

# DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE 7-14

Viv Wilson & Sue Kendall-Seatter









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Viv Wilson and Sue Kendall-Seatter

Canterbury Christ Church University



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### Companion Website for students

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# Guided Tour

## 10 Assessment for Learning

In this chapter you will:

- Consider the differences between assessment of learning and assessment for learning
- Examine the impact of different approaches to assessment on pupils' motivation and achievement
- Consider how approaches to assessment are embedded in a broader set of values and beliefs about learning, which are informed by learning theory
- Evaluate your own beliefs about the purposes of assessment
- Consider current developments in national policy and practice on assessment for learning

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**Case Study** boxes present vignettes that give an insight into real practice. The short questions posed in the **Thinking it Through** boxes provide regular opportunities to stop and reflect on what you've learnt.

Each chapter begins with a list of **Learning objectives**, providing a quick overview of what will be covered and clearly setting out the key learning goals.

### CASE STUDY

#### Two 'pen portraits'

Anna is always bright and alert and dresses smartly. She is, however, not always on time for classes and thinks she can deflect attention from this with humour and charm.

She puts a huge amount of effort into her work. She sits with a group of girls who are always right in the middle of classroom discussions and are always offering opinions. She is motivated by success and has been very upset when an assignment receives a lower grade than the one she was expecting.

She is very argumentative and holds her views strongly. With the encouragement of those around her she does not hesitate to engage in discussions on any topic and is remarkably inflexible in her views. She has once or twice stuck to her views so vociferously in the face of contrary text-based evidence that I have had to ask her to stop holding the class up with her immovable point of view.

Tom is a healthy and apparently happy pupil. He arrives on time for classes and is always alert and well dressed.

Early in his first term with me he enjoyed trying to use very long words in class and assignments, with the professed aim of catching me out. He didn't manage to do this and I marked him down on two occasions because the big word he used had been used incorrectly.

He enjoys the company of a small group of other boys, all of whom are quiet in class. He has become increasingly quiet in class as well. I would say that his peer group are a negative influence and they are not the sort of boys who respect academic success as much as they will respect a little quiet rebellion and attempts to avoid learning. When left to their own devices they do as little as possible and have not responded well to attempts to give them some independence of learning.

With thanks to Damien Scott Mason

### THINKING IT THROUGH

These descriptions of Anna and Tom (both 13 year olds) were written by a teacher at an early career stage. How far do you feel they are 'typical' of young adolescents? As you read on, consider how models such as that of Levin (below) could be applied to their behaviours as described here.

#### Social and emotional development and learning

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1980) suggests that there are eight stages of **psychosocial** development through which individuals pass, although the last two are

**Psychosocial:** the combination of psychological and social factors affecting mental health or social and emotional development.

### RESEARCH BRIEFING

The capacity for abstract thinking enables us to think hypothetically and to assess multiple outcomes. While this capacity develops during adolescence, many pupils in its early stages are still thinking mainly in more concrete terms. An interesting example of these types of thinking can be seen in the example shown in Figure 4.2, drawn from a medical context.

Concrete thinking	Abstract thinking
You said I'd get ill if I missed my medicine tablets. Did I forget them twice, and I played this, so I don't need them any more.	I missed my inhaler a week or two, but I think I got away with it because I wasn't doing much exercise. Think I'll leave them in the future. If I'm doing lots of exercise or in cold weather.

Figure 4.2 Concrete and abstract thinking  
Source: Christie, D. and Vines, R. (2005) Clinical review: ABC of adolescence, *BMJ*, Vol. 330 (5 February) pp. 301-304

Similarly, pupils were set the task of imagining the creation of a new society and asked 'What is the purpose of laws?' 'Younger adolescents tended to respond in more concrete terms: 'If we had no laws people could go round killing people', whereas older pupils gave replies such as 'To ensure safety and enforce the government' and 'They are basically guidelines for people' (Adelson, 1971, cited in Coleman and Hendry, 1990: 42).

As younger adolescents develop more independent reasoning, you may find that they demonstrate certain characteristics, which can be interpreted as confrontational, but may actually be a normal part of cognitive developmental processes. These include attempts to argue for the sake of arguing, and a tendency to jump to conclusions. In domestic situations these may also manifest as constantly finding fault with parents' or other adults' viewpoints, and while direct confrontation of this kind is less common in the school environment, it may translate into 'over-dramatic' responses to criticism or reprimand.

**Research briefings** explore classic and contemporary research studies, and examine their applications in the classroom.

VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PARENTING 49

automatically expecting parents to fit in with the structures and expectations of the school. This involves:

- examining our own values and assumptions about 'good' parenting;
- being sensitive about pupils' home backgrounds in terms of home-school communication;
- ensuring that schools are seen as welcoming to parents and carers from a variety of home contexts.

The next sections of this chapter consider these sometimes challenging issues in more detail.

**Values and assumptions about parenting**

Parents are seen as a crucial element in current government policy. 'We need parents who are prepared to take responsibility for supporting their child's education,' said David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education, in 1999. The subsequent introduction of home-school agreements which outlined parental responsibilities, as well as those of the school and individual pupil, marked the start of a series of initiatives aimed at increasing parental involvement in education. However, some writers have argued that these policies are based on assumptions about parents and their willingness (or lack of it) to support their children in school. If schools and teachers are to establish positive relationships with parents and sustain high expectations of pupils, we need to examine such assumptions carefully.

