold principles of assessment such as fairness, reliability and validity.

Moderation is one of the key quality assurance mechanisms deployed by education systems in general, and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) in particular in an attempt to ensure that the assessment that schools produce meet the standards prescribed by policy. The WCED is monitored by the external agency, Umalusi (the General and Further Education Quality Assurance Agency) who have developed directives for quality assuring assessment that have impacted on the implementation of moderation in the province.

Draft directives from Umalusi in 2004 led the WCED to issue a circular in 2005 that set out the system for moderation in the province of the Western Cape in South Africa.

What have schools done to deal with quality assurance demands regarding moderation of assessment? Moderation is a mechanism used by the WCED to drive policy implementation and in 2005, was used to enable outcomes based education (OBE) to become embedded within the consciousness of the teachers. The question of how schools were dealing with moderation at school goes to the heart of the practice of assessment and quality assurance at schools. Schools are the sites where teaching and learning actually takes place hence all policy, whether from external agencies such as UMALUSI, the national Department of Education or the provincial Department of Education, is ultimately aimed at influencing how the school deals with policy and what they do in order to implement the policy.

Study aims

This study was conducted in order to gain an understanding of how a school and a district in the Western Cape engaged in the practice of moderation of assessment.

The research was intended to examine how teachers and the leadership of a school make sense of the new policies regarding moderation and what they did in order to ensure that implementation takes place. To this end, the study sought to develop a conceptually driven description of the moderation process as it is spelt out in policy and as it occurred in a school and a district. This description of moderation at a school and district enabled me to identify the disjuncture between intended aims and enacted effects.

McLaughlin (2006) indicates that the system focus has been missing in implementation studies and mentions that researchers are beginning to highlight the essential role of the local district – the system – as critical to how policies are interpreted and sustained. She mentions that ‘intermediaries are a strategic middle between the top and bottom of the implementing system’ (2006:17). The value of my study is that it provides a description of a particular case study in a district and a school at a particular time as well as providing an analytical tool to interrogate the data.

Study questions

How did the school implement the policy regarding moderation of assessments?

- How was the policy disseminated to teachers?
- What moderation tasks were specified in policy?
- How did the school implement these moderation tasks?
- What relationships did the policy indicate needed to be set up to enable the moderation tasks to be conducted?
- What relationships were observed during the implementation of moderation of assessment in the school?
- What understandings had to be created in order to successfully conduct moderation at a school?

- What artefacts did policy specify were necessary for the tasks to be conducted successfully?
- What artefacts were actually identified at the school regarding moderation?

What was the district's role in moderation and how did they manage moderation of assessment in terms of the new policy?

- What tasks did policy indicate needed to be fulfilled by the district?
- How did the district manage these tasks in reality?
- What relationships were specified by policy regarding moderation in the district and what relationships were actually observed in the district?
- What understandings as suggested by policy had to be created in order to conduct moderation successfully at the district?
- What artefacts as suggested by policy were necessary at the district level to ensure that that moderation was conducted successfully?

Rationale

This dissertation offers a case study of implementation of a new moderation policy at the level of a school and a district. It draws on Spillane et al's (2002) conceptualisation of policy implementation in order to focus attention on local interpretations and contextual influences thereby allowing the opportunity to observe what facilitates and what hinders implementation of policy at the level of the school.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) released a provincial moderation policy in 2002. The moderation policy that was introduced in the WCED Moderation Protocol of 2002 was a departmental exercise that engaged all teachers around assessment by bringing an accountability mechanism into teaching and learning. This policy differed from previous models of moderation where advisers from districts were solely responsible for the moderation at a level external to that of the school. The new 2002 model sought to engage teachers in a collegial, collaborative exercise within

clusters. This represented a shift toward a more developmental approach with respect to moderation.

As a departmental official dealing with assessment management, how moderation policy was taken up by a school and its district was particularly interesting to me. My own experience as a teacher, an adviser and an official in the Head office of the WCED had taught me that implementation of policy involves far more than simply carrying out orders. I work in the Directorate Assessment Management of the Western Cape Education Department where I am immersed in the language of assessment and examinations, especially within the context of policy development. Understanding how policy is actually implemented in schools is thus very interesting to me as we, the provincial officials together with our colleagues in districts, seek to improve policy development and implementation and compliance in the province.

The research is intended to be of value to scholars who have a more general interest in how particular contextual factors shape the enactment of policy in general, and moderation policies in particular.

Background

A new curriculum

This study was initiated at a time when high schools faced the implementation of two new curriculum interventions – the new Further Education and Training (FET schools) National Curriculum Statement (NCS) curriculum which was implemented in 2006 in grade 10, in 2007 in grade 11 and in 2008 in grade 12 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) which was implemented for grade 8 in 2007 and grade 9 in 2008. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) specified an approach to assessment as well as curriculum content.

New assessment

The national assessment policy which was first introduced in 1998 indicated a desire to shift the system dominated by a high stakes examinations where ranking, grading and selecting was very important to a system that informed

and improved curriculum and assessment practice (DoE, 1998:2). It thus set the tone for a more formative assessment system where development would be more important than the high stakes system of the final examination.

The Assessment Policy of 1998 stipulated that moderation must be carried out to maintain appropriate standards and that the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) must ensure that there are moderation mechanisms at all levels in the country. The policy mentioned that '*internal, continuous assessment administered and marked by educators for grade R – 9 is essential*' and '*this assessment must be moderated externally by professional support services within guidelines set up by provincial education departments*' (1998:5). It further states that there must be external moderation to validate the assessment.

After the elections of 1999, the new Minister of Education revised the curriculum in 2002 and amended the assessment policy in 2003. In the 2003 Assessment Policy, it was stated that Umalusi, who by then had been constituted as the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) body, was to provide mechanisms for assuring the standard of both site based continuous assessment (CASS) and also the Common Task for Assessment (CTA), which was prescribed as the external assessment in grade 9 (2003:6). This policy further stipulated that learner portfolios must '*reflect five forms of assessment as indicated in the assessment guidelines of each learning area*' (2003:6). Also that the best of the learner's performance must be showcased in a portfolio for moderation purposes. The CTA also needed to be moderated externally.

Umalusi's draft policy for Quality Assurance of Assessment for the GET and FET (2004) states that Provincial Departments of Education would need to ensure of the quality of the assessment. They proposed a business like model of input-process and output for their quality assurance system. This concentrated on the inputs of policy from the provincial department, processes of moderation and support as well as the output in terms of results that would be subjected to statistical standardisation and moderation.

Provincial departments of education would have to establish mechanisms for assessment moderation as well as an internal moderation system at the sites of learning. In the case of SBA, the Umalusi policy prescribed that a senior staff member be appointed to carry out the moderation.

After UMALUSI released a Draft Policy for Quality Assurance of Assessment for the GETC and FETC (2004), the provincial department in the Western Cape responded by issuing a circular (0012/2005) to schools outlining the moderation process for 2005. This study sought to understand how the school interpreted and implemented these policies.

Quality assurance of assessment

Muller (2004) argues that assessment within schools in South Africa had not been thoroughly quality assured by external means in the past. The only point of quality assurance occurred at the final year of school – grade 12. The South African Certification Council (Safcert), set up in 1986, instituted quality assurance mechanisms in grade 12 since they were accountable for issuing the actual senior certificate to learners who qualified.

The Joint Matriculation Board was responsible prior to 1986 for standards maintenance in the Senior Certificate. In 1986, the South African Certification Council (Safcert) was established to *'provide controls over norms and standards of subject matter and examinations, issue certificates at exit points from schools, technical colleges and non-formal education, and provide for the conducting of common examinations'* (Muller in Chisholm, 2004:229).

As the role of school based assessment gained more prominence, the role of Safcert was broadened to include quality assurance of the whole assessment process. This meant that quality assurance of school based assessment had to be developed so that these assessments could be accepted toward the qualification. *'The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act, No 58 of 2001 provided the legislative framework for the establishment of UMALUSI'* (Muller in Chisholm, 2004:230). Safcert underwent a transformation and UMALUSI was born in 2002. Umalusi

would, in future, ensure that standards were met and be responsible for the issue of certificates. UMALUSI saw their role as custodians of the educational system: they have engaged various stakeholders on the issue of quality assurance of assessment. They received a boost when the joint Department of Education and Department of Labour Consultative document (DoE/DoL 2003:26) recommended that they become the main operational base for the GENFET QA.

The UMALUSI website defines '*quality assurance of assessment as the process of verification or endorsement of the final results of a learner for certification purposes*'. Verification, it is claimed, will ensure that moderation is carried out efficiently and effectively. The assumption in this claim is that moderation of assessment will be done by the school and the provincial department of education. Moderation is defined by UMALUSI as '*the process ensuring that assessment of outcomes described in the national curriculum statements is fair, valid, reliable and practicable*' (Umalusi website). Quality assurance processes have ensured '*the credibility of the certificates issued by UMALUSI in an environment that is rapidly changing*' (Umalusi website).

Credibility of assessments is essential for the currency of the qualification, especially at the exit level of an institution, whether at school, college or higher education levels. The qualification is used to access further learning opportunities or for employment purposes. How the world perceives the qualification and, importantly, the credibility of its assessment, is a determining factor for future progress and opportunities.

Introduction of the policy in the Western Cape

The development of the Umalusi moderation policy involved initial meetings with stakeholders from provinces. In 2004, Umalusi visited all provincial education departments in South Africa to present their draft policy for the quality assurance of assessment in the General Education and Training

(GET¹) and Further Education and Training (FET²) bands. These meetings formed part of the planning for issuing directives for quality assurance of assessment.

Prior to this meeting, the WCED was committed to a system that followed the 2002 Moderation Protocol. The Umalusi draft policy specifies that their *'approach to quality assurance of assessment is one of having the provincial education departments assume the responsibility of quality in school and adult education for both private and public providers'* (2004:7). Umalusi policy focused on the *'directorate(s) in the provincial education department responsible for the internal quality assurance of external examinations and site based assessment and all supporting structures at district level'* (2004:8).

In the Western Cape, the Umalusi officials met with provincial and district level officials. A key directorate at these meetings was the Curriculum Development Directorate, the responsibilities of which included curriculum and assessment. This directorate had developed the moderation policy for the province but was now under external scrutiny by Umalusi.

At these meetings, Umalusi proposed the following model of quality assurance of assessment in the GET and FET bands of the National Qualifications Framework of South Africa (2004:7):

1. The provincial department of education would assume responsibility for ensuring quality in school and adult education for both public and private providers. The responsibilities for the quality of assessment would be located with the assessment body hence the need for all institutions to be registered with an assessment body that is approved by UMALUSI.

¹ GET: General Education and Training includes school grades R – 9 and ABET levels 1 – 4. On the South African Qualifications Authority's National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the GET band culminates at NQF 1.

² The FET band incorporates grades 10 – 12 in schools and includes NQF 2 – 4 on the National Qualifications Framework.

2. Umalusi’s focus in the quality assurance of assessment would be the assessment body – in the case of public assessment bodies, this would be the provincial department of education. Sampling of assessment at the sites or districts would also be done.
3. The model for implementation of quality assurance of assessment focused on three core phases:
 - 3.1 ‘Evaluation of the assessment bodies’ plans for assessment prior to any results would be submitted to UMALUSI. This was indicated by Umalusi representatives as the **input** to the model of Umalusi moderation.
 - 3.2 Verifying the implementation of the assessment process before the results of a particular cohort of learners are submitted to Umalusi was indicated as the **process** of the model.
 - 3.3 Standardising the results after the assessment is complete was referred to as the **outcome** of the model.

The quality assurance model of Umalusi could thus be represented as follows:

Figure 1: Umalusi’s model for quality assurance of assessment.

INPUT	→	PROCESS	→	OUTPUT
EVALUATION	→	VERIFICATION	→	STANDARDISATION

Although Umalusi stated that their main focus is the examination as external assessment, they would also quality assure the internal assessment component that is done at the school. This would be done by sampling, but their directive did not provide the details of the sampling procedures to be employed.

The exit levels for GET (grades 1 - 9) and FET (grades 10 -12) were at grade 9 and grade 12 levels respectively. Both exit levels had an external (national) assessment and an internal (school based) assessment. The proportions of school based assessment to examinations in the GET and FET

bands within schooling are vastly different. In grade 9, school based assessment counted 75% while the final examination in the form of the CTA counted 25%. In contrast, FET had the final examination counting 75% while the school based assessment counted 25%. The shift in examination demands from grade 9 to grade 10 was thus quite remarkable. The CTA was scrapped in 2010 and an internal examination counting 25% was introduced in its place. The ratio of examination: school based assessment in the FET remains the same.

School based assessment

Umalusi's role was to ensure that both components of assessment at the two exit levels satisfied the quality assurance measures according to their model. The examination system was not changed during the time of the study. I focused this study on the school based assessment area since this was relatively new to the country after having been made compulsory in 2001. The quality assurance mechanisms for the examination system had been established for a long period already whereas that for SBA was still developing.

Examinations have been conducted for many years and most systems, such as setting papers, external moderation of papers, monitoring the conduct of the examinations, marking processes, moderation of marking and standardisation prior to resulting the candidates, are all well-developed already. School based assessment is however far more diverse and more complicated, especially within the paradigm of the outcomes based curriculum that was new at that time.

Umalusi's quality assurance model for site based assessment involves an annual process and is based upon sampling and the selection of evidence from the input, process and output phases – at different levels of the provincial body. Their findings could validate or annul the assessment of a provider. Their policy provides detail on assessment standards, assessment implementation standards and moderation standards.

Internal moderation system

One of the key responsibilities of an assessment body, according to the Umalusi policy (2004:14), is an internal moderation system at the site of learning. They prescribe that the assessment body ensures that 'a senior member of staff internally moderates all assessment tasks and assessment evidence' (2004:14). In addition, the policy directs: 'the assessment body must establish a moderation system that ensures consistency in the standard and quality of assessment instruments across learning sites, districts and regions' (2004:14). They further specify that 'Umalusi may request that a sample of assessment instruments be forwarded to their external moderators for moderation' (2004:14). They mention that they will 'focus on strengthening the internal moderation systems of the providers, in the interim' (2004:19).

WCED response to Umalusi

In response to the Umalusi policy, the WCED released circular 0012/2005 which explained the process for moderation in the Western Cape for 2005. Circular 0012/2005 built on the system introduced in the Moderation Policy of 2002 but gave greater specifics regarding the number of meetings and how these meetings would be utilised.

Prior policy and practice

Prior to the directives from Umalusi at the end of 2004 and the requirement for greater accountability in the school based assessment, the WCED had already established their own moderation protocol. This protocol, released at the end of 2002, was based upon the national Assessment Policy of 1998 which indicated that

continuous assessment is considered to be the best model to assess outcomes throughout the system and enable improvements to be made in the teaching and learning process. It must be used to support the learner developmentally and to feed back into teaching and learning and should not be interpreted as the accumulation of a series of traditional test results. (1998: 4)

Hence the spirit of the original policy was that the assessment was a developmental aspect of the curriculum that would be fed back into the teaching and learning process. The policy (1998:4) claimed that it was a shift from a system dominated by public examinations which were at the 'high stakes' end to a system that informed and improved the curriculum and assessment practice of teachers and the leadership of the school.

The policy of 1998 mentioned that moderation will be carried out to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained in the assessment process. The moderation would be enabled via a sample system at various levels such as school, province and national. The responsibility for this moderation system would be the Education Training Quality Assurance body. The policy specified that there will be an external moderation for the validation of assessment in grade 9 since this was supposed to lead to a ³GETC.

The WCED moderation policy and protocol of 2002 stated that it is underpinned by the South African Quality Assurance Act (Act 58 1995), the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (Act 58 2001), General Education and Training Assessment Policy (December 1998) and learning area/subject guidelines as well as relevant core syllabi.

The moderation policy spells out the various forms that moderation could take e.g. face moderation, practical moderation, portfolio moderation, statistical moderation and cluster moderation. It then emphasises that *'the cluster moderation model is a time-effective and human resource-effective model'* (2002:4). The framework promotes the cluster moderation system indicating that *'it is a well-known mechanism for human-resource development, standard setting, stimulating collegiality and assisting in the establishment of a Quality Assurance system'* (2002:4). It is further stated that *'educators in a cluster will be able to create a shared understanding of standards and assessment requirements in a collegial environment'* (2002:4).

³ General Education and Training Certificate (GETC)

In terms of how the author(s) of this protocol envisaged moderation within the district taking place, it specified two components: ongoing developmental moderation and a final cluster moderation meeting. The protocol does mention that the model will take a phased in approach. It does not provide the necessary detail in terms of when the phased in approach would be operative nor how it will actually work.

The 2002 moderation protocol, which was sent to schools together with WCED Circular 128/2002, mentioned the following regarding internal moderation (at school).

- *Schools should have an internal moderation policy.*
- *Internal moderation should ensure that school based assessment is consistent, accurate and well designed.*
- *Transparency in the methods used is of the utmost importance*

The main functions of internal moderation listed in the WCED 2002 moderation protocol are as follows:

- *To verify that assessment across all subjects is fair, valid, reliable and practicable.*
- *To ensure that learners doing the same subject but in different classes are treated equitably.*
- *To validate the authenticity of the learner's work.*
- *To identify the need to redesign assessments.*
- *To provide an appeal procedure for dissatisfied learners.*
- *To evaluate the performance of assessors.*
- *To provide appropriate and necessary support, advice and guidance to assessors.*
- *To ensure that school based assessment is continuous throughout the year.*

The protocol further indicates that the internal moderation process must be performed effectively from January to November. It does not provide sufficient guidance on actual ways in which the process should be carried out during this time period. The protocol urges schools to appoint senior staff to moderate the assessment of educators within the school, indicating that these

staff members should have the confidence of the rest of the staff. The WCED has yet to revise this moderation protocol.

In 2003, an interim policy framework was released by the DOE on the promotion of learners in grade 9. This policy reinforced the 1998 policy in terms of assessment framework but provided more detail information regarding promotion in grade 9. These details included the distribution of CASS vs. external assessment, requirements for the portfolio of the assessment and the naming of the external assessment to be the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTAs).

The 2003 grade 9 framework policy indicated that Provincial Education bodies had to ensure that appropriate moderation procedures at a school and district were in place. The framework also mentioned that the CTA would validate the school based assessment. Once the 2003 policy framework for grade 9 was released, the onus was placed upon the quality assurer to meet the necessary quality assurance demands.

Implementation of the 2005 Moderation Policy

In response to the direction towards which Umalusi had veered in late 2004, the WCED released the 2005 moderation circular (Circular 0012/2005) which requested compliance with moderation processes to meet quality assurance and support requirements.

