

Report for the Research Committee

Assessment in Secondary Schools: Mentor and Trainee Teacher Perceptions

Research participants

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The Project has continued to sustain interest and activity, with the key participants writing two articles. One article was submitted to the *Curriculum Journal* some months ago and we are still awaiting a response. The other article was published in *Teacher Development* (details below). Two further articles are in preparation.

The team has met regularly (once a term) and is now in the process of preparing a bid to seek further funding from outside agencies to allow the Project to continue.

A brief report on the current research activity follows:

Survey approach

This part of the study examined the values and practice in relation to assessment of a sample of trainee teachers studying for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the University of Cambridge, UK.

Using a survey instrument drawn from James & Pedder (2006), we sought to elicit how trainees valued different classroom assessment practices, and the extent to which their own teaching complied with such values. We compared our results with those found by James & Pedder (2006) for qualified teachers. Item and factor analyses (varimax-rotated principal components analysis) revealed three dimensions that underpin trainees' classroom practice and values (promoting learning autonomy, performance orientation, making learning explicit). Values-practice gaps were greatest on promoting learning autonomy and performance orientation. Trainees valued practices associated with the former more than they implemented them in their teaching, whilst they implemented practices associated with the latter more than predicted by their values. Cluster analysis of factor scores revealed four clusters of trainees in relation to their practice responses, and two clusters in relation to values responses. Similarities and differences between clusters are examined in the submitted papers, as are similarities and differences with corresponding solutions for qualified teachers. Membership of clusters was found to be associated with membership of particular subject disciplines.

Interpretive interview study

The data from interviews with trainees are being interrogated to explore how these new inductees into the teaching profession 'make sense' of assessment in school, drawing upon their own experience, the theoretical frameworks and considerations introduced to them during training, and their perceptions of actual practice on placement in partner schools.

Case-study approach

In seeking to further understand the reasons underpinning the similarities and differences both of trainee attitude to assessment and its place in teaching and learning, and classroom practices related to these factors, a series of across-subject case studies are being undertaken. These involve a small number of trainees who have indicated a willingness to work with us on this project. We plan to video a lesson which has been planned by the trainee to include some assessment activities, followed by an interview with trainees on their planning and classroom performance, using the video in a stimulated recall approach. The case studies will explore emerging factors with reference to current literatures in assessment and trainees' development. Whilst not claiming generalisability from any findings, the case studies will, nevertheless allow us to reflect on trainees' positionings of assessment in relation to students' wider learning.

Outcomes of the project

- Winterbottom, M., Taber, K.S., Brindley, S., Fisher, L.G., Finney, J. & Riga, F. Submitted. Understanding differences in trainee teachers' values and practice in relation to assessment. *Teacher Development* 12(1) 15-35.
- Winterbottom, M., Brindley, S., Taber, K., Fisher, L.G., Finney, J. & Riga, F. Submitted. Conceptions of assessment: trainee teachers' practice and values. Submitted to *The Curriculum Journal*.
- To be submitted:
 - An article which examines changes in secondary trainee teachers' values and practice in relation to assessment across their extended block placements.
 - An article comparing and contrasting secondary and primary trainee teachers' values and practice in relation to assessment before beginning their ITET course.
 - An article which examines changes in secondary trainee teachers' values and practice in relation to assessment across the training year.
 - An article which, through case study approach, offers some insight into the ways in which trainee teachers understand the place of assessment in teaching and learning, and reflect on their own practices in their secondary subject classroom.
 - An article based upon the interpretive interview study above.
- Additional outcomes:
 - The research programme has now extended to the primary and KS2/3 teaching teams (although not through the financial support of this grant),

yielding research outcomes which are expected to mirror and build upon those identified above.

Sue Brindley

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