

Comparing the decision-making processes involved in marking between examiners and between different types of examination questions

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Abstract

Despite the abundant literature on educational measurement there has been relatively little work to investigate the process of marking at a more cognitive, socially- and personally-influenced level. This research investigated the processes involved when examiners mark examination responses. Scripts from two geography A level exams were used: one requiring short and medium length responses and one requiring essays. Six examiners marked fifty scripts from each of the two exams and were later asked to think aloud whilst marking four to six scripts from each examination. Coding and analyses identified different types of reading behaviours, social, emotional and personal reactions and provided insight into the nature of evaluations. Some differences between examiners and between question types were identified. Tentative analysis of associations between marker behaviours and marker agreement suggested that positive evaluations, comparisons and thorough reading were important to avoiding severity. Potential implications, including those for the impact of technological changes to assessment systems, are discussed.

A revised version of this paper is in press at the 'Cambridge Journal of Education' under the title 'Exploring the nature of examiner thinking during the process of examination marking'.