The 2004 Draft policy for Quality Assurance of Assessment for the GETC and FETC from Umalusi clearly states their intention when they state that

Umalusi has adopted an examinations model for quality assurance where examinations will be used as the major form of managing the quality of curriculum and learning outcomes. The examinations model will be supplemented by an inspection model which will focus on the management of quality in provincial departments and private institutions and learning sites responsible for the delivery of the general and further education and training qualifications. (2004:3)

Spurred on by this clear directive of how the province would be quality assured the WCED, although retaining the moderation protocol, issued circular 0012/2005 which provided structure and process in terms of how moderation would take place in the future. Moderation for grade 9 and 12 would now be done in terms of satisfying quality assurance requirements for Umalusi. The developmental flame of the moderation protocol had been dampened and even though Umalusi removed the requirement for grade 9 from their 2006 final Directives for Quality Assurance, the WCED continued to retain the system for this grade.

Circulars are regarded as provincial policy since they instruct and guide institutions that fall under the responsibility of the provincial department of education. The responsibility for implementing the policy lies at the feet of the school management while monitoring of the implementation of the policy is a district and provincial responsibility.

The circular as an artefact of the provincial department was sent to schools and districts in March 2005. Later circulars from the curriculum section of the WCED included the request that the circular be shared with the relevant stakeholder as well.

In the case of circular 0012/2005, the following aspects were mentioned which would have an impact on schools:

- ❑ *quality assurance processes had to be carried out at both grade 9 and grade 12 levels.*
- ❑ *the 2005 process plan that incorporated Umalusi's quality assurance model.*
- ❑ *The WCED intended having three moderation cluster meetings for each subject in grade 12 and each learning area in grade 9.*

Circular 0012/2005 stated: '*Together the three meetings constitute the moderation process as a whole.*' Although the WCED retained the developmental system of moderation, reducing the number of meetings from

at least four to three shifted the emphasis of the moderation to increasing accountability of the schools at the expense of enhanced development.

Process of moderation

Circular 0012/2005 requested that one person from a school should attend each of the three meetings, requesting that this person be the subject or learning area head where possible. Since subjects are grouped in departments at schools, it would not have been possible for a single departmental head to attend all these meetings. The nature of this policy – where compulsory cluster meetings are held – already asks of schools to distribute leadership to people who may not be positional leaders. This was especially needed as the circular further added that even though only one teacher from a school may represent a school at a cluster meeting, portfolios from all teachers teaching a relevant subject/learning area in the grade should be presented for moderation.

Circular 0012/2005 provided the following detail which describes the intention of each meeting:

Table 1: Moderation process of the WCED (2005)

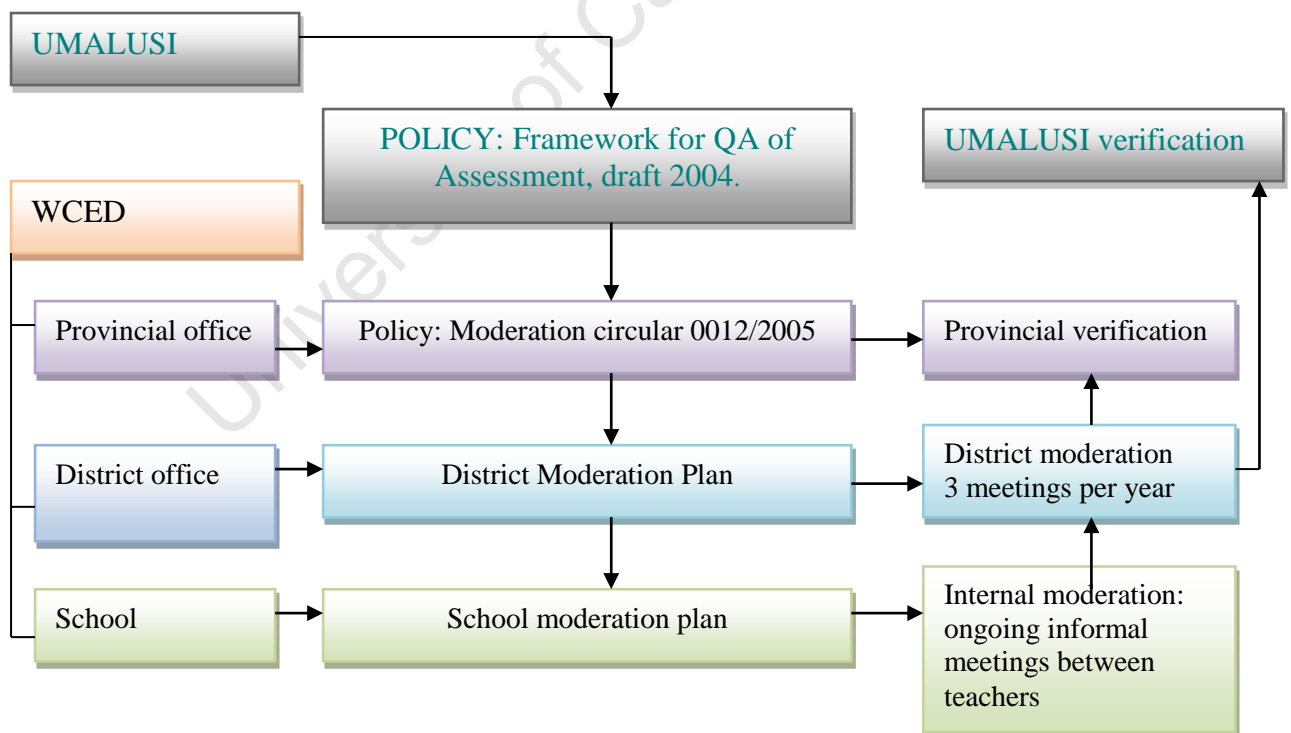
Meeting number	Description of the meeting in circular 0012/2005
Meeting 1	The first meeting entailed a formal standard setting exercise.
Meeting 2	The second meeting was a monitoring meeting though the circular mentions that between 50 – 80% of the year’s work should have been moderated at this meeting.
Meeting 3	At meeting 3, the balance of the portfolio would be moderated, the portfolios scanned for compliance, totals checked and other routines completed.

Circular 0012/2005 indicated that ‘**compulsory cluster meetings form the core of the moderation process**’. It adds that ‘*a sharing model promotes growth because the teachers are given the opportunity to explore the tasks set across a whole cluster*’ (2005:2).

The WCED circular (0012/2005) acknowledged that ‘a functional moderation system depends on a clear and completely functional moderation system within the school itself’ (2005:2). It further mentions that ‘school principals are asked to ensure compliance with this moderation model’ (2005:3). The strong emphasis on compliance was the approach adopted by the WCED in association with Umalusi. This approach appeared to have pervaded the entire educational system during the implementation of the new curriculum. Policy in the form of the circular 0012/2005 indicated the responsibilities of the schools regarding moderation and guided schools regarding the processes to be followed while providing the structure that sought to enact the system of moderation in the province.

Figure 2 below illustrates how internal and external moderation processes articulated with the policies and planning at each level.

Figure 2: Policy, planning and implementation processes of moderation



A fully functional moderation system at school required collaborative efforts by various players at a school and its corresponding district. This study examines how the role players at school and those at the district office

interpreted the policy laid down by Circular 12/2005. Key to the research was the district moderation meeting and interviews with teachers at a school.

Changes in curriculum

In this section, I look at assessment practice prior to the introduction of compulsory school based assessment in 2001 as well as looking to the future in terms of curriculum and assessment development and the role of moderation in order to contextualise moderation policy in relation to curriculum policy.

Prior to 1994, the Report 550 curriculum was content based and assessment practice in all grades was guided by what happened at the grade 12 level. Examinations were the dominant method of assessment and moderation was conducted by experts on a one on one basis, usually at the school to ensure compliance and accountability.

A new curriculum, C2005, was launched in 1997 and a new Assessment Policy was launched in 1998. The new curriculum was outcomes based and the assessment policy sought to extend assessment beyond the narrow spectrum of examinations.

In 2000, the curriculum was reviewed. In *'2001, all provinces were compelled by the national Department of Education to include continuous assessment (CASS) as part of their final grade 12 assessment.'* (Poliah 2011:44) The revised curriculum was released in 2002 as the Revised National Curriculum Statement, later called the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The WCED released a provincial Moderation Protocol in 2002.

The national assessment policy was amended in 2003 to legislate the CTA and introduce Umalusi into the assessment policy discourse. Outcomes based assessment remained in the absence of a content driven curriculum and the focus appeared to be more on development than merely compliance.

In 2004, Umalusi released their draft directives for quality assurance of assessment and the WCED released their circular on the moderation process in 2005.

A phased in implementation system of the new C2005 curriculum meant that the first Grade 12 class was supposed to have completed in 2005. The revision of the curriculum and the subsequent National Curriculum Statement in 2002 revised the implementation dates for the new curriculum.

Table 2: Curriculum format for High Schools in South Africa, 2005 - 2008.

Grade	2005	2006	2007	2008
8	Curriculum 2005	Curriculum 2005	National Curriculum Statement	National Curriculum Statement
9	Curriculum 2005	Curriculum 2005	Curriculum 2005	National Curriculum Statement
10	Report 550	National Curriculum Statement	National Curriculum Statement	National Curriculum Statement
11	Report 550	Report 550	National Curriculum Statement	National Curriculum Statement
12	Report 550	Report 550	Report 550	National Curriculum Statement

In 2007, the assessment policy was revised for grades R – 9 in order to provide greater detail in terms of the processes of assessment. It did not differ from the 2003 policy in terms of moderation.

In 2009, the national Minister called for a review of the curriculum after extensive consultation with teachers and parents regarding implementation challenges of the curriculum and assessment. The committee that reviewed the curriculum proposed a single Curriculum and Assessment Policy

Statement (CAPS) for each subject from grade R – 12. The review also proposed that a single policy for progression and promotion be established for grades R – 12. The CAPS are content laden documents and the policy for progression and promotion once again enhances examinations across the educational system.

The implementation dates for the reviewed policy statements are provided in the table below:

Table 3: Implementation calendar for the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements

Year	GET phase	FET phase
2012	Grades R - 3	Grade 10
2013	Grades 4 - 6	Grade 11
2014	Grades 7 - 9	Grade 12

This change in policy may also mean that the approach to moderation may be changed for grade 9 and grade 12 in 2014 since examinations will once again be the dominant feature in assessment in the future.

This study was conducted during a particular period after school based assessment was introduced. Prior to that period, examinations were the dominant assessment method and it appears as if the system has come full circle and is leaning toward a greater emphasis on examinations in the future.

Outline of the study

The study provides a detailed background, in **Chapter 1**, to the implementation of moderation policy in the province. The background includes a discussion of the concept of quality of assurance of assessment, Umalusi's visit to the Western Cape and the WCED's response to Umalusi's requirements.

Chapter 2 features a review of previous literature relating to implementation of policy, moderation of assessment and quality assurance. The literature review provides research insights from previous scholars. It serves as a backdrop for the study in that it allows comparison to be made to findings from previous studies and identifies issues to be taken up as key aspects of the study.

Chapter 3 draws on Spillane *et al's* theory of leadership (2004) and policy implementation (2002) to develop a conceptual lens for examining how moderation is implemented at the school and district. Key aspects of this framework included examining: the tasks of moderation and how they were enacted; cognition associated with implementation of moderation; relationships within moderation practice; artefacts symptomatic of moderation of assessment and the role of time. The conceptual framework lays the foundation for the analytical framework which appears in the latter section of Chapter 3. The analytical framework guides the analysis of data texts from interviews and observation of a district moderation meeting.

The design and method chapter (**Chapter 4**) provides a map of theoretically guided processes employed in the study. The key methods that were employed in this research study were interviews, interrogation of policy texts and the observation of a district moderation meeting. The design chapter includes a description of how this study was conducted at both school and district level. It also describes how the analysis was planned and executed.

In **Chapter 5**, I generate an analytic description of activities, processes and meanings associated with implementation of the policy. This analysis generated insights into the actual practice of moderation at the school and district levels of implementation. Further analysis was done using themes to draw conclusions from the research.

In **Chapter 6**, I review the study and discuss the conclusions that have emerged from the research. Key insights include how the policy actors have dealt with the implementation of policy regarding moderation of assessment,

the thinning nature of implementation as one goes closer to the ground level and how old practices prevail in the face of efforts to comply with new policy demands.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF ASSOCIATED RESEARCH

In this study, I examine how policy regarding moderation of assessment was implemented at a school and in its district.

This chapter reflects on the broad literature encompassing the topics of implementation and assessment. Since both fields are large and varied, I have focussed the review of the literature within the field of policy implementation and moderation of assessment. As moderation is one of the quality assurance mechanisms used by the education department, I have also examined the issue of quality assurance.

Research that can be associated with this study falls within the following areas:

- Implementation of policy
- Moderation of assessment
- Quality assurance (of schools, in general, but of assessment in particular)

Implementation of policy

Literature on implementation of policy showed a number of sub themes which I explore in this section. This includes a top down approach to implementation, bottom up approaches to implementation and a political approach to implementation.

Top down approach

McLaughlin (1987) argues that studies in the mid-1960s and early 1970s 'subscribed to Weberian notions of hierarchical authority and bureaucratic control' (1987:171). Weber was strongly in favour of having bureaucracies to

implement policies as they were laid out in policy by the authorities. He declared that the nature of the bureaucracy is such that it works more perfectly when rational, detached, objective officials have specialist roles to play in conducting their particular functions. This allows the bureaucracy to carry community action into rationalised societal action.

McLaughlin (1987) mentions that Pressman and Wildavsky were the first in a generation of implementation researchers that showed policy implementation, no matter how excellent it had been crafted or planned, depended on how people throughout the system interpreted and enacted the policy.

Bottom up approach

Two notable studies turned the Weberian rational approach on its head. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) and Elmore (1979) analysed implementation from the vantage point of the end user of the policy. Weatherley and Lipsky coined the phrase '*street-level bureaucrats*' (1977:172) to describe the people who are needed to implement the policy whereas Elmore used the term '*backward-mapping*' to describe the last possible stage of the implementation process. '*Street-level bureaucrats modify goals, apply certain routines, reduce services, prioritise certain actions and limit clients in order to process the work they are expected to do*' (Weatherley and Lipsky 1977:172). Elmore explained that backward-mapping starts with a statement of the specific behaviour at the lowest level of the implementation process that generates the need for the policy (1979:604). Elmore indicated that only when this behaviour is described can policy be developed and outcomes be determined.

Louis and Miles argue that '*implementation is a user-dependent process and stands and falls by what the local people actually do*' (1990:23) when they propose a model for organising change at a school. Practical advice for principals of schools as important end users of policy was provided by Fullan (1998) and Welton (2001). Stivers and Phillips (2009) reflect on development and implementation of assessment of learning at a school which they ascribe to leadership, funding and structure. Welton (2001:181) proposes the barefoot

manager approach in which principals of schools are trained in generic concepts and practices of management and supporting learning.

Berman (1978) distinguishes between macro-implementation and micro-implementation. He views macro-implementation as a national or provincial level of implementation whereas micro-implementation would be at the level of local implementers. His concern is that implementation research is not bridging the gap between the contexts of the two levels of implementation. Carless (2005) also examines factors that affect implementation at the micro or school level and the macro or wider socio-political levels.

Fullan suggests that implementing agents need to be aware that change is complex and even difficult to effect. The learning core is especially difficult to change and here Fullan indicates that '*to restructure is not to reculture*' (1998:49), thus '*changing formal structures is not the same as changing norms, habits, skills and beliefs*' (1998:49). Louis and Miles caution against expecting instant results from implementation, mentioning that '*changes are a slow process that depends on tenacity and skill at coping with the inevitable crises that occur in any evolving programme of change*' (1990:15).

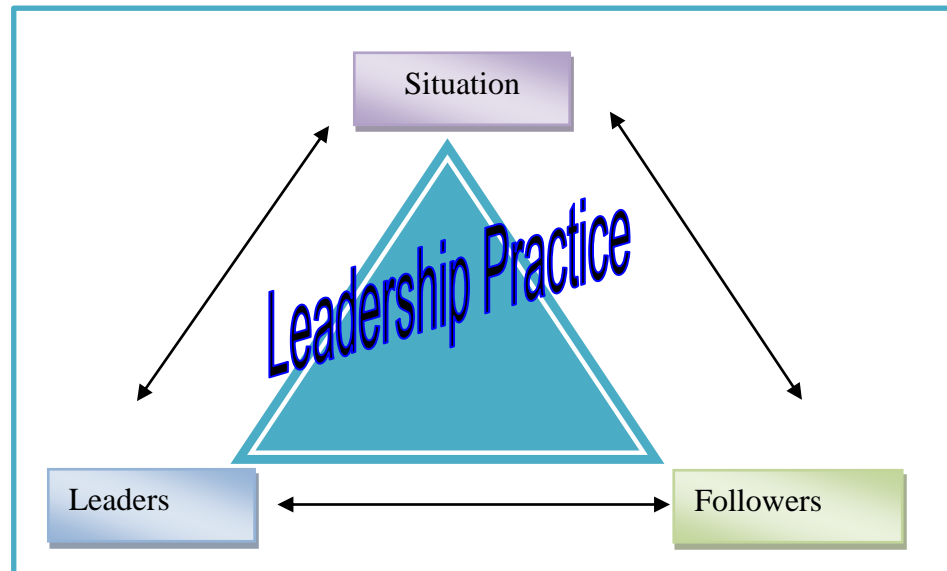
Spillane et al (2002:391) agree that policy implementation is complex and indicate that research has shown that '*bureaucrats are generally hard working and do not intentionally work to undermine the system*' (Brehm and Gates in Spillane et al, 2002:391). They explain that often sense making is not taken into account when researching implementation. Spillane et al propose a framework for implementation based on the principles of cognition. This framework is used as part of the conceptual framework of my study in conjunction with Spillane et al's framework for leadership. The following section explains the two frameworks developed by Spillane et al.

Spillane et al's distributed leadership framework

Spillane et al (2004) argue that leadership activity is constituted in the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation in the execution of particular leadership tasks. The following diagram provides an indication of

the relationship between the constituting elements of the distributed leadership practice perspective of Spillane et al.

Fig 3: 'Constituting elements of leadership practice' (Spillane et al, 2004:11)



In examining these three key elements of practice, Spillane et al (2004) have structured their framework around the following main ideas:

1. Leaders and their tasks, and how these tasks are enacted
2. Social distribution of task enactment involving leaders and follows.
3. Situational distribution of task enactment.

