



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

The effect of the “lens of the teacher” on beginner teacher summative assessment literacy and practice.

Frances Edwards

**Faculty of Education
University of Waikato
Hamilton
New Zealand**



2017

Assessment literacy:

Stiggins' (1995) definition: that assessment literate educators...

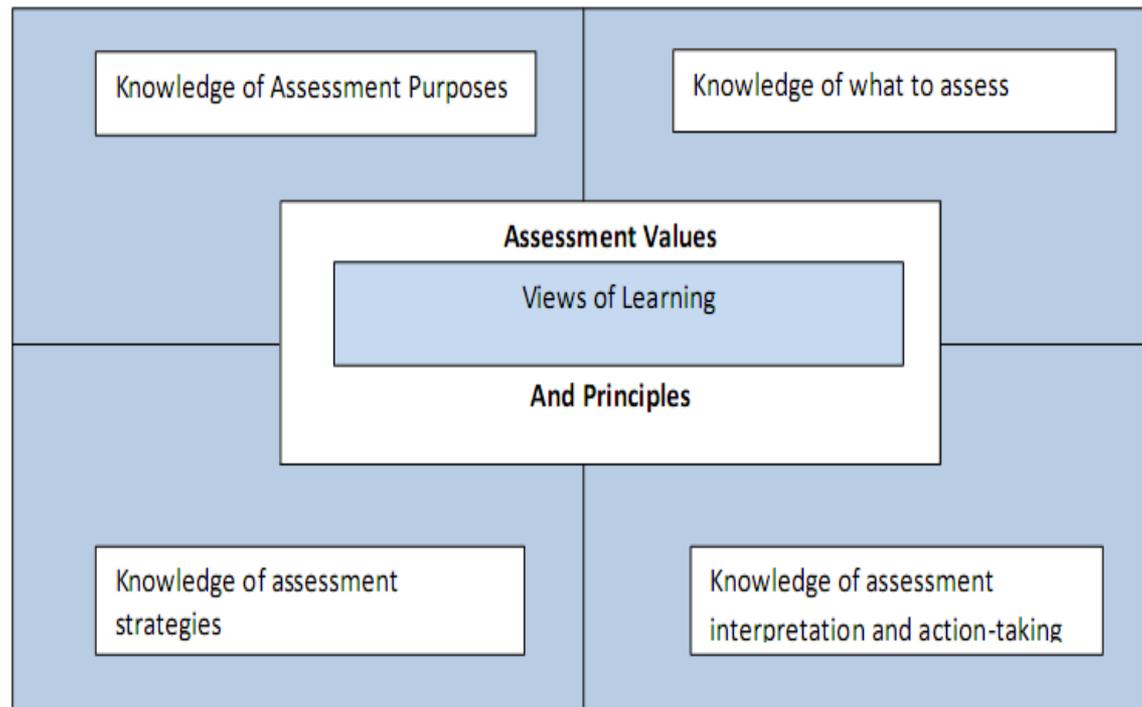
come to any assessment knowing what they are assessing, why they are doing so, how best to assess the achievement of interest, how to generate examples of performance, what can go wrong, and how to prevent these problems before they occur. Most important, those who are truly sensitive to the potential negative influences of inaccurate assessment never permit students to be put in a situation where their achievement might be mismeasured (p. 240)

Willis, Adie & Klenowski (2013)

assessment literacy is a dynamic context dependent social practice that involves teachers articulating and negotiating classroom and cultural knowledges with one another and with learners, in the initiation, development and practice of assessment to achieve the learning goals of students (p. 242)

A model for science teacher assessment literacy

(Abell and Siegel, 2011)



The Research

Aim:

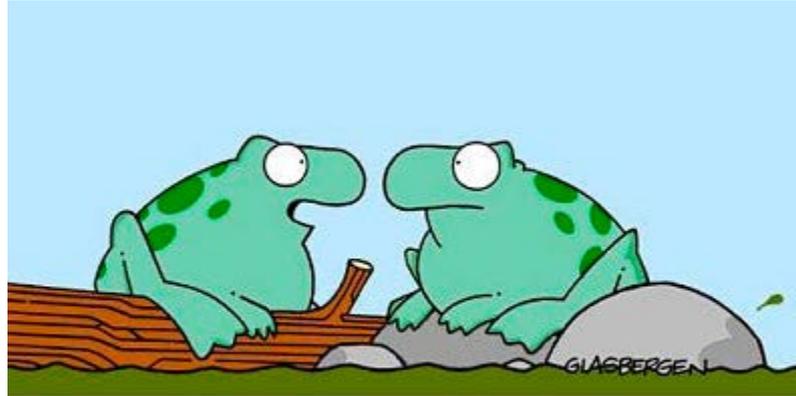
This study aimed to explore how beginner secondary science teachers developed their summative assessment literacy over approximately 20 months – through the one year Graduate Diploma teacher education programme and as they commenced their first year of teaching.

Objectives:

Through an investigation of the experiences of teachers this study focused on:

- The characteristics of assessment literacy for teachers, and how these developed/changed over an 20 month period.
- Factors that contributed to teachers' assessment literacy development

Data Collection



“Looks aren’t everything. It’s what’s inside you that really matters. A biology teacher told me that.”

The study involved a cohort of 8 beginner science teachers, 5 women 3 men, aged 23-50+, science/engineering/technology graduates

Data

Interviews (5 per person, over time – March, June, August, November, June)

Survey forms (3 per person, March, November, June) using survey from New Zealand research project: [Learning to become 'assessment capable' teachers 2009–2013](#) (Smith et al., 2014).

