

Thoughtful teachers and thoughtful learners: some assessment practices

ELP Lecture Series
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Children have the right to a quality education that prepares them for lifelong learning beyond the horizon: uncertain career options and a repertoire of possible selves

I will consider :

“how practices produced by different assessment systems, particularly those purporting to promote formative assessment, affect learners’ identities and dispositions for learning”

(Kathryn Ecclestone and John Pryor, 2003: ‘Learning Careers’ or ‘Assessment Careers’? The Impact of Assessment Systems on Learning)

British Educational Research Journal 29,4 p.471

The right to a quality education might be translated as the right to an educational environment that invites and provokes

Justice
Uncertainty
Dialogue
Inclusion
and **Continuity**

Judicious teachers (thoughtful teachers who make good judgements) who can apply assessment-for-learning practices to expand social and cultural capital and children's repertoires of learner identity

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Kathryn Ecclestone and John Pryor (2003) p.482

Writing about formative assessment in primary schools

Those moments when the ambitions of formative assessment appeared to be best realised were those at the divergent end of the spectrum. These moments seemed to occur when teachers and learners collaborated to produce a more even distribution of power. Within the settings researched, this did not mean that teachers' and learners' ideas were symmetrical, but, rather, that both parties were open to the ideas of the other. During these interactions, meaning was constructed through dialogue, where teachers were intellectually curious about the understandings of the learners, and in turn, learners were receptive to teachers' feedback.

Children doing some of the authoring

Adults seeking children's views

**Stories
in languages that children can read:
photographs
DVDs**

A Teaching & Learning Research Initiative project: Learning Wisdom

A project in which nine centres explored the ways in which young children re-visited their learning. The teachers developed five domains of a 'repertoire of funds of learning disposition'.

See examples from this project in Carr & Lee (2012)

Museum research:
Maggie tells a tapa story
Children respond to paintings

**Stories in languages that children
can read**

Nissa takes the photos

**Including photographs in Learning
Stories**

Children reading their portfolios

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**My own uncertain
career:**

geographer

potter

**early childhood
teacher**

university academic

Quote from an early childhood teacher during the Greerton Centre of Innovation project:

“Guy Claxton’s writing around intuitive practitioners has had a pervasive effect on us. As teachers are freed to be comfortable about not knowing, not necessarily being an imparter of knowledge, they are able to throw ideas around, to be playful, to be imaginative inside a setting that creates space for intuition to flourish.”

July 30th 2010 Guardian Weekly:

‘Festival of errors’ shows French children how to think.

[A growing number of intellectuals and education specialists in France claim that] the French school system is leaving children bereft of creativity, flexibility of thought and – crucially – confidence in their own mental abilities. To counter this culture of “intellectual timorousness”, academics from élite institutions hosted a festival in Paris last week with an unusual mission: its participants were encouraged to make as many mistakes as possible.

“A large part of the French school system is based on the *idée reçue* that errors are negative, when in fact it is by this very process of learning.... that you make progress,” said Maëlle Lenoir, of the Association Paris Montagne. “The French system is founded on a strict learning of knowledge, rather than on creativity or innovation. And yet, it was Einstein himself who said that ‘the only sure way to avoid making mistakes is to have no new ideas’ “.

Lizzy Davis, the reporter for the Guardian Weekly adds: Observers of the French school system have highlighted the shortcomings of an educational process which is “top-down” and results-driven, and which, they say, puts far more emphasis on having the right answer than the thought process by which a pupil might explore the question being asked.

UNCERTAIN RESEARCHERS (this transcript is in Carr, Smith, Duncan, Jones, Lee, Marshall, 2010, Learning in the Making. Rotterdam: Sense)

Who Made the Clouds?

Henry, Peter, Ben and Michael have been playing in the fort, they decide to head back towards the kindergarten to collect something. The group heads off together, Ben picks up a piece of branch.

Ben: Hey look what I found, that's the biggest, that's the biggest stick we found now isn't it?

Henry: Yeah.

Ben: Let's throw it over there.

Henry: Yeah.

Peter: And one day I saw a big big stick and it was who made this?and and and nobody was as big as it.

Ben: Only God is.

Peter: God, who's God?

Ben: God's up in heaven, that's our father in heaven.

Peter: Oh.

Ben: And God is bigger than dinosaurs – 'cos God make you and God didn't get bored, he made the world.

Henry: Yeah, and the clouds.

Ben: No he couldn't make the clouds cos God would fall down them.

Henry: Well, are - what about giants? God could make giants – then he could make clouds.

Commentary by the researcher:

The logic of this conversation is not entirely clear, but Ben appears to be arguing that the existence of clouds would have to precede the existence of God, because otherwise God (who lives in the clouds) would fall down. Henry, on the other hand, may be arguing that if God made giants first then they would hold Him up sufficiently to make the clouds. In any event, and perhaps we should not try to cloak the conversation in logic, they appear to be puzzling about the unseen, the uncertain, the possible, and the impossible: a rich conversational topic indeed.

“A critical curriculum for the early years would include learning goals as a key outcome; it is clear that in many environments these goals may have a struggle to survive. It will need deliberate nurturing by adults [and systems] to establish a learning climate in which stereotypes are questioned, new challenges are tackled, and it is standard practice to risk being wrong”.

Carr, M. (2001) A sociocultural approach to learning orientation in an early childhood setting.

Qualitative Studies in Education 14, 4 525-542

What might you contribute to a

Festival of Errors?

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“Teaching children as young as kindergarten age to question relentlessly and learn from their failures is the key to producing world-class scientists”, says New Zealand-born Nobel Prize winner, Professor Alan MacDiarmid. “The job of getting more Kiwis to choose science careers starts at kindergarten where children must be encouraged to ask ‘lots and lots’ of questions. We must stimulate the asking of questions by young people so they grow up in an environment that encourages scientific questioning.”.

A Media Statement from the Foundation for Research Science & Technology (FoRST) dated 18 May 2005.

Remembering that babies ask questions

1. A surprising encounter with tipping and disappearing
2. Jackson explores the water at the end of the hose
3. Three years later a Learning Story about Jackson's block-building refers back to this episode

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A kindergarten makes Learning Stories into books with large pictures

Learning Stories are written in home languages

References

MoE (2009) Narrative Assessment: a Guide for Teachers. A resource to support the NZ Curriculum exemplars for learners with special education needs

Kei tua o te pae Book 10

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Whatu pokeka

**Cross sector alignment of
Te Whariki strands and NZC key competencies**

Research on transition at Mangere Bridge

**Research at Taitoko Kindergarten: Transition to
School Learning Story folders**

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Kathryn Eccelstone and John Pryor again:

“Divergent assessment requires a divergent curriculum, and the increasing specification of curriculum content seemed to make this difficult. Moreover, the tightening ratchet of accountability based on testing and targets made more open practices a luxury”.

Ecclestone, K. & Pryor, J. (2003). ‘Learning careers’ or ‘Assessment careers’? The impact of assessment systems on learning. *British Educational Research Journal* 29(4), 471-488

**Assessment that links to curriculum:
Te Whāriki and Kei tua o te pae**

Resources to watch out for in 2012

Carol Hartley, Pat Rogers, Jemma Smith, Sally Peters & Margaret Carr. **Crossing the border: a community negotiates the transition to school.** NZCER Press

Keryn Davis, Jocelyn Wright, Margaret Carr & Sally Peters. **Monitoring and encouraging the key competencies: Learning Stories. Dialogue, connections and plain language reporting.** NZCER Press

Margaret Carr & Wendy Lee. **Learning Stories: documenting and constructing learner identities in early education.** London: Sage

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