Tasks and their enactment

The concepts used in the leadership framework guided the design as well as the manner in which analysis of data was produced. In attempting to understand tasks and their enactment, Spillane et al (2004), identified major and minor functions of leadership which they termed as macro-functions and micro-functions respectively. This approach allowed tasks to be dissected within a particular practice thereby enabling deeper analysis of the particular practice. They indicate that 'macro-functions alone will not enable one to understand leadership practice' but one would need to 'identify and analyse the micro-tasks that contribute to the execution of macro-functions' (2004:11)

According to Spillane et al (2004), interviews and observation elicit first-hand knowledge of enactment and can help in understanding the links between

macro functions and micro tasks. Identifying the tasks alone was not sufficient to understand practice. Getting to know how these tasks were actually enacted or implemented provided the real picture of practice for Spillane et al. Spillane et al (2004:14) felt that identifying espoused practices provides insufficient insight into practice. In order to gain insight into practice, one needs to understand the task as it unfolds from the perspective of the practitioner.

Social distribution

Spillane et al draw on Giddens when they contend that their framework includes both '**structure** – the rules and resources that provide the medium and outcome of social action and **systems** – the reproduced relations between social actors or collectives organised as regular social practices' (2004:22). They indicate that their perspective focuses on how leadership practice is distributed among positional and informal leaders as well as their followers. They consider the enactment of leadership tasks to be 'stretched over the practice of two or more leaders and followers' (2004:16).

Situational distribution

Spillane et al furthermore explore how leadership practice may be stretched over a context from a micro-perspective. Indicating that leadership practice may be distributed across the dimensions of **designed artefacts** and organisational structure, they define designed artefacts as 'external representations of ideas and intentions that are constitutive of leadership practice' (2004:23).

They also see organisational structures as 'more than vessels for leadership activity and more than accessories that leaders can use to execute a particular task using a predetermined strategy or practice' (2004:26).

Developing an implementation framework

Spillane et al's (2002) implementation framework provided the following key aspects for examining and understanding how implementation of a policy

could happen. This framework, although similar to the leadership framework, emphasised individual and situated cognition and thus the thread of sense making was woven throughout the implementation framework. They stated that this method is not the only method with which to understand implementation but it should serve as a complementary addition to the study of implementation.

The implementation framework provided another angle from which to observe practice by focusing the attention of analysis on sense making.

Table 4: Spillane et al's three stages of development of an implementation framework

Stage of development of implementation framework	Brief description of development stage
1. Individual cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local implementing agent as an individual sense maker • how implementer's beliefs, values and emotions influence sense making
2. Situated cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • context is a constituting element in the implementation process
3. Role of representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role of policy stimuli in sense making

Individual cognition

Spillane et al's (2002) implementation framework foregrounds the cognition of the individual regarding the implementation of policy. Viewing the manner in which individuals make sense of new policy is the key thrust of their implementation framework.

From a cognitive perspective, a policy message about changing implementing agents' behaviour is not a given that resides in the policy signal (e.g., legislation, brochures, regulations). Policy messages are not inert, static ideas that are transmitted unaltered into local actors' minds to be accepted, rejected, or modified to fit local needs and conditions. Rather, the (implementing) agents must first notice, then frame, interpret and construct meaning for policy messages. (Spillane et al,2002:392)

Experience in making sense of policy

Spillane et al felt that *'prior beliefs and practices could pose challenges as their prior knowledge and understanding may interfere with their ability to interpret and implement'* (2002:393) new policy in a manner that policy makers had intended the implementation to occur. They defined *'sense making'* as an *'active attempt to bring one's past organisation of knowledge and beliefs to bear in the construction of meaning from present stimuli'* (2002:394).

Furthermore, they added that *'an individual's prior knowledge and experience serves as a lens influencing what the individual notices in the environment and how the recognised stimuli are processed, encoded, organised and interpreted'* (2002:394).

Accommodation and assimilation

Borrowing Piaget's notion of accommodation, Spillane et al argued that it was important for implementers to assimilate or encode new knowledge into existing knowledge frames rather than restructuring existing knowledge.

Degree of sophistication

According to Spillane et al, a major aspect of accessing knowledge is the *'degree of sophistication in that knowledge'*. *'Experts may see deeper meaningful patterns in problem situations which would not be apparent to the novices'* (2002:396). Experts see things in terms of the 'big picture' and core principles and are less likely to be distracted by that which is superficial. They mentioned that this affects the reforms by implementers who look for similarities that are only superficial. Spillane et al maintained that *'few are experts when policy charts new terrain'* (2002:400). Their research showed that *'when implementing agents encounter new ideas about their work through policy, they are more likely to make surface-level connections to their prior experiences'* (2002:400).

Social cognition

In terms of relationships or the social distribution of the implementation framework, Spillane et al refers to *enactment zones* which are '*spaces where world of policy meets the world of practice*' (2002:407). Research done by Spillane and Zeuli in 1999 (in Spillane et al, 2002:407) in this field established three areas regarding enactment zones of teachers:

- Extent to which zones were individualistic rather than social
- Extent to which there were rich deliberations with fellow teachers and experts
- Extent to which artefacts or material resources supported the deliberation

Spillane and Zeuli's research demonstrated that teachers that had more social interaction regarding the new policy '*understood the new policy in ways that resonated with the developers of the policy*' (2002:407). Most teachers had enactment zones that were private and these teachers '*undertook less fundamental and frequently surface level changes in their practice*' (2002:407).

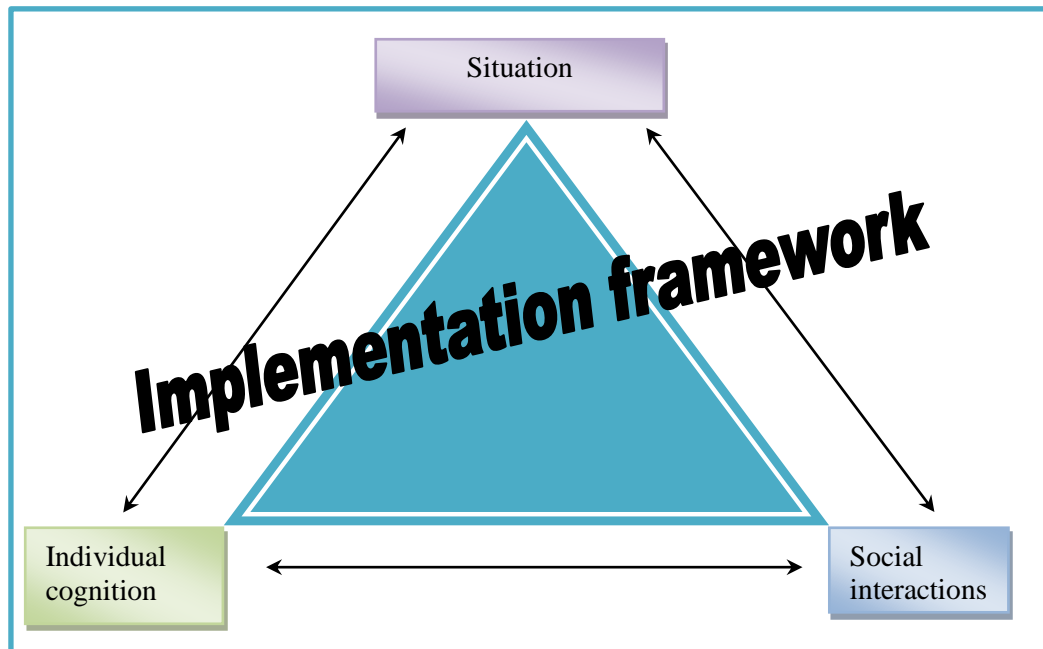
Spillane et al's implementation framework

Spillane et al indicated that a situation distribution perspective focused their research in three ways:

- *Implementation practice or activity as represented by meetings was the core focus of their work.*
- *Implementation practice was constituted in the interaction of administrators, teachers, students and their situation in the execution of particular tasks.*
- *Situation was multidimensional and included social, material, intellectual, temporal, historical and cultural aspects. (2002:412).*

Spillane et al's (2002) implementation framework can be viewed in terms of sense making of policy by the individual, social interactions of actors in the execution of tasks and the context or situation's influence regarding implementation.

Fig 4: Spillane et al's implementation framework (based on Spillane et al's implementation framework, 2002)



In this framework, Spillane et al (2002:394) place an '*emphasis on sense making rather than interpretation*' of policy.

Spillane et al mention:

an individual's prior knowledge and experience serve as a lens influencing what the individual notices in the environment and how stimuli that are noticed are processed, encoded, organised and subsequently interpreted. Schemas are knowledge structures that link together related concepts used to make sense of the world and to make predictions. (2002:394)

Schemas

In examining the concept of schemas, Spillane et al (2002: 394) asserts:

schemas can guide the processing of cognitive and social information, helping to focus the individual to use past understandings to see patterns in rich or ambiguous information'. 'Once accessed, the schema can focus an interpretation, helping to resolve ambiguous information affecting the interpretation of the information' (Higgins, cited in Spillane et al, 2002:395).

The contribution of cognition is an important facet of the implementation framework as it is threaded within the enactment of tasks/activities and also is important in relationships.

Spillane et al extended the discourse regarding implementation practice with special emphasis on how the implementers interpret policy and explained this practice in terms of tasks, sense making of the tasks, enactment of the tasks, relationships in enacting the tasks and the influence of situation on implementation.

The next section examines the literature regarding implementation studies from a political approach.

Political approach

'Large scale reform is deliberate policy and strategy that attempts to change the system as a whole' (Fullan, 2009:102). The change in education policy in South Africa is similarly seen by many scholars as a strategic attempt to change society as a whole. According to De Clercq, the *'evolution of teacher appraisal policies can be explained by examining the post-1994 policy context of uneven power relationships around education, the main influences in 'educational policy politics' as well as the changes over time in the policies and in the dominant interests, as manifested in appraisal policy processes'* (2011,331). Other scholars such as Chisholm (2003) and Jansen (2002) have written about implementation from a political vantage point.

Where Chisholm highlighted the influence of voice and power in shaping policy, Jansen mentioned that implementation was not on the agenda of the plans of government in the initial stages of the new South Africa and thus was not given the necessary attention.

Chisholm (2005) reflects that the South African government launched the new curriculum, Curriculum 2005, in 1997 as a post-apartheid curriculum underpinned by the principles of outcomes-based education (OBE). In 2000, the government called for a review of the curriculum. The curriculum was

revised after consultation and a Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for grades R – 9 became policy in 2002. Chisholm maintains that the *'interpretation of policy in South Africa was dominated by two main approaches: one that focused on curriculum as policy and the other on curriculum as knowledge'* (2005:194). For those that focused on curriculum as policy, Chisholm argues that *'the focus was on the symbolic aspect of policy and its political character, descriptions of origins and unfolding of policy, conflicts between curriculum in theory and practice and the relationship between curriculum and identity.'* (2005:194). Where the focus was on *'curriculum as knowledge, the view was of how knowledge is constructed and the role of school in teaching and learning. For elaborators of constructivism and outcomes-based education, the heart of OBE lies in its learner centred character as well as its emphasis on bringing to the surface the local, hidden, silenced knowledge and everyday realities of learners'* (2005:195).

Chisholm argues that unions played a role in the formulation and implementation of Curriculum 2005 from 1997 (2005:202) . Their exclusion from the Review Committee marked a shift from the stakeholder driven approach to democracy that had featured in the immediate post-apartheid years' (2003:7). She explains how the technology lobby mobilised a campaign when the Review committee recommended that Technology and Economic Management Sciences (EMS) be removed as learning areas and be integrated into other learning areas.

When the issue was presented to cabinet, the symbolism of these new learning areas presented the most powerful argument for their retention; letting go of the learning areas was seen as being tantamount to adopting a development path that challenged South Africa's modernisation through integration into a global world on the basis of markets and advanced technology. Cabinet argued not only for retention, but strengthening the role of EMS and technology in the curriculum (2005:198).

Jansen adds:

the fact that Cabinet became involved in and scaled down some of the proposals of the review team, after the Minister had accepted them is itself testimony to the symbolic politics underpinning something that from a bureaucratic point of view, appears to be a straightforward technical matter' (2002:212).

Jansen points out the challenge for the national government who developed the policies but had little control over the '*speed and direction of policy implementation in the provinces since it would require stepping over a negotiated fine-line in the constitution and the national powers and provincial competencies*' (2002:209). Taylor (2009) recalls that after the second general election of 1999, the government paid greater attention to the Senior Certificate Grade 12 results. A monitoring forum was established by the national Department of Education to co-ordinate improvement in the SC examination and each province had to institute an improvement plan for grade 12 results. After 1994, only the WCED implemented CASS as part of the grade 12 mark (Poliah, 2011). In 2000, the national Minister Asmal placed a restriction of 25% on CASS. '*From 2001, all provinces were compelled by the DOE to include CASS as part of their final assessment*' (Poliah, 2011:44).

Policy implementation research initially focused on a top down approach with the policy text as the main activity unit. Later research dealt with a bottom up approach for studying implementation with scholars valuing the contribution of the implementers at the ground level.

Having examined the general area of implementation research, the next section will focus on the literature that deals with moderation.

Moderation of assessment

'Moderation is a process for assuring that an assessment outcome is valid, fair and reliable and that the marking criteria have been applied consistently' (Bloxham, 2009:212)

There are many angles from which to view the research on moderation of assessment, as has been demonstrated by the breadth of approaches in the literature. The topics that included in this chapter are teacher expertise in assessment, internal versus external assessment and systemic approaches to moderation.

Teacher expertise in assessment

Teacher expertise is a vital component of successful school based assessment (Maxwell, 2006). Maxwell states that there are two kinds of expertise relevant to school based assessment - *'obtaining good information on student learning and making good judgments'* (2006:2). Moderation, he mentions, is essential in high stake assessment as a quality control. Building teacher capacity through moderation is encouraged by other scholars as well (Klenowski, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 1986).

Klenowski remarks that *'teacher judgment is intrinsic to moderation and to professional practice'* and *'with the introduction of standards at state and national levels, teacher judgment as developed in moderation practice is vital'* (2010:21). Pennycuik in Lubisi illustrates this when he points out that a *'serious lack of capacity among teachers led to continuous assessment failure in Sri Lanka'* (2002:265).

Hayward and Hedge (2005) argue that there may have been the belief that teachers in Scotland already had the skills to support learners through assessment but were unable to do this due to the demands of the system. They mention that *'one of the fundamental shifts in practice advocated in assessment, and highlighted in the widely accepted rationale for a greater focus on formative assessment as a part of learning and teaching is a*

changed power relationship between learning and teaching (2005:70). *'For teachers to be truly effective, they must first see themselves as learners'* (Miller and O'Shea in Hayward and Hedge, 2005:71).

Internal vs external assessment

Internal assessment is that which is developed and performed by teachers at their schools while external assessment are developed outside of the school and in some cases, e.g. the ⁴Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA) in grade 9, will be implemented by teachers and in other cases such as independent testing be implemented by researchers.

There was some reluctance among teachers to embrace new assessment and instructional practices unless they had the endorsement of it being included in a high stakes assessment (Barnes et al, 2000). Barnes et al (2000) report that the widely held belief in Australia is that the only way to maintain standards is to ensure that the work assessed is the result of the learner's unaided effort and this can only be obtained in examination conditions.

Opposing this viewpoint, Hayward and Hedge (2005) argue that consultations in Scotland with stakeholders (mostly teachers unions and education authorities) showed that it was *'commonly argued that assessment for purposes of accountability should not dominate learning and teaching – classroom based assessment was the heart of the business'* (2005:62) They admit that tensions exist since *'classroom assessment is not highly regarded by external communities'* (2005:62) and *'teachers do not always trust each other's professional judgement'* (2005:62).

Systemic approaches to moderation

Maxwell's (2006) examination of the processes and procedures that encompasses the moderation of assessment at a college level in Australia

⁴ Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA) were externally produced assessments as stipulated by the Assessment Policy of 2003 and counted 25% of the final assessment in grade 9. The CTA was discontinued in 2010.

allowed an analytical insight into what is expected from the system. It is a normative view that provided the facets that make up the moderation process as a whole.

Maxwell (2006) provides an insight into the approach taken by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) where moderation panels consist of experienced teachers whose participation is voluntary and supported by the schools. There was no additional remuneration since this exercise is seen as a professional development opportunity.

Describing structures present in the moderation system Maxwell (2006) mentions portfolios but does not explain in terms of their contents nor mentions what the contribution teachers make to the development of the portfolios. Instead he states that the panelists meet and review portfolios of learners, discuss teacher judgments and seek to agree before providing advice to a school. He further mentions that there should be advice in the middle of the assessment period, not only at the end, similar to the moderation process used by the WCED. The difference between the Australian model and the South African model is that the Australians have moderating panels independent of the schools that will be moderated and the skills of experienced teachers are utilised. The panels also strengthened professional development. In the WCED, all teachers were involved in the moderation through a cluster system with no regard for experts or novices.

For Maxwell, the key advantage of panels conducting the moderation was improved verification since there was greater opportunity for authority as a collective rather than it residing in the hand of an individual. His main focus is thus regarding the accountability role of moderation. The disadvantages of panel moderation, argues Maxwell, include costs that were substantial in terms of travel, accommodation, training, communications, conferences etc. It also meant that teachers were taken out their normal work.

Bushell (2006) cautions that panel moderation based on the mean scores given by each assessor may lead to a false result while Orr (2007) agrees that

there is a tendency to average marks during moderation. She also reports that seniority of lecturers in higher education may play a role in moderation with the '*convergence in the direction of the senior member of staff*' (Hand and Clewes in Orr, 2007:651)

Klenowski (2011) and Bloxham (2009) focus on the benefits of moderation for the teaching and learning process. Klenowski (2011) argues that teacher assessment can derive dependable results through moderation practice. Benefits of moderation hailed by Bloxham are '*improved reliability resulting from opportunities to discuss differences in interpretation of criteria and marking schemes, prevention of assessment being unduly influenced by the predilections of the marker and mitigating against the influence of hard or soft markers*' (2009:212). Also '*transparent moderation procedures are likely to increase the confidence of students in the marking*' (Parlington in Bloxham, 2009:212) while '*seeing others' marking and discussing marking decisions can have an important role in staff development and the creation of an assessment community amongst the marking teams*' (Swann and Ecclestone in Bloxham, 2009:212).