Artefacts (including developed assessment tasks, lesson and unit plans, assignments, marked work, class work – whatever they wanted to give me that they saw as relevant)

My observations in university classes (student attendance, perceived engagement, learning activities, content covered, assignments given, class discussion) in Science Education and Professional Practice courses

What beginner teachers learnt

Beginner teachers gained a range of knowledge about:

assessment purposes, what to assess, assessment strategies, interpretation and action taking, NZ context specific assessment including NCEA...

Learning about assessment was not 'even' over time, considerable growth was observed after each practicum.

The amalgam of knowledges was used to inform teachers' summative assessment decision-making

But their decision making was not just informed by what they knew.



Amplifiers and Filters at work

Just because a teacher 'knew' something, this did not necessarily predict their summative assessment practice.

Sociocultural context

Conceptions of assessment

Ethical matters

Emotional response

Sociocultural context

- **School assessment culture**

Oh, well, the school I was at, they made no secret of what they were. One teacher said to me that the school was assessment oriented, meaning exams and NCEA levels oriented. They made no bones about that at all. [Ryan, 14]

I've got complete freedom basically with these classes, so with the Year 11s we had four topics within our unit so at the end of each of those we'd do a bit of a flow chart together, and I'd [prepare a task] that they'd have to do. Instead of doing it all and assessing at the end, doing bits in between, which is really good. [Elisa, 15]

- **Students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds**

But not [I don't have confidence] in... Should we be assessing them differently, should we be assessing them the same, should we be changing the assessment, should we not be changing the assessment? [Kate, 13]

- **Wiremu's example**

Teacher conceptions

- **Summative assessment as being improvement focussed**

You have to have assessment to see how well the students are doing. ... for qualifications, for next year and all the rest of it. But I think the main purpose is assessments for teachers to see where the main gaps are, where our teaching could improve, or where the students just need more learning. [Benjamin, 14]

- **The importance of student creativity**

Their [senior students] imagination and creativity has just died ... I think it will narrow them down in their creativity, which I think is the big thing we should be trying to build. Well, that's what I'm going to try and do as a teacher. [Benjamin, 14]

- **Beliefs about prioritising student engagement**

All you want them to do is make them enjoy the subject. So it didn't really matter if I gave them a really easy test so they would get good grades and feel better after that ... Yes, it was no big deal. I changed the marking scheme so it wasn't that hard to get Excellence. One of the kids was really good in class for me, and he got Excellence. He said to me, 'I told my mum I got Excellence and she didn't believe me, can I take my test home to show her please?' He was really excited because he tried really hard in the test, and asked lots of questions during it ... It was a good payoff. [Elisa, 14]



Ethical matters

- **Treating people with respect and care**

Like if they don't like writing, don't give them a writing one ... Like some oral presentations because some of the students were so adverse to writing... or giving them a chance of posters, because if you gave them a poster even if it was just brainstorming, it would be done. Whereas if you gave them writing it was a nightmare ... Some kids can fully talk and tell you about it, but when it comes to putting pen to paper it can be a bit difficult. [Susie, 14]

But I realise that it is better to mark them harder in the [practise assessments], so they can see what they need to work on, and I kind of came to that realisation like halfway through ... so in the long run it is not going to be helpful ... So 'be nice' by marking them hard? [Bella, 14]

- **Honesty**

It's like everything has to be based on a criteria and justified somehow... I mean you can't just say I gave him an Achieved, there has got to be a reason behind it. Is this fair? "I thought he did enough effort in class, it wasn't enough for a Merit, so I'll just chuck him an Achieved because he hasn't failed?" No. [Wiremu, 13]

Facing ethical dilemmas

Teacher emotional response

- **Assessing as teachers**

Although decisions came into it, I hated marking to be honest. Like if they were so close [to passing], I just feel mean ... I don't even know the students but I still feel mean ... well I think, because I should have failed a couple of them ... I 'Achieved' them. [Bella, 14]

- **Being assessed as teachers**

I guess that is the biggest fear, it's just, oh man, imagine if I did this whole test and they all failed. I'd suck as a teacher ... I felt it was on me if they didn't pass, like it was my fault because I hadn't taught them correctly. [Mary, 12]

I am kind of nervous about what my judgement is going to be. Am I going to be judged based on my judgement of others? And so these things all go through your head. [Wiremu, 14]

Effects of amplifiers and filters

The teachers said that competing factors sometimes caused conflict or indecision for them, but at other times confirmed their next steps of action.

At times these factors generated tension for individual teachers, and their reasons for making assessment decisions were complex and not necessarily expected.

It was clear, however, that these amplifiers and filters influenced teachers' summative assessment decision making, including sometimes leading them to assess in ways that conflicted with what they had learnt (knowledge)

Summary

- **Sociocultural context** – the school the beginner teacher had practicum/worked in had a big effect, NCEA system had effect
- **Teachers' conceptions** – they reflected on their own experiences of being assessed, this gave them motivation to do certain things e.g. encouraging creativity, prioritising engagement in science, reducing exams, including oral assessment
- **Ethical matters** – beginner teachers wanted to be fair to all, especially struggling students, “do no harm” affected their practices, but need to be truthful about students' levels. They faced dilemmas over grading.
- **Emotional responses** – projected their own emotions on to students e.g. anxiousness, worrying about judging students' work, getting it wrong, frustration at students for underachieving

Implications

- Beginner teachers/associate teachers need to understand that learning about assessment doesn't mean teachers will apply what they learn
- An awareness of the effects of amplifiers and filters may help beginner teachers understand their decision-making
- Opportunity for personal reflection on the sets of amplifiers and filters that may affect their own assessment literacy and inform their decision making is important
- ITE providers needs to move beyond knowledge, be aware of the effects of types of schools for beginner teachers on practicum
- Pastoral care for beginner teachers could include specific support in the area of ethics and emotion with respect to assessment

Thank you

Frances.Edwards@waikato.ac.nz