

QEF Teacher Conference University of Hong Kong

Formative Assessment: time of learning?

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Purpose of Assessment

Summative –
ranking,
certification, public
accountability,
gate-keeping ...
→ usually standardised,
high-stakes testing

Formative –
promoting
learning

▶ *classroom-based*
individualised
assessment, can
be high-stakes

National Curriculum (England) – English Performance

Year	% Pupils Achieving Level 4 or above in English	
1996	57	
1997	63	
1998	64	
1999	70	
2000	75	
2001	75	
2002	75	Official target – 80%
2003	75	
2004	78	
2005	79	
2006	79	Official target – 85%
2007	80	

Problems encountered:

- **Narrowing of curriculum**
- **Teaching to the test**
- **Unethical practice**

Teacher accounts

In the spring term, I drop design and technology, music and religious studies. . . Because of the tests, I sometimes focus on children who might reach level 4 with a little boost. My ideal would be that all children get the same amount of time. But coming up to the tests I spend three days a week with the booster children. I sit with them because they're the ones who increase the results. How awful is that? (Ward, 2004, p. 18).

New initiative to raise performance:

- ◆ Personalization of the curriculum
- ◆ Formative assessment carried out by teachers as part of classroom practice

Formative Assessment

Assessment *for* Learning (AFL)

Much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be described as assessment. That is, **tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed and interpreted, and judgements are made about how learning can be improved.** These assessment processes are an essential part of everyday classroom practice and involve both teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision making. (Assessment Reform Group 2002, emphasis added)

AFL strategies

Questioning → open questions, exploratory questions, longer wait time (avoid IRE sequences → closing down)

Feedback → teacher guidance for next steps in learning (not just giving grades/marks)

Peer and self-assessment

IRE & co-construction

Teacher-student interaction

I – teacher initiation

R – student response

E – teacher evaluation/feedback

IRE & co-construction

Closed IRE:

What question → recitation/fact-based response → right/wrong evaluation

Open IRE:

What/why/how questions →
fact/interpretive/'I'm not sure' response
→ *'tell me why you think this'* feedback



Reasoning discourse (Leung & Mohan 2004)

Disciplinary beliefs and values

Theory of assessment?

Theory of learning?

Theory of subject discipline (& subject teaching)?

James (2006, 50-52)

→ relationship between disciplinary beliefs and values, pedagogy and assessment

Three views on ELT - with implications for assessment:

- ◆ Traditional grammar-based approach
- ◆ Constructivist approach
- ◆ Socio-cultural approach

Teaching Writing Approaches (based on Ivanič 2004)

Approaches	Learning to write	Teaching and assessment
Skills	Learning rules governing sound-symbol correspondence and syntactic patterns	Explicit teaching of rule-governed aspects of written language; focus on accuracy of production/reproduction
Creativity	Learning by writing on topics of interest (to the writer)	Implicit teaching drawing on language experience; focus on interesting content/style
Process	Learning the processes and the work involved in planning, drafting and revising writing	Explicit teaching and modeling of writing processes; unclear assessment focus, probably some attention to evidence of drafting and revision
Genre	Learning the need for different text types for different social purposes, and the ways language is used to produce the appropriate text/s	Explicit teaching of genres; focus on appropriateness of text types and language expressions
Social practice	Learning to write by writing in real-life (or in simulation) for specific purposes	Explicit teaching where social contexts and purposes are known; implicit teaching where the classroom is constructed to replicate an outside social environment
Sociopolitical	Learning different types of writing and learning to take a position to change or transform existing 'unjust' power relations	Explicit teaching of social and political analyses in relation to writing; focus on writing as challenge to existing power relations

Infrastructure Support

Assessment criteria –
what basis?
if imported, local usefulness?
if locally developed, connected to
wider national/international
developments?

Professional Practice

- ◆ What questions do teachers ask in relation to English language knowledge and skills?
- ◆ How do teachers ask these questions?
- ◆ How do teachers 'see' learning?

What professional development needs?