Scholars have argued that moderation maintains the principles of assessment and is essential in high stakes assessment systems. Since teacher judgment is an important facet of moderation, building capacity of teachers is seen as important by several scholars. Most agree that school based assessments do not enjoy the same level of importance as external examinations and there is still a lack of trust among teachers regarding moderation. In the next section, I look at the general issue of quality assurance and locate moderation within this context.

Quality assurance

Moderation is viewed as a quality assurance mechanism in order to determine whether policy compliance has occurred.

Muller (in Chisholm, 2004:228 - 231), recalls that the first time that the term 'quality assurance' was used in official policy discourse was in 2001. Providing a historical backdrop to the discourse around quality assurance, he focuses on whole school evaluation but provides insight into the establishment of UMALUSI, the quality assurance agency that deals specifically with assessment. Quality assurance of assessment is discussed by Poliah (2011) by engaging topics such as the legislative framework of quality assurance in South Africa, the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in quality assurance of assessment.

Jansen argues that *'introduction of the national policy on whole school evaluation in 2000 meant that the institutional (school) and professional (teacher) performance would be brought into sharp and systematic focus under the new government'* (2004:58). There are nine key areas for whole school evaluation, including the *quality of teaching and educator development, curriculum provision and resources and learner achievement* where moderation has a direct influence.

According to De Clercq (2011), Darling-Hammond and Elmore favoured teacher professional accountability though she felt that this model only works when teachers themselves are committed and work collegially. The *'tensions between the two approaches (of development and accountability) undermine the developmental aspects of the IQMS (Individual Quality Management System - teacher appraisal system) and the accountability aspects are subverted through a compliance approach to the implementation of the system'* (Biputha and Mc Kenna , 2010:287). Biputha and Mc Kenna argue that the *'mixing of low stakes developmental processes with high stakes appraisal functions is problematic in a fledgling educational system that still battles with the mistrust of the apartheid dispensation'* (2010:287).

Scholars have commented on the approach to quality assurance in different countries. Croxford et al (2009) report that school self-evaluation is the approach to quality assurance that has been promoted in Scotland. They argue that *'although this may appear to be a bottom up approach, it is in reality a top down approach using prescribed indicators'* (2009:186). They add

that the *'system creates cultures of performativity where the system of quality indicators encourages schools to construct fabrications of their performance in order to create a good impression rather than give an authentic evaluation of issues where improvement is needed'* (2009:186).

In another study, Black (2000) reports that the *'assessment systems in Australia, New Zealand and Sweden signal a move away from the traditional quality control towards one of quality assurance. The major effort goes not into correcting scores assigned by teachers but into improving the ability of teachers to get it right first time'* (Black, 2007:24). They add that that the notion of

community of practice as forwarded by Lave & Wenger (1991) is a useful idea for thinking about how teachers can come to consensus over the marks, grades, or scores to be awarded to students' work, but it can also serve to disguise what it is that they come to agree on. After all, the requirements of reliability are met if teachers' judgments are consistent, even if they have no idea what they are doing, or how they are doing it. The result of this can often be that teachers can judge accurately the standard of students' work, but have little idea about how to improve it. In contrast, getting teachers to meet together to talk about what makes high quality work not only improves the consistency of their judgements they make of students work but also provides a valuable form of teacher professional development in its own right.
(2007:24)

On the other hand, Harlen argues that *'the requirements of moderation procedures could constrain the teachers' use of the full range of evidence available to focus only on what can be safely assessed'* (2005:212).

The historical background regarding quality assurance has been reported by scholars and the influence of accountability in quality assurance through whole school evaluation, teacher appraisals and moderation was discussed. Scholars have reported on quality assurance processes in several countries, with one lamenting self-evaluation processes in Scotland while another encouraged community of practice in moderation.

In this chapter, the role of the local implementer, the teacher in the case of moderation, was viewed to be very important in implementation of policy. The role of sense making, building of teachers' capacity and community of practice is encouraged by scholars. Political accountability has placed greater demands for quality assurance in terms of policy relating to whole school evaluation, teacher appraisals and moderation of assessment. Each of these policies has also had developmental goals though scholars have argued that mixing accountability with development is a problem due to the mistrust in the system.

Key to implementation is the notion of sense making and this forms part of the conceptual framework underpinned by the work of Spillane et al which follows in the next chapter.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Maxwell (1996:25) the conceptual framework is 'a formulation of what you think is going on with the phenomena that you are studying'. A conceptual framework provides the lens to examine the research problem by specifying relevant features of the phenomenon. It underpins the research in terms of how one approaches the question, gathers data, analyses the data and draws conclusions.

In this study, my conceptual framework was developed in order to shape and provide direction as well as focus my study of implementation of moderation policy.

Spillane et al's frameworks

The conceptual framework for understanding implementation of moderation in this study was strongly underpinned by Spillane et al's conceptualization of leadership (2004) and implementation (2002). These two frameworks provided a strong theoretical description of how practice is realised and were used to frame a description of how policy regarding moderation was implemented in this study.

Since moderation was the focus for the study, what was important was how the school and district actually conducted the moderation and how the policy was taken up at these two levels of implementation.

Spillane et al provides a conceptualisation of leadership practice. Aspects of Spillane et al's leadership conceptual framework were adapted for this study in order to examine how moderation was practiced at a school and district thereby providing insight into how moderation policy was implemented. This study was therefore not about leadership per se - it borrowed from the conceptual framework dealing with leadership of Spillane et al and adapted the framework in order to study the implementation of moderation.

Similarly, the conceptual framework that Spillane et al used to examine policy implementation was drawn on in order to expand the breadth of my study so that it included a focus on sense making by the implementers of moderation. This was particularly helpful in looking at what happens when a policy is changed and at the influence that the new policy has on the implementers.

The conceptual framework developed in this study served as the lens for examining moderation practice and informed the development of an analytical framework that was used to interrogate the data.

Smith (2003) argues that a community of practice needs to develop various resources such as tools, documents, routines, vocabulary and symbols that carry the accumulated knowledge of the community. In attempting to understand the practice within moderation of assessment at a school, one should be aware of these artefacts that form the shroud around the practice in question.

The following questions deal with artefacts regarding moderation practice. What artefacts are present to enable the task of moderation to be enacted by the various players at a school and a district? What routines are present in the schools in preparing for cluster moderation meeting? Is there a culture of transparency in terms of distributing the policy documents, circulars from Head Office and notices from the district office? How does policy from a central point (national, provincial, district, school) enable a process such as moderation to be enacted?

Enactment of a task

In terms of task enactment, how does moderation occur in the school and district?

Four key aspects can be drawn from Spillane et al's framework for leadership into a framework for moderation:

Table 5: Relating Spillane et al's distributed leadership framework to moderation

Spillane et al's distributed leadership framework	Framework for understanding moderation practice
Leadership tasks and functions	Moderation tasks or activities
Enactment of leadership tasks and functions	Enactment of moderation tasks or activities
Social distribution of task enactment	Relationships in implementing the moderation tasks/activities
Situational distribution of task enactment including artefacts.	The context of moderation tasks /activities with special emphasis on artefacts of moderation

Table 6 provides a summary of Spillane et al's two frameworks and attempts to illustrate how these two frameworks have been applied in order to develop a unique framework for examining how policy regarding moderation was taken up in this study. Importantly, the framework that is used to interrogate policy regarding moderation not only examines how the policy was taken up but also looks at the role of sense making in implementing the policy.

The table shows the fragments of the framework that allowed deeper examination of the case study. The influence of the two Spillane et al frameworks allowed me to use the following elements to understand how moderation practice occurred in a school and a district.

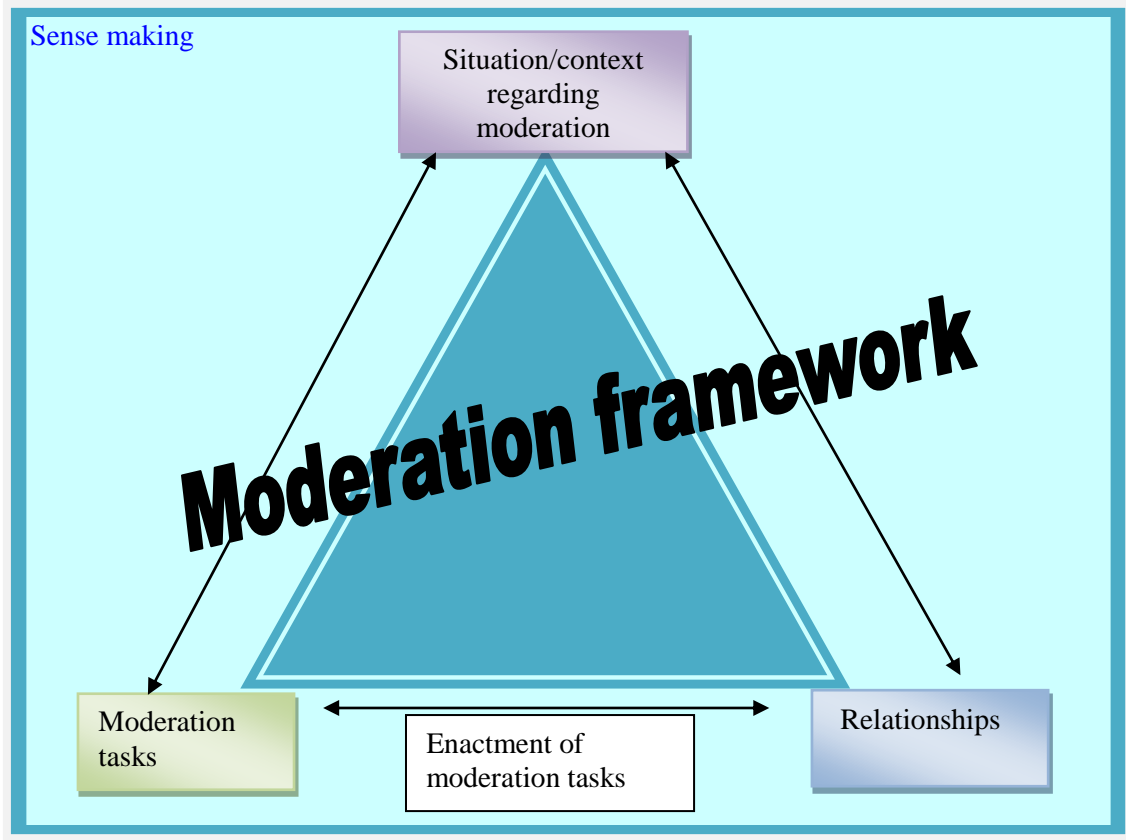
- Tasks associated with moderation
- Enactment of the tasks associated with moderation
- Sense making by individual implementers of the tasks
- Relationships associated with the implementation of the tasks
- Artefacts related to the tasks and their implementation

Table 6: Application of Spillane et al's frameworks

	Leadership framework	Implementation framework	Moderation framework
Tasks	Leadership tasks.	S E N S E M A K I N G	Individual cognition in understanding the task.
Enactment	How leadership tasks are enacted.		Individual cognition in terms of implementing the task.
Social	Relationships between leaders and followers.		Social enactment zones
Situation	Influence of context on leadership.		Context is important in implementation. Policy is an important stimulus in sense making.
			Moderation tasks
			How moderation policy is understood and implemented.
			Relationships involved in implementing moderation.
			How artefacts influence moderation practice.

From table 6, the following diagram was developed to illustrate the moderation framework for this study.

Fig 5: Conceptual framework for understanding moderation of assessment



Adapted from Spillane et al's conceptual frameworks for leadership (2004) and implementation (2002)

This framework conceptualising implementation of moderation focussed attention on tasks associated with moderation of assessment and their enactment, relationships and the context of the moderation as well as on cognition or sense making within the context of moderation policy take up.

The examination of context focused specifically on documentation as artefacts though other aspects of situation were also taken into account such as routines and time. Layered into the framework was the thread of cognition which focused attention on how understanding of policy and understanding among people influenced the take up of the policy.

The study drew on a 'top down' conceptual approach to trace the development of policy at national and provincial level and drew on a more 'bottom up' conceptual approach to generate a description of its interpretation and implementation at the level of the district and the school.

In the next section, the conceptual framework was adapted to form a tool for analysis. This tool or analytical framework was used to analyse the raw data from the field. This data included transcripts from interviews and also from observation of a moderation meeting.

The conceptual framework has directed the design of the study including the decision to utilise interviews and observation and it has also focused questions that were used in the interviews. The analysis of initial data differentiated three levels: the policy texts, the district and the school, as is reflected in table 7.

Table 7: Analytical framework for moderation practice

Moderation	Provincial Policy	Level of the district	Level of the School
Tasks	What tasks are specified in the policy?	What were the tasks regarding moderation at the level of the district?	What were the tasks regarding moderation at the level of the school?
Sense making	What sense making (individual, social and situational) is expected from the policy?	How do the role players in the district make sense of their roles in implementing moderation of assessment?	How do the role players in the school make sense of their roles in implementing moderation of assessment?
Enactment of tasks	Does the policy specify who should enact the policy and how the policy should be enacted?	How did the district implement the tasks associated with moderation?	How did the school implement the tasks associated with moderation?
Relationships	Which relationships are necessary for the policy to be implemented.	Which relationships are present at the level of the district regarding moderation of assessment?	Which relationships are present at the level of the school regarding moderation of assessment?
Artefacts	Which artefacts are specified by the policy?	What artefacts are found in the district?	What artefacts are found in the school?
Time	What timelines are specified in policy?	How does time affect the implementation of policy at the district?	How does time affect the implementation of policy at the school?

This chapter used the distributed leadership framework and implementation framework of Spillane et al in developing a moderation framework which in turn was used to produce an analytical framework for examining the moderation practice.

In the next chapter, which deals with the design and method, I discuss the context of the case study and how the research was undertaken and analysed.

CHAPTER 4

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In order to gain a meaningful understanding of how policy regarding the moderation of assessment was implemented and understood by the implementers, I sought to study this quality assurance element of assessment in a school and a district as a particular case study during a certain slice of time.

The conceptual framework for the research acted as a lens to focus the study in the direction of certain aspects of implementation. These included the tasks that needed to be completed for moderation, the relationships that were established during the moderation process and how engagement with each other occurred and also the artifacts significant to moderation specifically, documentation, time, support and expertise.

Overview of the chapter

The design strategy used in this study was informed by the moderation framework and various methods were used to generate data within the field of study. The foremost methods used for the production of data were interviews and observation. A secondary approach was scrutinising the actual policy documentation and artefacts. All the data was then analysed according to the analytical framework.

This chapter describes the approaches used to generate data and explains why the particular strategy employed interviews and observation. Further on into the chapter, I describe how the transcribed data as well as policy documentation was analysed. I then demonstrate how insights were drawn from this analysis.

Case study

The study adopts a case study approach. A case study is a research method where a particular context is studied in depth to gain an understanding of what happened in that context.

Yin (in Tellis, 1997) mentions that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical positions, not to populations. In no way do I claim that one can generalise the results of this study to other schools and districts. Instead, the study attempted to provide theoretical insight into the workings of the moderation at the particular school and a specific district meeting. Interviewing the district officials provided a general perspective of moderation in the district which made the case for the particular school and district moderation meeting stronger. This meant that the study identified ways in which the policy shifts as it is interpreted and implemented at different levels. This is a conceptual rather than an empirical contribution: it offers an explanation as to how the process worked, in this case.

Case studies generate multiple data sets to improve validity and establish a chain of evidence. Yin (1999) illustrates that one can source evidence from documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. Yin (in Tellis, 1997) suggests that the 'rationale for using multiple sources of data is the triangulation of evidence which increases the reliability of the data and the process of gathering it'. In this study, I used multiple sources of data from interviews, direct observation and artefacts. I analysed the 2002 moderation protocol and the 2005 moderation circular and also read other policy documents to broaden my understanding of the context. These other documents were the 1998, 2003 and 2007 national Assessment Policy documents and the National Curriculum Statement for Natural Sciences. I also examined correspondence from the district office such as the letter to schools inviting them to the moderation meeting, the agenda of the district meeting, the assessment policy document of the school and the moderation tools used during the moderation meeting. I interviewed all the school officials as well as district officials directly involved

in the grade 9 Natural Sciences moderation process and observed a district moderation meeting.

Context of the school

I selected the school that had been identified as the most improved school in the country during a particular three year period as the site of my research. This national award had been determined on the basis of their Senior Certificate results and my thinking at the time was that, although I wanted to study moderation in a disadvantaged school, I also wanted a school that was more likely to implement the policy regarding moderation. A school that was successful over a particular period of time would be more likely to have implemented new policy than schools that were not as successful. I was interested in the factors that shape implementation in a disadvantaged school but did not want the description to be dominated by factors that characterise dysfunctional schools. At the time, I felt that a disadvantaged school that had management systems in place would afford me a better vantage point from which to view the process of moderation unfolding at their school than would be the case at a dysfunctional school.

This school was well managed, had good resources and was organised in terms of their administration. The school had 23 classrooms, two laboratories, a Home Economics room and a library. They had 1050 learners and 33 teachers including two deputy principals and the principal.

Selection of subject

Grade 9 has eight learning areas in total. I only selected one of them, Natural Sciences, as a case since the moderation policy and processes of moderation applied in the same way to all learning areas. For practical purposes, I would not have had sufficient time to interview in more learning areas nor attend their moderation meetings. Time was thus a limiting factor in this study. However, the purpose of the study could be adequately achieved by focusing moderation within a single subject as a case.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with those in leadership positions and then with those that were directly responsible for the tasks related to moderation of assessment.

All in all, interviews were conducted with the deputy principal, the head of department (HOD) for Science, the teacher leader of Natural Sciences in grade 9, another teacher in grade 9 and the grade 9 internal moderator of assessments at the school.

The deputy principal was interviewed as she was responsible for management and communication of moderation policy at the school. The HOD was responsible for the subject and for leadership in the department. The teachers that taught grade nine Natural Science were directly involved in the moderation since they had to develop the assessment tasks, conduct the tasks and mark them. It was their work that was under scrutiny in terms of studying implementation of moderation. The teacher moderator, as the actual person who would conduct the moderation, was also an important role player in the implementation story.

Interviews were also conducted with the district Curriculum Adviser for Natural Sciences as well as the Assessment Co-ordinator from the district. These two officials were interviewed as they provided the district perspective on the policy uptake as well as providing perspective on how moderation happened in their district. These two district officials were also interviewed to provide a more holistic perspective on what was happening in the school and the district with regard to moderation of assessment in relation to the policy that the province had promulgated.

My own experience at a school, within a district and as an official at the Head Office of the Department of Education in the Western Cape province of South Africa enabled me to know who to interview and what to ask each of these different role players.

