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Moderating artwork – investigating judgements and cognitive processes

Conference Paper Abstract

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Presented at the MAXQDA International Conference,
Berlin, Germany,
February – March 2019

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How to cite this publication:

Chambers, L., Williamson, J., and Child, S. (2019, February). *Moderating artwork – investigating judgements and cognitive processes*. Paper presented at the MAXQDA International Conference, Berlin, Germany.

Background and aims

For the majority of standardised summative assessments in the UK, students will sit examinations. However, for certain subjects (e.g. art) students will produce non-exam coursework, which is marked by their teachers. In order to ensure that the standards of marking are the same across schools, samples of student work from each school are externally moderated. This process entails moderators viewing the work and deciding whether the teachers have marked accurately and appropriately. The moderators can make adjustments to the school's marking, if necessary, in order to maintain the same marking standard across schools.

Artwork is notoriously difficult to assess, and this study sought to gain an understanding of how moderators conduct their task and make their judgements in order to inform moderation practice. Previous work has investigated the moderation of student work in mostly written form (Crisp, 2017 and Cuff, 2017); no studies were found explicitly looking at a non-written submissions such as artwork.

Methods and analysis

A small empirical study was conducted in which participating moderators (N=3) were asked to 'think aloud' whilst moderating student artwork. Moderators were observed by two researchers and video-recorded. After completing moderation, a short interview was conducted in order to discuss points of interest that had occurred during the moderation session.

The multimedia protocols from the study were loaded into MAXQDA, a coding framework was then designed and refined. The multimedia protocols were then coded within MAXQDA; the software enabled designation of how long each coded activity lasted. The interviews were first transcribed in MAXQDA, then coded using a separate coding framework.

An analysis of the resulting protocol and observational data in MAXQDA enabled timelines of moderator activity to be produced. Using these timelines and drawing on the work of Crisp (2017) and Cuff (2017), a process map of how moderators carried out moderation was developed. The different stages of the process model were developed by identifying repeated and systematic occurrences of distinctive combinations of cognitive processes, physical activities and use of resources.

Results and discussion

The moderation process began with an orientation and preparation stage and then featured a lengthy investigation stage in the middle. This was followed by a stage in which a moderation decision was reached, and then finally a report- writing stage. In terms of cognitive processes, the participants: oriented themselves to the moderation task, made observations, considered and evaluated student work, made explicit comparisons, formed overall evaluations and a moderation decision, and reflected on this decision.

All of the participants made observations and considerations about multiple students within the first ten minutes of moderation, and throughout the investigation stage. In effect, the participants made a number of short 'passes' through the whole sample. The analysis showed that moderators were not simply remarking the samples but were engaged in a multi-stage reflective quality control activity.

References

Crisp, V. (2017). The judgement processes involved in the moderation of teacher-assessed projects. *Oxford Review of Education*, 43(1), 19–37.

Cuff, B. (2017). *An exploratory investigation into how moderators of non-examined assessments make their judgements*. (Ofqual/17/6252). Coventry: Ofqual.