Strengthening Teacher Assessment Practices, Learning and Evidence

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Reasons Behind Project

• Success of formative assessment projects
• Current high stakes testing inhibits teaching and learning (Harlen & Deakin-Crick, 2004)
• Little support given to teachers in relation to continuous summative assessment

• Changes in Wales, Jersey and N. Ireland
• Failure to implement 14-19 reform
KOSAP

- King’s-Oxfordshire-Summative-Assessment Project
- Investigate & strengthen Teachers’ summative assessment practices
- Working in schools well versed in FA
- English & Mathematics departments
- Head of department + interested teacher
- Year 8 (13 year olds)
Phases of KOSAP

• Phase 1 (January 2005-July 2005)
  – Pilot
  – Investigating existing practice
  – Evaluating & devising new assessments

• Phase 2 (September 2005-July 2006)
  – Trial
  – Adapting, developing and implementing reformed assessment practices

• Phase 3 (September 2006-July 2007)
  – Implementation in departments
SA PURPOSES

Decisions about teaching sets
Information for the next teacher
Reporting to Senior Management Team
Reporting to Parents
Target setting

FA also had a role to play in these.
Focus

• Teacher’s literacy, skills and values of assessment
• Whether summative tasks could be selected/designed that were acceptable in terms of reliability and validity
Data sources

- summative assessments;
- fieldnotes/audio recordings of all project meetings;
- fieldnotes/audio recordings of intra-school standardisation and moderation meetings, as well as inter-school meetings preparing for these;
- classroom observations of alternative summative assessment events;
Data Sources

- regular interviews with the “12” core teachers;
- focus group interviews with subject and school teacher groups;
- teachers’ writing and reflections, in particular teachers’ reflective diaries;
- interviews with teachers in departments;
- pupil questionnaires
Research Questions

• What do the summative assessment practices of FA teachers look like?
• How different are the SA practices in English and Maths for these teachers?
• How do the processes of moderation support teacher learning about SA?
• How can these ideas be implemented across departments?
• Can summative assessment tasks be used without detrimental effects on FA and students?
Emerging findings

Teacher assessment is possible
BUT
More complex than we expected

Transferring expertise not straightforward

Formative assessment
Maths SA Practices

Maths teachers used end-of-topic tests.

Derived questions from external examinations & textbooks

Teachers had not considered quality of tests nor how appropriate these tests were at assessing specific skills and conceptual understanding.
Realism?

I am going to target those things. If you can do these things, it is going to radically improve the probability that you are going to get a C. Now that’s not necessarily making them a better mathematician, but that is saying if you practice these skills and learn to do these skills and apply them on that exam paper, you are more likely to get a C which will then enable, will open doors for you beyond Yr11 here.
Findings

Mismatch & confusion between purposes of assessment

We are caught in a trap. Report to parents a level. Students focus on just doing tests so we have a level to report. We have missed the point of what we are trying to achieve. It is less and less with monitoring progress and more about filling in boxes. (Teacher T)
I have begun to question what the point of what I do is. My lessons are often like walking students past a line of trees and the test is then about how many trees they remembered. I was depressed by this thought!
Findings

• Teachers challenged their own existing and external summative assessments

Maybe that’s what the investigation is trying to address. Think that these investigations have become too formalised. Something that lets them have a more creative element in their work and rewards kids that try things in a different way, who are willing to take risks with their maths (Teacher I)
Measurement, judgement and accuracy

In your capacity as class teacher, you are the best person to make those judgements… You could ask them and probe them. Watch them use maths. Ask them why they are writing things.
Sampling concerns:

I’d like to look over all students’ shoulders all the time
I want to know everything really

BUT as *recipients* they wanted:
a broad-brush level plus anything unusual
Findings

• Maths teachers looked at classwork through an assessment lens

• Maths teachers piloted and trialled alternative assessment tasks

• Tests would still feature and needed improvement through professional input
English SA Practices

English teachers used a portfolio of 6-8 pieces of work that they built up as part of their teaching

Moderation was done by one teacher on a sample of portfolios/work

Used a mixture of KS3 and GCSE criteria
Findings

Teachers reformulated ideas of assessment in terms of “what does it mean to be good at this subject for Y8?”

Being able to access very difficult text, being able to put themselves in a writer’s situation. Something you can’t teach... Come out with these amazing, creative ideas and you think, I couldn’t have written that. That cha-ching value. They teach you something. (Teacher K)
Quality in English

‘Insight’ ‘Flair’ ‘Confidence’

English teachers not concerned with reliability
Crooks sees reliability as subset of validity

Rhetoric of justification

Aim is to inform rich holistic judgments
using a six portfolio tasks (one control conditions)
  2 writing
  1 reading,
  3 speaking and listening
Findings

• English teachers use CONSTRUCT REFERENCING

For a writing task, students have to write, in Yr. 7 for example, a persuasive letter to (King) Arthur asking him if they can join the round table as a knight. I just want to enjoy the letter-have they convinced me? Then let’s look at what persuasive techniques have they used. Were they effective? And then have they chosen good vocabulary. Then have they written in a fluent way and used punctuation.” (Teacher C)
Findings

- English teachers use portfolio system similar to current practice
- English teachers readdress mismatch between KS3 and GCSE
  - a greater emphasis on Speaking and Listening
  - using GCSE criteria or rewriting KS3 criteria
- Introduce a ‘controlled piece’.
Subject differences

Curriculum ATs
KS3 and GCSE
Target: point(s) or horizon?
Aggregation
Analytic vs. holistic
Experience of summative assessment
Findings 1

• Limited space for learners to do anything different from classwork
• Classwork activities did not discriminate and provide evidence of a range of achievement (mainly in Maths)
• Limited space for learners to do anything different from classwork
Findings 2

- Need for some ‘controlled’ assessments and some more informal assessments
- Teacher intervention could limit or facilitate student showing potential/capabilities

- Confidence that they can identify levels but concern that they are perceived as reporting on an ‘acceptable assessment’

- Tension between ‘doing assessment’ and using assessment information to inform teaching/learning
Strengthening processes of assessment?

• A “partial” profession (Gardener)
  • Assessment literacy
  • Assessment skills
  • Assessment values

• Self-doubt, distrust & inter-collegiate discussion

• Simply “telling” teachers doesn’t work
• Collaboration & design research

• Recognise the systemic constraints & affordances on change
Implementation across Departments

• Working on how they could ensure colleagues develop their expertise (learning journey)

• In English, colleagues accept new approach as a variation on current practice

• In Mathematics, some concerns as to why this needs to be done
Implementation
Recognition of the need to wrestle with the FA/SA interface

I wish we could bottle what we’ve done. Our teachers are happy to go along with this, but it’s so hard to help them deal confidently with the issues that arise for them in their own classrooms, without … You know ... the hindsight that we have through engaging with this. (Teacher K1)

Some of our staff just don’t get it. They’re okay with assessment for learning… They know we need to do tests. But they don’t really link the two. (Teacher I)