I prepared a set of questions for the various officials as a way of focusing the discussion with them. The conceptual framework led me to focus the questions on tasks and the enactment of the moderation tasks, the relationships associated with moderation and the teachers' understanding of moderation as well as the artefacts of moderation. During the course of writing this dissertation, the conceptual framework was altered slightly to shift from a stronger emphasis on leadership toward the implementation of moderation policy by a school and district. This shift during the writing of the dissertation meant that the original data from interviews needed to be adapted for the purposes of analysis. Questions that were used for the analysis are depicted in the Appendix.

During the interviews, my style was to use a probing approach that engaged the person being interviewed. Thus, additional questions were added spontaneously during the interview in order to probe the teacher's understanding of particular issues.

The interviews with the school personnel took place at the school. The interview with the Natural Sciences teacher, the HOD and the moderator of the grade 9 Natural Sciences took place in the tiny office of the HOD while the interview with the Natural Sciences Adviser and the Assessment Co-ordinator took place in an office at the Head Office of the WCED. I arranged the interviews prior to the date of the actual interview with the interviewees who all consented readily to being interviewed. The interviews were recorded on cassette tape using a tape recording device and I also wrote notes as the interview proceeded. The taping process went very well except in one case when the electricity went out in the school and I was unable to record the interview with the HOD. I then had to resort to writing the responses down as they were provided by the HOD.

As a provincial official of the WCED, I knew that the school would be invited to a district moderation meeting. Thus, after selecting the particular school, it followed that I would also study their particular district as part of the design since the school would be involved in that district's moderation meetings.

Observing a moderation meeting at the district

The district conducted several moderation meetings for their schools. I chose the one which dealt with Natural Sciences and which was supposed to include the school that I had worked with regarding this study. This provided an opportunity to study implementation of policy as it was being enacted.

Arrangements were made with the curriculum adviser to attend her moderation meeting and I planned to record the meeting and take notes of the meeting itself.

The observation of the cluster moderation meeting was set up by initial contact with the district leader of moderation (she dealt with the logistical aspects of these meetings which were quite substantial as they entailed setting up the venues and communication for all subjects in grade 12 as well as all eight learning areas for grade 9.) These are the only two grades where external moderation is mandatory in accordance with policy which was also supposed to be quality assured by Umalusi.

I arrived at the moderation meeting with a tape recorder but since there was no electricity in the room that was initially set up by the adviser, she moved the session to another room where the electricity was indeed working. Here the tables were not arranged in the manner that she had initially set up in the initial Natural Sciences room but she proceeded with her meeting nonetheless. I sat on the side of the room where I was able to observe the proceedings as well as tape what was possible. If the meeting had been a round table meeting with one person talking at a time, a single tape recorder would have been ideal. In this case, the tape recorder was useful in recording the curriculum adviser's presentation as well as some of the group interactions.

Besides observing the social interaction between adviser and teachers or between teachers and teachers, I also examined the written artefacts present in the meeting. These included district documentation as well as the actual learner material.

Development of the study

The study developed along the lines of:

- ❖ What did policy specify regarding tasks, relationships and artefacts regarding moderation of assessment?
- ❖ What were the tasks associated with moderation at the school and district?
- ❖ How were these tasks understood by the implementers at the school and districts?
- ❖ How were tasks associated with moderation enacted at these levels – school and district?
- ❖ What relationships regarding moderation were evident at these levels – school and district?
- ❖ What were the artifacts associated with moderation at these levels – school and district?

Planning and preparation

Based on the conceptual framework which required identification of the tasks of moderation, how the tasks were enacted, what relationships were necessary for the enactment of the tasks, what sense making the implementers had to undergo and what the artifacts associated with moderation were, I chose interviews and observation as the primary approaches for data generation.

Interviews enabled me to generate data from people that had firsthand knowledge of the context being studied. Interviews were also used to gauge the understanding of the participants in a particular situation.

The 2005 circular regarding the moderation process entailed three district moderation meetings during the year. The first meeting was a standard setting meeting at which feedback from the previous year's assessment was provided to the teachers and also where the work for the year was defined. The second meeting was a meeting at which part of the items of the learner portfolios would be moderated. The third meeting was the one in which the remaining items within the learner portfolios were moderated, the CTA was moderated and final mark sheets were completed. Due to my own work situation, I was

only however able to observe the final district moderation meeting. Time prevented me from attending all the three meetings but the meeting that I attended was the one where there was a greater chance of actually observing moderation in action. The ⁵Natural Sciences Curriculum Adviser had revealed in his interview that few teachers actually attended the middle meeting and the first meeting was a feedback meeting from the district to the schools. Attending this final moderation meeting allowed me to observe the process in action as well as see some of the actual artefacts in use.

One cannot discount that observations on their own would not be realistic in providing the necessary insights in terms of moderation or any other implementation. As Timperley (2005) limited her research to observing one meeting and then followed it up with interviews, I have also observed and recorded one meeting while interviewing all the relevant role players at various levels of implementation. I felt that interviews were extremely useful as they provide important insights into moderation activities that did not happen at the school or that took place informally. This is especially important as many encounters in school occur incidentally, as Timperley (2005) has also remarked. These encounters occur in the corridors, in staff rooms, outside of school etc. The meetings are brief and usually deal with transfer of information of what happened at a cluster meeting or possibly what was required from the particular teacher.

Data production and sources of data

The following table depicts the data production strategies that were used to generate data sets. For each strategy, there is a corresponding source of data e.g. for observations, the source of data was the district meeting. Within this meeting, there were many micro-sources for data collection based upon the thrust of the conceptual framework of this study e.g. there were tasks that had to be fulfilled in terms of the agenda of the meeting, one could observe how these were actually enacted; there were relationships between the adviser and the teachers and then between the teachers themselves; finally there

⁵ The Natural Sciences learning area was chosen as a focus area in which to study moderation as explained on the next page.

were the artefacts that were on display including the register, the tools that were used by the teachers, the actual portfolios of the learners and teachers and other administrative documentation.

I have also included an analytical focus which provides reasons for particular interviews e.g. the school principal and the HOD would have been interviewed as I wanted to understand the tasks and sense-making of the school leadership in moderation and their relationship with the actual moderators and teachers.

Table 8: Explanation of design strategies, data sets and analytical foci

Strategies for data collection	Sources of data	Analytical focus
Studying documents	Moderation Policy (2002) WCED Circular 0012/2005	To determine what was expected of schools and districts in terms of moderation tasks, relationships, sense-making and artifacts prior to and after the Umalusi directives. To investigate what moderation tasks, relationships, sense-making and artifacts are mentioned in the national assessment policies.
Observation	District meeting	To observe the district moderation meeting in action to view how moderation tasks were actually enacted, what relationships were observed and which artifacts were actually used in the meeting. Discussions during the meeting would assist in determining the sense-making that was apparent in the meeting.
Interviews	School: Principal HOD Teacher (assessor) Teacher (moderator) District: Curriculum Adviser Assessment coordinator	To determine management's role in moderation tasks, sense-making regarding the enactment of the tasks and their relationships with the moderators and teachers. To determine the tasks of moderation in the school, how they were enacted, sense-making of the teacher implementers, their relationships in enacting moderation of assessment and the artifacts that they used for moderation. To determine the District sense-making of the WCED moderation process.

Recording and transcription of data

Recordings were made for the interviews with the three teachers directly involved in the moderation process and the two district officials while hand written notes were taken for the interviews with the deputy principal and the HOD. The value of the interviewing was very important in this research as it provided insight into the sense-making of implementers of moderation.

I transcribed the tape recordings at home which allowed me to reflect on the implementation of the policy in terms of the lens of my conceptual framework.

My general feeling during the interviews was that teachers and officials were not afraid of speaking about the issues and I am confident that the data received from them portrayed an accurate reflection of what had transpired in their school and district. Even though I was a Head Office official, I had emphasised to both teachers and district officials that this was a UCT research project for my studies and thus their names would not be used. I requested the teachers to see me in my student capacity. I spent several days at the school and I feel that I was seen less as a departmental person and more as a student. The general disposition during the interviews was relaxed and open, allowing for transparent engagement with the school officials. Similarly, the departmental officials were encouraged to see me in my student capacity which they were easily able to do since all of us have done some post graduate studies where we would have engaged in some research. The data will show that the school and district officials were comfortable enough to criticise policy and even admit to several incidences of non-compliance which indicated to me that I could trust what was being said. I also felt that it was important to interview multiple role players in the school and district which provided greater perspective on both their practice and sense making.

Selection and analysis of the policy documentation

The study of the Department of Education's policy documentation was conducted by reading the documents in relation to the conceptual framework. This meant that these policy documents - the national policy and the WCED circulars - were interrogated by shining the conceptual framework onto them

and examining what they espoused regarding tasks, relationships and artefacts with respect to moderation of assessment.

The specific documents that were analysed were the 2002 Moderation Policy document of the WCED and Circular 0012/2005 which instructed schools on the process for moderation. These documents were selected as they were the WCED documents sent to schools and districts that contained the policy regarding the implementation of moderation.

Analysis

The analytical framework was used to interrogate the provincial policy documents as well as the data collected during the field work.

Using a tabular approach with headings underpinned by the analytical framework (e.g. tasks, enactment of task, relationships, artefacts and sense-making), policy documents, raw data from the transcripts of recordings from a grade 9 Natural Sciences cluster moderation meeting as well as from interviews conducted with officials from the school and district were interrogated. The specific interview transcripts were derived from interviews with the Natural Sciences teacher leader, the Natural Sciences moderator at the school, the district Assessment Co-ordinator and the Natural Sciences Curriculum Adviser.

In this way, I identified primary insights that were then used as foci for analysing the data once more in an attempt to deepen the insight. This method drew out the descriptions of what had happened in a focused and ordered manner. It provided the path for themes to be developed and insights to emerge. Besides shining the analytical tool onto the data gathered by means of interview or observation, the tool was also used to interrogate actual policy documents themselves.

The slice across the different levels of implementation was important to understand. These levels included the policy at the level of the province, the cluster meeting at the level of the district and the internal moderation process at the school.

Validity

Maxwell (1992) defines five types of validity that would be associated with qualitative research. Maxwell indicates that *descriptive validity* deals with the factual accuracy of the study, *interpretive validity* is associated with the participant's perspective, *theoretical validity* deals with the theoretical constructs the researcher brings to the study or develops during the study, *generalizability* refers to the extent that one can extend the study to other people, time and situations while '*evaluative validity* involves the application of an evaluative framework to the objects of study' (1992:295).

Maxwell mentions that 'validity is not an inherent property of a particular method but pertains to the data, accounts and conclusions reached by using that method in a particular context for a particular purpose' (1992:284). For the researcher to justify the study in terms of validity, it is important that the method used in the study must be appropriate for the context and purpose of the study. In terms of descriptive validity, Maxwell mentions that a tape recording of the proceedings of the study could be used to check if actual statements were indeed made as reported by the researcher. In my study, I made tape recordings of almost all the interviews - the only interview of significance without a tape recording was the one conducted with the HOD of Natural Sciences. This interview was however documented through notes taken of the conversation between the HOD and myself.

According to Maxwell (1992), *interpretive validity* pertains to the aspects that are emic - where behaviours or beliefs that are meaningful to the participant are taken into account. In my study, the transcripts provide the actual participants' perspectives in their own words and I have used this specifically in my analysis. Interpretive work lays greater emphasis on validity than reliability since there is a focus on understanding a phenomenon within its unique context rather than on 'repeatability' of the data production process. ..

In terms of *theoretical validity*, I have developed a conceptual framework for the study based on Spillane et al's theories and applied this framework directly into the method and analysis. Using the analytical framework, I linked the raw data to the conceptual framework using my experience and

understanding of the processes that I had observed and which I had engaged in.

Limitations and challenges

Within this study, there were notable challenges - the unavailability of staff on days when I was able to visit the schools, my own busy schedule and a lack of formalised structure to the process of moderation in the school. I felt that it was necessary to obtain greater data from the school as well as from the district office than from other levels. This decision was made on the basis of an initial understanding that the actual practice of moderation happens at school level and cluster level. These are the two levels where moderation was expected to be enacted.

In recording the cluster meeting of the district, I experienced challenges as teachers communicated in isiXhosa which I was not able to follow. To alleviate this problem, I interviewed some of the teachers so as to gain their first hand perspective as the process of moderation unfolded.

Time was often a limiting factor within the context of the research as my own availability did not always correspond with the meeting times or availability of the people that I wished to interview.

A further challenge presented itself when the electricity was turned off unexpectedly at the school while I was busy interviewing the Natural Sciences Head of Department. I resorted to taking hand written notes which, although providing an accurate reflection of the interviewee's input, was not as comprehensive as a transcribed recording. For the other interviews, recorded notes were transcribed and provided better raw data than did the hand written notes. Recording also allowed the interview to flow more freely, allow better eye contact as well as relax myself and interviewee.

Critique of methodology

Limitations in this method was the fact that I was unable to actually observe any internal school moderation taking place during my limited time at the school.

At the school the main data production strategy was interviewing and I thus relied more on the testimony of the role players in the school to provide a perspective on how moderation had been conducted at the school.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Moderation is a quality assurance activity that is prescribed by national policy and directed by the quality assurance agency, Umalusi. What does policy regarding moderation ask of implementers and how do implementers understand and implement the policy? This question is one that shrouds this study regarding moderation policy and how it has been understood and implemented at district and school level.

In this chapter, I provide the findings that I obtained by shining the analytical framework for moderation practice on policies of the WCED regarding moderation, on a district organised cluster moderation meeting and on transcripts of interviews conducted with district officials and school officials. The chapter thus looks at the trio of **policy from the provincial level, implementation of the policy at district level and school level implementation** with respect to the elements of the analytical framework - moderation tasks, enactment of these moderation tasks, relationships within the realm of moderation, artefacts involved in moderation and the critical aspect of sense making in moderation. Later in the chapter, I identify a set of insights that have emerged from this analysis.

In the next part of this chapter, I look at the two policies driving moderation in the province, the Moderation Policy of 2002 and the circular 0012 of 2005.

Policy regarding moderation

Spillane et al indicate:

policymakers' intentions, or the spirit of the policy, are important even if these are not always clear. The notion of intent, or spirit, is meant to suggest that policy texts represent ideas about reforming practice and that we can analyse policy to see if it was understood as it was intended. (2002:420)

Policies relevant to moderation in terms of the slice of time when this research study was undertaken include the national assessment policies of 1998 and 2003, the draft Umalusi directive (Policy for Quality Assurance of Assessment for the GETC and FETC) of 2004, the WCED circular 0012/2005 and the overall Moderation Protocol and Policy of the Western Cape Education Department of 2002. Since the schools would only have had access to the latter two policies, these are the only ones that I have focused on for the purposes of analysis in this study.

I chose to place this study within the learning area, Natural Sciences, as I had previously taught Natural Sciences at a school. Natural Sciences is one of eight learning areas offered in grade 9 and was chosen as an example of the system. I have focused on the cluster moderation approach as this was the method of moderation adopted in Natural Sciences. There were subjects that had face moderation, oral moderation and practical moderation but I have not examined these methods in this study as it did not apply to the Natural Sciences in grade 9.

In the following section, I examine and compare the texts of the two policy documents in terms of the analytical framework – thus looking at the tasks specified in the documents, the relationships mentioned and artefacts indicated. No mention is made regarding enactment since this exercise was an examination of the text of the policies themselves.

Tasks regarding moderation

The WCED released circular 0012/2005 after discussions with Umalusi in 2004 regarding their quality assurance model. My interest in circular 0012/2005 was whether implementation happened as stipulated and within the spirit of that policy. How did moderation actually happen during that time?

The general approach of the 2002 moderation protocol was different from that of circular 0012 of 2005. Whereas the moderation protocol reflected a developmental approach, circular 0012/2005 placed a greater emphasis on

compliance. The following section compares the two policies with regard to particular features.

Planning for moderation

The Moderation Protocol (2002) specifies that moderators needed to plan and prepare for moderation. This entailed that they had to check their assessment instruments to determine their appropriateness, they had to monitor the assessment processes, they had to check evidence of the candidate's work and they needed to check the decisions of the teachers for consistency.

Circular 0012/2005 on the other hand specified that districts and schools needed to demonstrate compliance with moderation processes to meet quality assurance and support requirements. The circular informs schools and districts that the WCED is required by Umalusi to provide certain guarantees regarding the moderation and quality control of continuous assessment (CASS). The purpose of moderation was indicated as providing protection for integrity of the examinations and the learners. It stipulates that the quality assurance exercise must be carried out in full at both grade 9 and grade 12 levels.

Whereas the protocol focused on specific planning activities for moderators, the circular emphasises quality assurance and quality control in an attempt to demonstrate compliance.

District moderation meetings

The Moderation Protocol (2002) mentions that there should be a number of meetings for teachers during the year to enable all the details regarding the methods to be used for a particular subject to be known and agreed upon before evaluations are conducted. The district model entailed on-going developmental moderation meetings and a final cluster moderation meeting. The protocol specifies that cluster moderation will generally be used for the developmental meetings in which educators would gather together with a group of portfolios and where 'moderation is based on group evaluation and discussion and managed on a consensus basis' (2002:9).

Circular 0012/2005 states that the district will conduct three moderation cluster meetings for each subject/learning area. Additional meetings were at the discretion of the curriculum advisers in the districts. The circular provides details regarding the processes to be followed in each of the three meetings. It mentions that schools that are non-compliant will receive site-based support.

The structure of the system changed from organising developmental meetings managed on a consensus basis as indicated in the protocol to a three meeting process in which there was greater discretion placed on the district officials in terms of supporting non-compliant schools as indicated in the circular.

Tasks for district meetings during the year

The approach to moderation in the 2002 Moderation Protocol indicates a *'series of developmental meetings in which educators bring portfolios for display and general observations'* (2002:14). It furthermore mentions that *'joint marking or standard setting exercises'* (2002:14) will take place. The protocol states that *'by the time of the final moderation meeting, internal moderation and ongoing developmental cluster moderation should have ensured a degree of standardisation and quality assurance'* (2002:14).

Circular 0012/2005 indicates that standard setting should be done at the first meeting of the year when *'the details of what is to be moderated at meeting 2 will be defined by each subject'* (2005:2). In meeting 2, it was envisaged that *'between 50% - 80% of the year's work should be fully moderated'* (2005:2) while the *'balance of the portfolio will be moderated'* (2005:2) in meeting 3.

There is no mention of joint marking, as in the protocol, but a greater emphasis on compliance: the *'school principals are specifically asked to ensure compliance with this moderation model for 2005'* (2005:3)

Tasks for the final district moderation meeting

The Moderation Protocol (2002) indicates the following tasks for the final meeting:

Districts had to inform schools of the date and venue for the final meeting. They had to invite at least one teacher per school and select 15% of the total learner portfolios for this final moderation meeting. The following is mentioned in terms of the process to be conducted at the final moderation meeting:

one full learner portfolio from the cluster will be photocopied for group assessment. This would allow a consensus decision about how marks will be reached. Other portfolios will be distributed and assessed. Each portfolio should have been studied by at least 3 teachers who will have commented on separate pages. Further discussion and consensus reaching processes will ensue. (WCED Moderation Protocol, 2002:15)

Circular 0012/2005 provides the following information regarding the final cluster meeting:

The balance of the moderation that had not been completed in the second meeting would be moderated during the final meeting. The learner and teacher portfolios would be scanned for compliance and the totals would be checked. (2005:2)

The spirit in the protocol by specifying the use of a 'common portfolio' and 'each portfolio ... studied by at least 3 teachers' suggested that it promoted greater collaboration and consensus driven decisions. On the other hand, the circular focuses on ensuring that moderation of portfolios is completed and '*learner and teacher portfolios scanned for compliance*'.

School moderation tasks

In terms of the schools, the 2002 Moderation Protocol specifies that the school must have acceptable assessment and moderation criteria developed for each subject for the CASS. Schools needed to appoint senior staff such as subject heads or HODs to moderate the assessment of educators. There should be a record of the marks of the learners and the portfolios must be stored safely. School also needed to have an internal moderation policy. The protocol also provides guidance on the management of mark sheets where they specify the following:

- Educators need to provide the marks on class lists as per the CASS guideline document.
- The adviser or moderator moderates the school based assessment either on site, by distance (at the office) or by cluster moderation.
- The educator completes the computer data sheet, checks the totals for accuracy and signs the data sheet.
- The principal signs the data sheet and submits the sheet to the curriculum adviser at the district office.
- The adviser signs the sheet indicating that the necessary quality control has been effected.
- The forms are then submitted to the district assessment co-ordinator who checks the forms for all the subjects and learning areas in grades 12 and 9 respectively and then submits them to the Head Office for data capturing.

Circular 0012/2005 mentions that quality assurance must occur at both grade 9 and 12 levels. It indicates that the moderation system depends on a fully functional internal moderation system operating within the school itself. This entails there must be planning at all levels in the school and that all parties are part of the development of common standards. School principals are requested to ensure that there is compliance with the 2005 moderation model.

In terms of school moderation, the Moderation Protocol indicates that formal leaders should lead moderation at the school and provides a checklist of activities that the school needs to undertake in preparation for cluster moderation meetings. It also encourages the development of a school moderation policy. The circular also encourages an internal moderation system that includes planning and development of common standards. From this, it appears that the focus of the protocol was on comparability of schools in the district hence the emphasis on consensus and common district standards whereas the circular placed the focus of activity at the level of school and expected principals to ensure compliance in developing common standards at school.

If one looks at moderation policy before and after the draft directive from Umalusi in 2004, it shows how the more developmental Moderation Protocol was superseded by the compliance seeking circular which stressed an accountability approach.

The next section looks at relationships associated with moderation as espoused by the policies.

Relationships regarding moderation

Both the Moderation Protocol and circular 0012/2005 specified that the cluster moderation approach would be the preferred mode for the moderation process though face to face moderation would still be done for certain subjects with practical and oral components. The district moderation meetings as specified by the policies are set up in a way that will facilitate collaboration or an enactment zone.

The Moderation Protocol mentions that '*moderation methods will include face moderation and cluster moderation*' (2002:4). The Moderation Protocol elaborates on the cluster moderation:

Employment of this model is a well-known mechanism for human resource development, standard setting, stimulating collegiality and assisting in the establishment of a quality assurance system. Educators in a cluster will be able to create a shared understanding of standards and assessment requirements in a collegial environment (2002:4). The cluster moderation meeting will be managed by the Curriculum Advisers, circuit managers or other officials or educators where necessary (2002:9).

The WCED circular of 2005 also promoted a spirit of sharing and collaboration when they indicate '*the sharing model promotes growth*' and '*teachers explore tasks across the whole cluster*' (2005:2).

Artefacts in moderation

The 2002 Moderation Protocol of the WCED indicates that an important artefact for moderation was the assessment instrument such as the rubric, memorandum or observation sheet etc. The circular 0012/2005 from the WCED mentions that a guideline document to support schools in developing assessment plans was to be supplied to schools. Further artefacts indicated in both policy documents included learner portfolios and teacher portfolios. The Moderation Protocol also provided detailed information regarding the artefacts that needed to be brought to the final moderation meeting:

- 15% of the school's total sample of learner portfolios had to be brought to the meeting although it indicated that the official need was 10% with the remainder to be brought in case of queries.
- A full set of educator portfolios had to be supplied.
- Sets of attendance records
- Class lists with all the required totals, as per learning area specifications.
- Portfolio assessment criteria

The protocol has greater detail about the type of artefacts that were expected to be presented at a cluster moderation meeting. Since the circular was a shorter document, these details are assumed and the major items needed for compliance with policy are emphasised e.g. learner and teacher portfolios.

Time in moderation

The Moderation Protocol of 2002 indicates that the internal moderation process must be conducted from January to November. Circular 0012/2005 specifies that the first moderation cluster meeting should be in term 1, the second meeting in term 2 or 3 and the final meeting in term 4. There was thus more time available for cluster moderation before the implementation of circular 0012/2005.

In the next section of this chapter, I examine moderation within the district and specifically at a grade 9 Natural Sciences cluster moderation meeting that I observed.

District level implementation of moderation

Moderation at district level was confined to three moderation meetings per year after the implementation of circular 0012/2005. I only attended a final district cluster moderation meeting and interviewed district officials that were directly involved in the moderation process who provided me with information on the other two meetings. The first meeting was mostly a feedback meeting and the Curriculum Adviser informed me that attendance at the second meeting was generally poor. I attended the third meeting and was able to observe moderation practice in action.

Tasks regarding moderation

Tasks for the cluster moderation meeting may be related to planning and preparation prior to the meeting and to the conduct of the meeting.

Tasks in preparation for the final district moderation meeting

In order to facilitate the moderation policy, the district office invited schools via a letter to the final moderation meeting. The schools in the district that I studied were divided into five groups or clusters based on their geographical proximity to one another. Each cluster of schools were invited on a particular day to the district office where the learning area curriculum advisers managed the cluster moderation meeting for their learning area.

Teachers were to attend a cluster meeting from 14:00 to 17:00 on dates indicated on a timetable that was supplied with this notice. The letter that was sent to schools in the district by the Senior Phase co-ordinator of the district office stated that the moderation process is underpinned by the Moderation Protocol.

The district letter indicated several micro tasks, that the school needed to fulfill in preparation for the final moderation meeting, in their communiqué to schools.

The cluster moderation meeting would include moderation of continuous assessment (CASS) as well as moderation of the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA). Principals had to supply their timetables for implementation of the CTA and a letter stating that internal moderation had

indeed taken place at the school. They were also instructed to ensure that all teacher portfolios, samples of learner portfolios, CASS mark sheets (official computerised departmental sheets) and a grade 9 CD, which is unique in the WCED, were completed.

Tasks required during the final moderation meeting

During the course of the meeting, the curriculum adviser indicated the tasks that needed to be conducted during the meeting, including signing the register, submitting a teacher's portfolio for each teacher in the grade, submitting 12 learner portfolios and handing in a letter from the principal stating whether internal moderation had been carried out. She also requested that teachers work in pairs so that they moderate each other's portfolios. The teachers were instructed to use the two checklists provided to moderate the CASS items in the teacher's portfolio, to select one portfolio from each of the three different groups of learner portfolios and to mark the learner portfolio using a green pen, or a black pen if internal moderation has taken place at the school. The teachers were requested to complete the two different checklists, one of which would be provided to the school whose portfolio has been moderated and the second checklist would be handed in to the district office. Finally she requested that they moderate specifically identified tasks from the CTA and complete a moderation checklist for the moderation of the CTA.

The district letter and the presentation of the CA both focused on ensuring that schools complied with the necessary requirements for moderation. The message of the letter, the structure of the meeting, the forms used in the meeting and the approach of the CA all focused on compliance.

According to Spillane et al (2004), in order to analyse practice, '*it is necessary to move beyond the identification and analysis of tasks to explore their enactment*' (2004:14). The next section describes how the moderation tasks were enacted during the cluster meeting.

Sense making in moderation at the district

In this section, the aspect of sense making is discussed based on the interviews conducted at the cluster moderation meeting and also with the AC as well as with a CA for Natural Sciences.

Enactment zones

This meeting may be described as an 'enactment zone' since it offered some opportunity for teachers to work beyond their roles as individuals. There were instances for one teacher to learn from another and thereby improve their knowledge or understanding e.g. when one teacher was able to explain to another about translation activities. Another instance was when a teacher was able to demonstrate to her colleague that one could override a memorandum if the answer provided by the learner was plausible in terms of the question that was asked. These opportunities for engagement were however limited in this meeting.

Generally, teachers used the moderation tools and were directed to work as individuals.

Experts and novices

Spillane et al argue:

A major factor in the mechanism used to access knowledge is the degree of sophistication in that knowledge. With developing expertise in a domain, one builds knowledge structures (schemas) that encompass more diverse cases and are organised around deeper principles. Experts can see deeper meaningful patterns in problem situations that may not be apparent to novice (2002:396).

The WCED circular 0012/2005 echoed the thinking of Spillane et al that it would be preferable for a subject head or learning area head (*expert*) to be present at the cluster moderation meetings. Generally, the educators present at the moderation meeting were post level 1 teachers who were not subject heads either.

Teachers generally appeared to have sufficient expertise to conduct the moderation based upon the memoranda provided in this cluster meeting. This may also be a reflection of the tasks themselves which were quite simple. Some teachers had greater levels of expertise than others and were able to assist each other with understanding of the task. Since Natural Sciences include Physical Sciences, Geography and Biology topics, not all of the teachers are totally comfortable with every aspect of the learning area.

Generally, formal heads of the learning area were not present which meant that there was not much opportunity in this meeting to build their *schemas*. The tasks were simple and so did not provide opportunities for developing deeper understandings.

Perspectives of district officials from their interviews

The two district officials that were separately interviewed were the Assessment Co-ordinator (AC) and the Curriculum Adviser (CA). They illustrated a grasp of the three meeting moderation process indicated in circular 0012/2005.

The Assessment Co-ordinator (AC) mentioned that the first meeting was a standard setting session conducted at the beginning of the year. She said that this “*meeting was for planning*” while the CA said that the first meeting was where “*you unpack indicators for teacher – for quality, for tasks and level distribution so teachers would know what to incorporate into the learner’s portfolio, especially for those promotion tasks*”

The AC indicated that the second meeting was “*to monitor and check the pace for the people who are lagging behind and to support these people*”. Similarly, the CA understood the second meeting to be for support.

The CA mentioned that the final meeting was a “*verification process where one looks at an administration of the moderation process – looking at different aspects of the learner’s portfolios ... from the portfolio to the mark sheets where they transcribe the marks*”. This is true of the grade 12 process in the past but as can be seen from the enactment of the grade 9 moderation

meeting, actual moderation of both CASS and CTA took place in the final moderation meeting.

The CA said that the first time that the district officials were told of this three meeting process, there was “*a lot of debate around why it is now three meetings*”. He said that they were told that costs and teachers being called for too many meetings were provided as reasons why the number of meetings was restricted to three. He questioned how much support could be provided in two hours. He also was critical of the cluster model since it meant that groups of teachers with varying skills, abilities and knowledge were together in a meeting. He said that “*we found it much more valuable when we did school visits where we engaged with the teachers right there in the classroom but because this was provincial policy, we had to do it and it was a futile exercise*”.

The two officials lamented the time afforded for the activity of moderation but mentioned that independent teacher moderation sessions had taken place and these were conducted in a more relaxed and sharing approach. The Assessment Co-ordinator indicated that teachers would only open up to each other if they felt that the environment was safe, something that the formal moderation meeting did not appear to provide.

The AC explained:

People understand moderation as looking at the question paper, checking marks, looking at the answer sheet of learner and see whether the marks were allocated according to the memorandum. Moderation is more than that. I need to look at whether I'm addressing the Assessment Standards by a particular task. I look at the assessment instrument in terms of skills and knowledge embedded in the assessment standards.

She also mentioned that the instrument should be checked in terms of its target, in terms of validity, reliability and transparency.

These officials had a good understanding of the overall process of moderation and were able to name the artefacts that were present in moderation

meetings. The CA appeared to be critical of the process in terms of whether policy will be achieved. He harked back to older policy and practice in his criticism of the new approaches of moderation.

The following section examines the third tier of analysis which involves implementation of moderation at the level of the school.

Enactment of moderation tasks

The following describes enactment at the final of three moderation meetings in the learning area, Natural Sciences, at a district office.

Leader and followers

At the moderation meeting that I observed and recorded, the curriculum adviser arranged the room and prepared the documentation that she delivered at the meeting. She explained the moderation procedures in great detail before allowing the cluster moderation to proceed. She especially went step by step through the first moderation tool and explained what was meant by each question. She referred the teachers to the second checklist and indicated to them that this one had to be handed to her once completed.

The meeting followed the following pattern: the teachers all signed the register which was kept at the table in the front, the CA introduced the agenda and followed the agenda in conducting the meeting. She provided some motivational material to the teachers, and explained the questions in the moderation tools. In the second part of the moderation meeting, the teachers conducted moderation of the CASS by marking the portfolios and completing the two checklists. They remarked the learner portfolios using the assessment tools/memoranda in the teacher portfolios that accompanied the learner portfolios.

The CA collected the necessary administrative documents from the teachers present and allowed the teachers to moderate the learner portfolios that had been brought to the meeting.

The CA dominated most of the meeting where she explained the checklist in detail to the teachers and did not allow much engagement with the teachers.

Partial fulfilment of policy requirements

Although policy intended that all Natural Sciences teacher portfolios from a school were present at the cluster moderation meeting, in reality, teachers only brought their own portfolios to the moderation meeting. Many teachers teach more than one learning area and thus may have attended another learning area where they also had to submit their portfolio. Teachers are reluctant to remove portfolio evidence and give them to another teacher of the school to hand in. Twelve learner portfolios had to be handed in per school and these twelve portfolios had to reflect the upper level of achievement, middle level of achievement and lower level of achievement. Thus, four learner portfolios per level were provided. This appeared to be done by the schools, though it was not clear in all cases whether all the portfolios were from one teacher at the school or that they reflected all the classes of all teachers at the school in a particular learning area.

In the case of the letter from the principal stating that internal moderation had taken place, some schools submitted these letters from the principal indicating that some sort of internal moderation had taken place. Some of the teachers indicated that they had not been informed that this artefact was supposed to be providing at the meeting. One teacher responded: "We received the letter to come to this meeting but we don't know of this letter (from the principal)". It is clear from this interaction that the letter was received but not all of its contents were read and followed.

The CA mentioned during the meeting that the moderation needed to be done in green pen if not previously moderated at the school or using a black pen if the school had already conducted internal moderation. I did not see any black pens being used so I generally assumed that internal moderation had not taken place in this cluster.

Curriculum Adviser's (CA) presentation at the district meeting

The CA explained the moderation procedure at length and utilised a series of questions that she then answered herself as an explanation for the teachers. She referred the teachers to a hand-out which also had a summarised version of the moderation procedure for the remaining CASS as well as for the moderation of the CTA. There was very little interaction from teachers during this part of the meeting. This was surprising as this was the third meeting between the adviser and the teachers that year in terms of the moderation process. The CA dominated the early part of the session with her presentation and then moved around the room providing individual support to teachers while she also engaged in moderation of learner portfolios.

The CA paired the schools that attended the meeting and asked them to moderate each other's work. She had a pre-constructed idea of who she would pair at the meeting but due to absenteeism and late-coming, she was forced to change tactic and construct new pairs. She named the schools that would pair up and also walked to the teachers gesturing to them which schools they will be working with.

This immediately allowed the re-organisation of the room to accommodate the pairs of teachers. The teachers moved their desks together at various points of the room based on the way that the CA has indicated which schools will be moderating each other's portfolios.

The CA explained the questions of the first checklist to the teachers, showing them this checklist which she had provided in a pack for each school. In the case of each question from the checklist, she asked what they were going to do. I expected some response from the teachers but the wait time from the CA was non-existent and no-one responded, resulting in all the questions being answered by the CA herself. E.g. *"Is there evidence of school based moderation? Whether the HOD or the Deputy Principal or the Principal moderated the work, the Natural Science work"*. In this particular response, she already placed the responsibility of the internal moderation at the feet of the formal leaders in the school. No allowance within her statement is made

for other teacher leaders to do this moderation even though the school that I studied had an ordinary teacher as their moderator.

Another question was “*Are the marks for the learners recorded?*” The CA responded immediately: “*Take the learners’ portfolio and look at the class list and see whether or not the teacher recorded that work*”. Here, the teacher moderator had to use a combination of artefacts to determine whether the marks have been recorded – there is also another question asking about the accuracy of the recording. The teacher’s portfolio contained the mark sheet whereas the learner’s portfolio has the activities with the original mark. The teachers therefore had to find each activity, obtain the mark for that activity and then determine whether that mark corresponded with the mark on the mark sheet for that learner as well as being appropriate for the particular assessment task.

A further question was “*comment on the tools in terms of standards and validity*”. Interestingly enough, this question that I thought was probably the most challenging was dealt with by the following “*Right, are you clear, are you with me?*” In this case, a teacher did respond “*Yes Ma’am*”. Thus when it came to questions that dealt with deeper issues than the more technical aspects of the moderation procedure, this was skimmed over by the CA e.g. “*were all the activities done by the grade 9 teachers*” *could easily be checked as could the aspect of “does the portfolio have all the five types of assessment” or “is the date given*”. The issues of standards and validity are ones that require greater professional judgement on behalf of the teachers and hence I would have expected more discussion on this point. At the same time, it may have been dealt with in a previous meeting hence the teacher’s response being affirmative when asked whether they were clear. None of the teachers stopped the CA at any point during her presentation even though she was asking questions all the time.

Later during the session, the CA returned to a question on the checklist about the activity being standardised and asked that the teachers “*check for the memos and levels, level A, level B and level C.*” In this case, I wondered if all

these teachers knew what she was talking about when she mentioned these levels.

There was also mention of the different types of assessment tasks used in Natural Sciences such as the project and translation activity. These two types of tasks appeared to challenge the teachers and learners the most and the CA provided a step by step procedure for undertaking the project including formation of the hypothesis, developing a plan of action, putting the plan into action, collecting the necessary data and analysing the data. In the case of the translation task, she explained that *“Translation tasks are when you have a picture and you translate the picture into words, so make sure you check that it is on standard. If it is not like that, not on standard then you comment because I know that lot of schools are struggling with the translation tasks.”*

There was no discussion on how one would determine whether the translation activity is ‘on standard’. The professional judgement of the teachers is therefore paramount in the decision making of standards in the case of the translation activity and project. As the moderation of the learners’ portfolios continued, there was less talk among the pairs and teachers engaged seriously in the process of marking.

During her presentation, the CA asked the teachers to complete the checklists honestly: *“If there is more than one teacher, and the teacher’s portfolio is not here, please say it is not here, even if it is your friend, please be honest and say it is not here”*. I thought that this was important as interviews with teachers had indicated that teachers were reluctant to be negative about their colleagues from other schools. The moderation process required the teachers to step away from their particular context and answer the questions objectively. By having national checklists and provincial tools, the system of cluster moderation is already standardised to the extent that most technical questions should be reliably answered.

There was not much interaction during the presentations by the CA. Her speed of delivery and approach, apparently mindful of time, directed the proceedings toward compliance more than capacity building since there was

no time allowed for engagement in a meaningful discussion. Complex issues such as standards were glossed over and not pursued.

Teacher moderation of assessment

After the presentation by the CA, teachers sat and talked in their pairs but since most of the chatter was in isiXhosa, I was unable to transcribe this data. Also, multiple conversations picked up on tape made it difficult to clearly determine what was being said. I thus had to interview some teachers as they were busy in their groups in order to determine what they were saying to one another. They confirmed that they were merely engaged in social interaction or clarification, and not in deep engagement of the process.

The teachers exchanged portfolios in their pairs and then proceeded to page through the portfolio, reading the contents and they appeared to gain a sense of what the portfolio was about before embarking on the task of completing the checklist which included questions related to the teacher's portfolio. One teacher mentioned that the conversation in the pair was for additional information or clarity: *"If I open up her portfolio and I may ask what do you mean here or how does this work"*. The teachers generally tended to answer the questions in a simplistic manner by answering yes or no to the questions.

The teachers then looked at the learner portfolios and proceeded to remark them using their green pens.

One teacher asked another about the assessment criteria that they had used to assess the learners which indicated to me that teachers are not yet comfortable with the assessment tools such as rubrics where criteria have to be spelt out and then utilised to make specific judgements on the evidence presented within the learner portfolio. I concluded that new methods and instruments of assessment had not yet been fully internalised by all the teachers.

The moderation meeting was able to lift the lid on assessment practice in the schools as well. Teachers used traditional memoranda for tests and

examinations which still dominate the assessments. Rubrics were developed to mark certain activities though these activities were not very common among this cluster. I noticed that there was very little evidence of rubrics being used among these teacher portfolios and the rubrics that were provided in certain activities had little or no level descriptors. The activities often only had the grid numbers that currently appears in the policy. This point was echoed by the CA when she mentioned in an interview that *“the only problem is with the assessment tool. You see the assessment tool is not standardised. I’m going to have workshops dealing with this aspect. They (the teachers) have a rubric where they only indicate 1, 2, 3, 4 so there’s no marks nor descriptions of the levels.”* In terms of internal moderation, the CA confirmed the point that the practice is generally confined to the internal moderation of the examinations without serious consideration for the other forms of assessment.

When one teacher moderator checked whether the marker had followed the memorandum, she discovered that a learner had expressed himself in a manner that was not exactly as displayed in the memorandum. According to the professional opinion of the moderator, the answer provided by the learner was valid. In this instance, the moderator applied what she deemed to be fair practice in accepting a learner’s response that was acceptable since it provided an answer that appears to be true in terms of meaning yet not one that utilises the same language structure as provided in the memorandum. In this case, language barriers may stretch to being a barrier for knowing words used in the scientific concepts. This is an important facet of moderation as well as basic assessment – applying the principle of fairness to the responses from the learner. Teachers first made sense of the learner portfolios before moderating them. They asked for clarity from one another and enacted the principle of fairness.

Practices at this meeting suggested that school assessment practice was still dominated by old traditional approaches to assessment. Where newer assessment instruments such as rubrics are used, they are simple tools without the complexity or depth of detailed descriptors.

Moderation of the Common Tasks for Assessment (CTA)

The CA gave the teachers instructions regarding the moderation of the CTA indicating that they only needed to moderate certain questions (1.2 and 2.3) as '*lots of schools received the CTA very late*'. She explained the alternative answers that could be used in 2.3 and also talked about positive marking which was important in my opinion as some teachers do not credit learners for certain steps done during the working out of a problem.

She further explained that a moderation checklist had to be completed both by the school whose CTA is being moderated and the moderator themselves. They were further told that they had to include the topics of the two activities that they were moderating, provide the mark allocation of the two activities and add these together. They also had to include the name of the learner on the form. This was a surprising aspect as external assessment in terms of the Senior Certificate and the ABET exams protects the identity of a learner.

Few people had actually completed the CTA at their school by the time of this moderation meeting though I was able to speak to one teacher who was busy moderating a colleague's CTA. This teacher used the assessment tool which was a memorandum to remark the CTA. Both activities that the CA chose for the moderation had traditional examination memoranda available. There were no rubrics or checklists that were present as the assessment tools for the learner activities. The CTA was often projected as containing the kind of tasks that the national Department of Education wanted the schools to be doing. Even though there had been a rubric in the CTA, the CA chose two traditional examination style memoranda which perpetuated the idea of the traditional examination format as the preferred assessment method. When asked how these CTA activities compared to their own school assessment tasks, the teacher mentioned that there was not much difference as their internal activities were in fact based upon the previous CTAs.

The two moderation checklists were completed with minimal comments and generally with yes and no responses.

Encouragement of practice in terms of positive marking, analysis of marking and administration were evident in this meeting. The CTA questions as chosen by the CA for this session of moderation perpetuated traditional examinations over newer assessment instruments.

Relationships within the moderation meeting

The CA dominated the meeting with her presentation to the teachers while the contribution of the teachers during this presentation was minimal.

All teachers who attended the meeting were expected to moderate the learner portfolios of their peers. They were placed in pairs and thus only moderated each other's portfolios. The teachers were generally passive followers during the first hour of the meeting while the CA delivered her presentation, though they adopted the role of experts in conducting the moderation of the portfolios of their peer.

Although the moderation protocol had emphasised the need for a common portfolio to be discussed and consensus regarding the awarding of marks to be reached, this was not done in this meeting. Instead the teachers were grouped in pairs and each one in the pair marked the other's set of portfolios. They only sought clarity to make sense of the other's set of assessment evidence.

The dominance of the CA, passivity of the teachers and the grouping into pairs constrained the development of appropriate engagement and contributed to a compliance driven approach.

Artefacts in moderation

The district letter was sent to schools informing them of the meeting and indicating the specific tasks and documentation that they needed to bring to the meeting. Since the district letter indicated that it drew on policies such as the 1998 and 2003 Assessment policies, the 2002 Moderation Policy as well as WCED circulars, it was expected that schools complied with the policies.

Other artefacts included the agenda which directed the flow of the moderation meeting while the attendance register was an administrative artefact which enabled the CA to determine who complied with the requirement of attendance. Educator portfolios, learner portfolios and the letter from the principal certifying that internal moderation had been conducted were also artefacts present at the meeting.

The first moderation tool that was supplied to the teachers had a section for examining the teacher portfolio and another section for the learner portfolio. This moderation tool was designed in a checklist format with four columns present. The first column had a question or statement, the second and third columns accommodated yes and no responses respectively and the final column had a space for comment. The first table inside this moderation tool did not have questions but merely had words or statements e.g. index; school assessment policy; copy of learning outcomes etc. This moderation tool had to be handed to the school together with the portfolio and thus served as feedback on the moderation that had been externally conducted.

The second moderation tool for CASS was completed for the district and was a single page with the name of the school and also contained a series of questions. The tool once again had columns for indicating yes or no responses and had a final column for comments. Unlike the first moderation tool that was returned to the school, the second tool has some questions in which the columns for yes and no responses had been blacked out so that moderators would only be asked to provide comments. These instructions included the following:

- Specify the types of assessment tool used.
- Comment on the standard of the assessment tool.
- Comment on the validity of the assessment tool.

Both moderation tools were completed by the teachers during this meeting, with the first tool inserted into the portfolios that were moderated and the second tool was handed over to the CA at the end of the meeting.

Activity was supported and directed by artefacts such as the agenda and the moderation tools. The forms had a check-list type structure that inhibited discussion and focused on compliance.

Time in moderation

The meeting started late in order to accommodate teachers who travelled with the portfolios by public transport.

The first hour of the meeting was taken up by the presentation of the CA with the second hour being used for actual moderation by the teachers. Since there was no common portfolio session as indicated in the protocol, the teachers were able to remark the sections given to them by the CA in the second hour.

Teachers also asked to leave early in order to catch their transport home. Despite the shorter meeting, they appeared to have completed the tasks allocated to them in this meeting.

The pace of the meeting tended to contribute towards a compliance driven approach as there was little time allocated to developmental activity in the meeting.

School level of implementation of moderation

In this section, I will look at the tasks of moderation at the school, relationships associated with moderation, enactment of moderation and artefacts within moderation at the school.

Tasks regarding moderation

The circular 0012/2005 indicated that a functional moderation system depends on the school having a functional internal moderation system. It instructed schools to have clearly articulated plans and school principals had to ensure compliance with the moderation model. The district letter to the school provided details of what the school needed to bring to the cluster moderation meeting.

The school provided all teachers with a manual at the beginning of the year in which the assessment policy was included. The school assessment policy indicates that the HOD and subject heads will, for quality control purposes, moderate all CASS activities. A moderation form will be used to this effect and be signed by the subject head and the HOD.

The circular and the school assessment policy are driven by a compliance approach.

Relationships regarding moderation

In terms of relationships, collaboration was intended to be an important part of the moderation process. According to the teachers (two teachers of grade 9 Natural Sciences and the grade 9 moderator) at the school, they sat at the beginning of the year to plan assessments. When an assessment task had been developed by the teacher leader in grade 9, he provided this task and its marking guideline to the grade 9 moderator who was also an ordinary teacher. Teachers fulfilled leadership roles in terms of one teacher being the grade 9 leader and another teacher being the moderator of assessment.

After the moderator had conducted the moderation, she met with the teacher to discuss the assessment task. According to him, she discovered that a particular question was similar to another in the question paper and he had then to develop an alternative question to replace the one that she had identified. She would report to the HOD regarding the moderation.

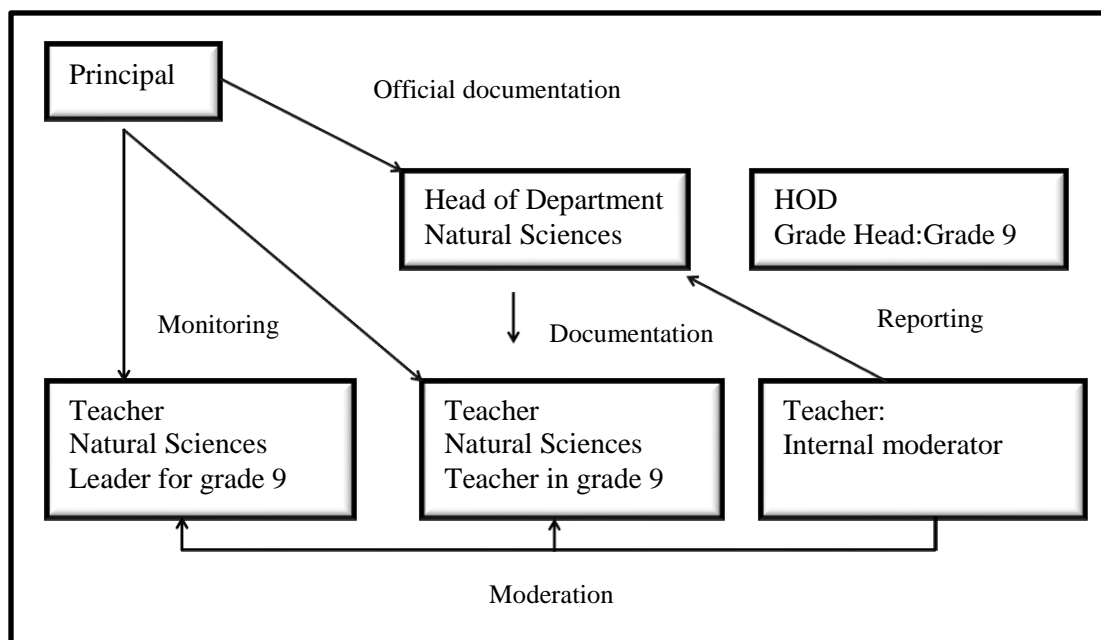
The teacher also mentioned that the principal had requested that he provide his educator portfolio and learner portfolios. The principal then called the teacher into his office together with the HOD to discuss what *“he had noticed and what was lacking”*. He then asked them how they were *“going to manage the work in terms of the time”*.

Communication was problematic in terms of moderation. The procedure is that the school receives circulars from the education department and the principal takes charge of all circulars. The circulars for a particular subject department are handed to the HOD of that department. The HOD

communicates the information from the circular to the subject teachers at a meeting.

Figure 6 provides an indication of the relationships regarding moderation at the grade 9 level in Natural Sciences at the school where this study was undertaken. One of the teachers has been 'appointed' as subject head and she is responsible for the moderation of grade 9 Natural Sciences and reporting to the HOD.

Figure 6: Organogram of grade 9 Natural Sciences at a school



Teachers indicated that they had planned together, had met in order to discuss moderation feedback and also received monitoring of CASS by the principal.

Sense making in moderation

Spillane et al emphasise the effects of implementers' understanding of the policy on implementation:

teachers' prior beliefs and practices can pose challenges not only because teachers are unwilling to change in the direction of the policy but also because their extant understandings may interfere with their ability to interpret and implement the reform in ways consistent with the designers' intent (2002:393)

The HOD understood the policy in terms of her role in monitoring whether the teachers comply with the policy. She explained that, following the introduction of the circular, there was greater emphasis on compliance with even the principal being involved in monitoring. She felt that teachers had formal qualifications and thus should be in a position to implement policy. She did not see the need for capacity building though admitted that some teachers were coping while others were “*slow to grasp*”.

The teacher leader for Natural Sciences in grade 9 was aggrieved because he did not understand the role of moderation as part of the practice of teaching and its capacity building role. He complained about the teachers doing the moderation at cluster meetings :

When the subject adviser is calling us for this moderation ..., We are the ones doing the moderation. I think it will be OK if it will be done by the adviser. I think they are the ones with the better knowledge.

When asked whether any taxonomy is used in the development of tasks, the teacher mentioned that this was not discussed in their meetings as it is “*taken for granted that all teachers will know about Blooms taxonomy objectives*”. Similar to the HOD, he made assumptions about the capacity of teachers. He added that “*internal moderation is not happening, we tend to relax and get bored with the CASS activities*”. In the case of the examination, this was moderated by the moderator who then sat with the teachers and discussed “*things that she has noted in the moderation. For example, she discovered that question so and so is similar to question so and so. I thus had to come up with another question*”. The teacher leader did not appear to be motivated to

conduct the CASS but was more interested in the traditional examination which he said was moderated by the internal moderator.

The internal moderator, who viewed the policy from the vantage point of being centrally involved in the detail of its implementation, explained: *“the memo must stipulate directly where the marks are going to be given, not just write two marks – he must show that one mark is for this and the other mark is for this part”*. She added that this was important as learners do not always phrase their answers exactly as in the memorandum so the accurate allocation and placing of the marks in the memorandum will allow anyone who marks the work to do so accurately.

She further argued that moderation was not a simple process and it needed time. She admitted that they were not conducting moderation properly but this had improved compared to previous years. She attributed this improvement to management becoming stricter since they won an award. She mentioned: *“it’s not nice to be called (to answer) why this has not happened. This makes us take things serious”* thus confirming the emphasis on compliance at the school.

She however lamented the administration associated with the moderation:

after you have moderated a paper, you need to write a report on the moderation of the paper. If you accept the paper, the standard of it, you have to motivate. Then also by looking at it, it takes time. Then afterwards you scribble that this paper is fine, but you cannot submit this. You need to compile a proper report and most of the time you are at school up to 3 o’ clock and you’ve got other things to do. You only have one break and the school knocks off at twenty past two, you need to collect some things, everything must be done on computer. We do not write a written report.

When asked whether she understood the process of moderation of the WCED regarding the three meetings per year, she agreed with the teacher leader, that the process was not clear.

In general, it emerged that policy approaches made demands on teachers which they did not find favourable. The teachers demonstrated some

understanding of moderation and were able to grapple with the issues at hand. They were however not clear about the cluster moderation system and especially did not understand the purpose of cluster moderation meetings. Partial implementation of policy was happening, mainly driven by greater emphasis on compliance. Notwithstanding these similarities, teachers varied with regard to their willingness to comply with policy.

Enactment of moderation tasks

Formal leaders

In terms of tasks, there appeared to be a lack of clear direction in terms of dealing with moderation at school level. The formal leaders such as the HOD of the subject and the HOD in charge of the grade did not perform micro tasks in terms of monitoring or moderating rather leaving this to a delegated teacher moderator to do. The planning for moderation also did not include the subject HOD at school and this important process was left to teachers to develop on their own.

Internal moderation

There was little evidence of the process of internal moderation actually happening at school level - something that was confirmed by both the curriculum adviser for Natural Sciences and the assessment co-ordinator from the district office. No moderation forms were completed at school level during the time of this study. The learner portfolios at the cluster meeting further showed that internal moderation was not generally practiced in the schools. Where internal moderation was actually happening, it was focused on the examinations mostly, though some tests were also moderated. This indicated that the traditional methods of assessment were still prominent at school level

Process of moderation at school

The Grade 9 Natural Sciences teacher moderator at the school that I visited inspected the question papers for examinations but the rest of the assessment tasks were not moderated. The teacher in grade 9 indicated that there were five forms of assessment: tests and examinations, presentations

and performance, assignments, projects and research that they used in the learning area. Of these five forms of assessment, only the examinations were moderated.

Moderation of question papers took place after hours at the home of the moderator. She explained in her interview how she conducted the task of moderation. She looked at whether the examination paper covered the necessary content, the distribution of marks, whether the memorandum indicated for what the marks would be awarded, the variety of types of questions and an indication of the assessment standards being used for the examination. She did not use a moderation tool for the moderation.

She also said that she did not moderate all the learner portfolios but selected six learner portfolios in a class from the mark sheet – *“two of the top, two of the average learners and two of the bottom so that the teacher doesn’t know which portfolios I am going to choose”* She then checked the teacher portfolio for the list of things that the learners were supposed to have completed and verified that the work had been done by the selected learners. She would then make notes and have a meeting to discuss the matter with the teacher.

An interesting aspect of the moderation conducted by the Natural Sciences moderator emerged when she had moderated a test after it had been implemented in class. She explained that this had been necessary as teachers did not plan properly and had given her the test a day before the actual writing of the test. With this lack of time, she still conducted the moderation - *“the principal is going to be cross as this wasn’t moderated so you just moderate it for the sake, not for the sake of quality purposes but for the sake of the school”*. Feedback to the teacher and its consequent developmental value would also be lost by this practice. The teacher also mentioned this aspect in his interview, indicating that it was challenging to always ensure that the moderation was conducted before it was handed to the learners. He said: *“I just type, print and hand it to the learners, then moderation can happen afterwards”*. Clearly moderation serves little purpose

if conducted after the test has been written other than as an empty signifier of compliance.

Although the HOD, teacher and moderator indicated that there was a year plan for assessment, the HOD mentioned that 'it doesn't happen the way you'd like it'. She further indicated that 'the subject head selects learner portfolios from the mark sheet' in a random manner to take to the cluster meeting.

The beliefs, values and emotions of implementers are according to Spillane et al (2002) important in sense making and therefore play a role in implementation. A teacher interviewed indicated that if he saw that the CASS activity of a colleague at the cluster moderation meeting was not up to standard, he would not comment about it:

"..., because we're not taking it in the correct manner it should be. If I see that this CASS activity is not up to standard, I'm not going to comment about that. ... I think because you don't want to put the other teacher in a tight corner."

Time was thus a limiting factor on the moderation process and also impacted on the assessment process as a whole. The moderator was able to demonstrate her competency in moderating question papers but refrained from moderating the rest of the assessment tasks. No learner moderation is conducted but there was a check for compliance. There was even an attempt to comply with the needs of the school to have moderation after the task had already been conducted with the learners.

On the whole, the school was trying to comply with provincial policy on moderation but there was a lack of proper planning in terms of the timing of the assessments and their moderation. There was also an emphasis on the older, traditional assessments and they only moderate the tests and examinations while not moderating the tasks that have rubrics.

In the next section, I look at artefacts associated with moderation at the school.

Artefacts in moderation

Artefacts at the school level included the school assessment policy which includes a few lines about moderation, learner and teacher portfolios, assessment instruments (tests and tasks), memoranda and rubrics, and mark sheets. There was no evidence of any moderation instruments present in the school. There were also no moderation reports as done in the district or at Head Office although the moderator indicated that she was supposed to compile reports for the HOD. The school is thus thin in the amount of documentation they use during moderation compared to the district.

In this chapter, I have provided the results of the study with respect to tasks, relationships, artefacts and sense making regarding moderation as it stands in policy, how it was implemented at a district and at a school. Analysis of the results allowed several emerging insights which are discussed in the next chapter.

The following chapter also concludes with an overall view of the study as well provides an opinion on how moderation could be managed in future.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand how policy regarding moderation of assessment was taken up by implementers at the levels of a district and a school. A conceptual framework, which was developed from the distributed leadership and implementation frameworks of Spillane et al, directed the course of the study in terms of design and analysis.

An analytical framework was developed that focused on tasks, enactment of tasks, relationships, artefacts and sense-making across the levels of provincial policy, district and school implementation.

I interviewed all the key role players that dealt with moderation of Grade 9 Natural Sciences in the school and district. I also observed the final cluster moderation meeting of a district and studied the original policy documents which included the 2002 WCED Moderation Protocol and the 2005 circular regarding the moderation process.

Relevant policy texts were analysed and the practice of moderation at a school and district was described. Once the data had been placed under the lens of the analytical framework, insights emerged from the analysis.

Emerging Insights

Several insights have emerged from this study relating to the following themes:

- Tensions between development and accountability
- The thinning nature of implementation (across levels)
- Old practices prevail
- Lack of depth regarding discussion that will enhance teaching and learning

- Artefacts including time play an important role in directing processes (of moderation)

Tensions between development and compliance

The spirit of the circular, which ultimately steered the implementation of moderation in the province since it was the document widely available to schools and districts, appears to have been focused more on compliance than on the developmental focus of the moderation policy. This tension between quality assurance and development is an important duality within the policy of the province as it attempted to manage the implementation of a new assessment system within the new curriculum and still had to account to Umalusi for the purpose of certification. The policy appeared too ambitious and did not fully acknowledge the particular context of this district and school.

Umalusi's acknowledgement that moderation must be a phased in process as capacity is built within their own organisation implied that provinces would not have immediately had the capacity to implement this system. The ambition of the circular could therefore not be expected to be intended for 2005 and must be seen as one that was probably intended as a precursor for 2008 when the new curriculum (National Curriculum Statement) was initially intended to be implemented in both grades 9 and 12. Further study could be undertaken in years beyond 2008 to gauge how moderation has been implemented in grades 9 and 12 in schools and districts.

Since the introduction of the circular, the development aspect of moderation meetings has receded to accommodate a process that emphasizes the fulfillment of compliance requirements. Instead of discussing a common portfolio and engaging in joint marking exercises as was indicated in the moderation protocol of 2002, the moderation meetings have become sterile activities to ensure compliance. The use of moderation tools which concentrate on checklist activities appears to direct the teacher moderators into a tick box exercise.

Thinning nature of implementation

Implementation thinned out as the policy moved from the district to the school.

In terms of the engagement that happened to initiate the implementation, more meetings were held with provincial officials than with district officials and similarly, the schools only gained their insights from the engagement that happened at their cluster meetings. The Assessment Co-ordinator was adamant that there existed pockets of excellence where greater engagement occurs between teachers and this was verified by the curriculum adviser in the district. At the school in this study, there were meetings after the moderation but sometimes the moderation was deferred until after the assessment had actually been conducted.

Districts bring in operational material to their meetings. The school is slimmer in terms of moderation documentation and appears not to use the moderation tools that are used at district meetings. The school also does not take minutes of meetings nor reports in the way that districts report. No moderation report is compiled at the school while there are several reports compiled at the district level.

The thinning of implementation can be looked at in terms of understandings gained at the various levels. Umalusi had one meeting with district officials while teachers were not directly exposed to the inputs from the quality assurance agency and also did not appear to receive the circulars that directed the process of moderation. Their understanding of the bigger picture of moderation across the schools is limited. There is a greater understanding demonstrated by district officials of how moderation should be implemented at district and school levels.

In the next section, I discuss how old practices such as the emphasis on traditional examinations still prevail in the system

Old practices prevail

The moderation protocol had attempted to introduce new assessment practices but the reality in implementation was that schools have focused on

moderating examinations and tests, not complying in moderating newer assessment instruments such as those used for assignments, projects, translation activities and presentations.

During the third moderation meeting in the district, the approach adopted was focused on individual moderation and there was no opportunity for consensus building as espoused in the moderation protocol.

The CA delivered her presentations in an old style chalk-and-talk approach that perpetuates the old practices of the past. The focus of the moderation appeared to be more on tests and examinations though this was more dependent on the type of assessments that were developed in this cluster that I observed. Even the CTA sections, that the CA requested the teachers to moderate, were old style or traditional examination questions.

Old practices appeared to also prevail at school level where moderation still focused on examinations. The teacher and moderator indicated that the forms of assessment other than the examinations were not moderated. There was a greater confidence among the moderator in the moderation of traditional assessment such as examinations and although there is feedback from the moderation process, this was done informally and orally. No written feedback is provided to the teachers or in the form of a report to the HOD.

Lack of depth regarding discussion that will enhance teaching and learning

Deeper discussions that would entrench greater understanding did not appear to be happening frequently or at all. Thus 'surface level implementation' may occur. Spillane et al indicates that 'surface level implementation' occurs where there is a lack of understanding of the new policy and its requirements and also because implementers interpret the change in the policy as something familiar. Although schools had included examples of rubrics in their portfolios, the depth of these tools were limited to simple types indicating that the understanding of the teachers was more surface level than that of an expert.

When examining the actual moderation that takes place by the moderator at school, it is apparent that there is a lack of a culture of deep discussion about

performance. This is true about the new approaches to assessment in the new curriculum but even apparent when one examines the moderation of traditional examinations and tests. The moderation focused on the mark allocation, structure of the paper, quality control of the paper in terms of checking duplication of content but there was not discussion about the cognitive levels of the questions e.g. relating to Bloom's taxonomy. The moderation therefore does not deal with the aspect of standards.

Artefacts play an important role in directing processes

Moderation was originally spelt out within the national Assessment Policy in 1998 and then again in 2003. It was enacted by the quality assurance agency, Umalusi via it's directives in 2004 and subsequently the WCED through it's circular in 2005. Ultimately the district reacted by means of their notice of the moderation meeting to the schools. These texts represent the policy in ways that emphasised development initially and compliance later.

During the moderation meeting itself, the various moderation tools were used by teachers to conduct the moderation process and this directed their actions in conducting the moderation as well as reporting on the portfolios to the schools and to the district. The moderation tool also served to frame their understanding in terms of how to moderate the portfolios.

Time as an artefact played a significant role in the implementation of moderation on the ground level. Time was a limitation in terms of how schools implemented moderation e.g. they sometimes struggled to have their tasks moderated prior to the actual conduct of the task with the learners.

Aspects such as travel time and cost of travel have impacted on how the moderation model functions. Poorer teachers arrived late for meetings because principals would not allow them to leave earlier. They would leave the meetings early in order to get the last taxi back to their homes. This impacted on the time necessary for carrying out the important professional aspects of the moderation process. The WCED restricted the number of meetings per year as some schools complained that their teachers were being taken out of school for too many days of the year. This resulted in less time to

properly enact the process of moderation as advanced by the moderation protocol.

Discussion

In this concluding section, I focus on how insights that emerged from the analysis extend our understanding of policy implementation as discussed in the literature chapter.

The spirit of the moderation policy in 2005, although including the duality of compliance and development, leaned more toward the former as opposed to the 2002 Moderation Protocol which had a clearly developmental focus. This is in keeping with Spillane et al's assertion that '*policy evolves as it is being implemented*' (2002:419) and that the '*spirit of the policy is important even if it not clear*' (2002:420) to the implementers.

Achieving balance between accountability and development is important and Barber and Phillips '*motivate for the fusion of accountability and development in one system but warn of difficulties in finding an appropriate balance between the two*' (in De Clercq, 2011:49).

Balance of these two moderation goals was hindered by the capacity of teachers in this particular cluster which draws teachers from a particular disadvantaged area. Klenowski argues that it is important to '*develop the capacity of teachers as the pressures of accountability increase*' (2011:80) while Black reflects on collaborative moderation meetings in Queensland, Australia which he argues are a '*form of professional development as well as serving quality requirements of the system*' (2007:40).

Whether implementation was done for compliance or development, this case showed that there was more extensive documentation at the district than at the school regarding moderation. Also the understanding of the district officials of the moderation process was greater than the leaders and teachers at the school that I studied. Spillane et al point out that '*teachers are not unwilling to change in the direction of the policy but their understandings may interfere with their ability to interpret and implement the reform in ways*

consistent with the designer's intent (2002:393) while Harlen ponders on whether the *'requirements of moderation procedures could constrain teachers' use of the full range of evidence available to focus only on what can be safely assessed* (2005:221).

The district as a conduit between provincial policy and school implementation is highlighted by McLaughlin (2006) who argues that the role of the district is essential in ensuring that policies are interpreted, implemented and sustained. Moderation in this cluster at this particular time was mainly conducted at the district level. There was little evidence of school internal moderation being carried out and provincial moderation also does not take place. The district moderation was thus the essential activity unit in terms of quality assurance of assessment at that moment in time.

The school in this study implemented policy regarding moderation but this was only done in a partial manner. Old practices such as moderating examinations and other traditional assessments e.g. tests prevailed at the school level where there was no moderation of new forms of assessment. This aligns with thoughts in Australia where Barnes et al report that *'teachers are reluctant to embrace new assessment practices unless they have the endorsement of inclusion in high stakes assessment'* (2000:638) and *'the general belief was that assessment under examination conditions were the only way to maintain standards'* (Barnes et al, 2000:632). Similarly, Spillane et al report that *'teachers assumed that a traditional curriculum was sufficient to implement state policy that was designed to press for fundamental change'* (2002:397).

'Surface level implementation can occur when there is a lack of understanding of the new policy and its requirements and because implementers interpret the change in policy as something familiar' (Spillane et al, 2002:396). This study echoes Spillane et al's insight with regards to the implications of agents' grasp of policy and how it is implemented. In moderating the examination paper, the teacher moderator at the school in this study examined surface level aspects but did not provide feedback to the teachers regarding the

deeper issues of quality of test items nor about standards which even the teacher leader deemed to be complex.

Finally the study endorses the theoretical view that sense making and ultimately implementation are shaped by contextual factors specifically artefacts. Artefacts in the form moderation tools framed the practice and understanding of teachers during the cluster moderation meeting which corresponds with Spillane et al's notion that '*designed artefacts are constitutive of (leadership) practice*' (2004:23) and '*represent identifiable entities that define or are re-defined by (leadership) practice*' (2004:23).

In Spillane et al's conceptual framework, time is also seen as a contextual factor, in effect, like artefacts. In this case study, time limitations compromised the process of moderation at school and especially in terms of development at both school and district levels. The lack of time forced the moderation process to be enacted in a more compliance driven approach.

From the literature reviewed on policy and policy implementation gaps, it appears that the reasons why moderation policy veers toward compliance rather than development of teachers are to do with the policy itself and its implementation in a context of lack of resources and time as well as commitment constraints at district and school.

In the final section of this study, I provide a few recommendations for moderation practice in the future.

Implications for future practice and policy

The model of moderation in the province, although influenced by Umalusi directives for quality assurance, appears to have been changed in order to save money to appease certain sectors of the school community that are upset about teachers being summoned to too many meetings in the year.

This case has illustrated how the emphasis on compliance within policy has stifled development in the current practice of moderation and the reality is that

the understanding of moderation among the school officials is also not satisfactory.

In a developing country like South Africa, where past policies have resulted in vast differences in knowledge, skill and understanding, it is important that the moderation process contributes to the development of capacity within the teaching corps and that it generates a richer stream of feedback to the implementers in schools and districts.

This study suggests that it would be beneficial to revise the moderation policy in such a way that it supports capacity development. This would mean, for example:

- Bringing together better and worse performing schools at district level meetings.
- Focusing support on schools that need it.
- Providing opportunities for teachers to develop capacity with regard to modes of assessment associated with the recently introduced Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and enhance teachers' sense making with regard to the intentions of the moderation policy.

The policy itself, the artefacts associated with it and the events that it sets up should be oriented towards creating zones of enactment where deep level, sense making discussions can take place.

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APPENDIX

The analysis did not ultimately draw on all questions asked in interviews as the focus of the research was more tightly defined. Responses to the following questions were included in the analysis.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Deputy principal of the school

- Could you please provide a background of this school including the current organogram of the school.
- How does CASS operate at your school?
- How is moderation implemented at your school?

2. Head of Department (HOD) of Science

- Please provide your perspective on the moderation process.
- How are the pieces (of learner evidence) checked?
- Provide a perspective on the preparation that the school or department did for the monitoring meetings.
- How do you as a positional leader in the school, contribute to the following key functions of a leader within the moderation process?
- Teacher growth with respect to the moderation process.

3. Leader of Natural Sciences in grade 9

- How did you become the leader (of Natural Sciences)?
- What is the difference between the NS HOD and the (NS) SUBJECT HEAD?
- Tell me how internal moderation happens in this school with regard to NS.
- What kind of things happen at the (cluster) meeting?

4. Internal moderator of Natural Sciences in grade 9

- Could you basically give us a short description of how moderation happens at this school in the learning area, the Natural Sciences Learning area in grade 9.
- How are department circulars either from the district (EMDC) or the Head office mediated or distributed to the staff at your school?
- What do you see as the complex part of this moderation process?
- What kind of administration is there involved (in moderation)?
- Do you understand those three meetings? Standard setting, monitoring and moderation? Is this process clear to you?
- What kind of qualities do you bring to be the moderator?
- What kind of tasks are associated with moderation?
- Is there any moderation of the learners work?
- What happens to the learner portfolios at the end of the year?
- Do you have any tool, a moderation tool that you use during the moderation?

5. Teacher of grade 9 Natural Sciences

- Tell me how internal moderation happens in this school with regard to NS.

6. Curriculum Adviser of Science at the district office

- What is your perspective on this three meeting process – the three meeting process was almost structured – you know, you going to have standard setting, a support meeting and you'll have the final moderation. What is your perspective on this three meeting process?
- Describe what you see as the tasks that you actually engaged in moderation processes

7. Assessment Co-ordinator at the district

- What do you understand by the term quality assurance of assessment and how has it occurred in your EMDC?
- Provide a perspective of the three meeting moderation strategy.
- What are the tasks involved in the moderation process?
- Who do you consider to be leaders in the moderation process:
 - at the EMDC cluster meeting?
 - at the school?
- Describe what happens at a moderation support meeting.
- How does the theory of this moderation strategy differ from reality?
- What materials, resources and other artefacts are involved in the moderation?
- How does language influence the moderation process?
- Challenges in the moderation support meetings.

SCHEDULE FOR DATA COLLECTION

1. Schedule of Interviews

No	Position	Date interviewed
1	Deputy Principal at selected Secondary School	22/08/2005
2	Head of Department, Natural Sciences at selected Secondary School	22/08/2005
3	Natural Sciences leader in grade 9 at selected Secondary School	23/08/2005
4	Natural Sciences leader in grade 9 at selected Secondary School	23/10/2006
5	Natural Sciences moderator in grade 9 at selected Secondary School	23/10/2006
6	Natural Sciences Curriculum Adviser (District official)	16/09/2006
7	Assessment Co-ordinator (District official)	14/09/2006

2. Schedule of Observations

No	Type of event observed	Date
1	School Natural Sciences departmental meeting	21/08/2005
2	Natural Sciences District moderation meeting	21/11/2006