**CONTROVERSY**

**Making 'middle-class' assumptions?**

In 2001, the educational writer Sharon Gewirtz wrote an article called 'Cloning the Blair' (Gewirtz, 2001). She argues that government initiatives on parenting seemed to want everyone to share the kinds of values and behaviours supposedly represented by the then prime minister Tony Blair and his family. Since educational research shows that children of middle-class parents achieve better in school than those from working-class backgrounds, Sharon Gewirtz ironically suggests that policy makers have decided to 'make all families like middle-class families, or at least the ideal-typical middle-class family of much educational research'... in other words, to 'clone the Blair'.

However, she goes on to question whether these 'middle-class' attitudes and behaviours are really all that desirable. These include treating education like a marketplace and 'policing' what happens in schools; using social networks to engage with the education system for their children's advantage; and transmitting cultural values through activities such as museum visits and educational outings.

**Controversy** boxes tackle the more divisive topics, encouraging you to examine both sides of the argument and helping you to form your own point of view.

254 CHAPTER 11 INCLUDING ALL LEARNERS: DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE

In such cases there are a range of strategies that may need to be employed, including the involvement of learning mentors or other support, or provision of focused study support. Identifying the appropriate strategy will normally be the responsibility of the school's Gifted and Talented co-ordinator, whose role it is to ensure that pupils identified as being very able or having particular talents are appropriately supported. As with any other pupil, you will need to be sure that you are familiar with the nature of the support that is being provided and how you can ensure that the pupil(s) concerned can access it to best advantage in relation to your own teaching.

**OVER TO YOU**

**In training**

Have you encountered any pupil(s) identified as very able or gifted in a particular area? What provision have you made, or observed, to support such pupils within normal lessons in the light of the previous section of this chapter, do you feel this support could have been developed further?

**Starting your career**

Are you aware of any pupil(s) in your class(es) who might be underachieving in terms of their potential, as discussed above? How would you consider altering your own planning in order to support such pupils in the future? What systems exist in your school to offer further support for these pupils?

**Investigating learning and teaching**

Why is the underachievement of gifted and talented pupils such an area of concern? What is the role of teacher expectations in the (mis-)identification of gifted and talented pupils? What factor might prevent teachers from recognising the learning potential of some pupils?

The 'Launchpads' area of <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/shsbooks/education/receogifted/> provides useful information about the underachievement of gifted and talented pupils in both primary and secondary schools.

**Withdrawal, acceleration and 'curriculum enrichment': a challenge to inclusion, or a means towards achieving it?**

The practice of withdrawing pupils from classroom activities to provide additional support in relation to an identified need operates in a variety of forms, and in many schools. Such support lessons include focused literacy teaching sessions for

**Withdrawal:** the practice of withdrawing pupils from classroom activities to provide additional support in relation to an identified need.

**Acceleration:** the practice of 'speeding up' an individual pupil's academic development.

**Curriculum enrichment:** providing work within the normal classroom to extend the thinking of very able pupils, rather than 'moving the learner on' as with acceleration.

The **Over to you** feature includes questions and activities that encourage you to interrogate core issues, and reflect on their influence on your attitudes and your practice. Throughout the book you'll find clear, concise definitions of the relevant **Key terms** in the margin.

SOME BACKGROUND 249

However, an unintended outcome of the 'hands up' routine might be that some pupils learn that if they don't raise their hands, they need not engage with the lesson as they will not need to know the answer. As most teachers become aware of this possibility and vary their questioning style appropriately. However, they have often had to have the potential drawback pointed out to them during their initial training, since this routine is strongly ingrained as a 'teacherly' behaviour, often on the basis of their own memories of being a pupil.

**WORKING IN THE CLASSROOM**

Can you identify any 'routine actions' that you have noticed in school so far? Why do you think such routines are observed? What do you think are the intended outcomes of these routines for pupils? Are there any possible unintended outcomes?

More recently, the influential work of Schön (1983) has examined reflective action as applied to teaching. Schön is well known among educationalists for his distinction between 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action': the first being the capacity for making rapid judgements about how to respond in a given situation, and the second being deliberate consideration after an event. In his book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), Schön also discusses different ideas about teachers' knowledge and how teachers develop their own theories for application in the classroom. He rejects the idea that teachers act as technicians who apply the theories of others ('technical rationalism') and argues that teachers' professional knowledge is constructed through reflection on what they actually do in specific contexts and then applied in practice, becoming 'knowledge-in-action'. This is not to say that teachers should not be aware of, and examine, the ideas of other people, but that teachers have a particular kind of personal knowledge, developed in and through practice, that should be recognised and valued.

The influential writers we have so far referred to were concerned with examining broad principles of knowledge and teachers' knowledge in particular. They were not concerned with exploring what teachers actually reflect on, or suggesting what they should reflect on. This is a more difficult and contested area that is intimately bound up with questions of values and beliefs about the purpose of education. Thus two people who hold quite opposing views about educational issues could both be equally convinced of the importance of reflective practice.

**RESEARCH BRIEFING: TYPES OF REFLECTION**

Zeichner and Tabachnik (2001) discuss four main traditions that have emerged in discussions of reflective teaching. These traditions are not mutually exclusive, but represent the different focus or priority that has been identified in each case.

The **Working in the Classroom** feature helps you to make direct connections between the chapter content and your own classroom experience.

22 CHAPTER 3 CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

- Regular exchange visits by Year 6 and Year 7 teachers in order to observe lessons and share information about teaching methods.
- The development of 'bridging units' where teaching on a topic starts in the last weeks of the summer term in Year 6 and is continued in the secondary school in Year 7. This approach works best where primary and secondary schools plan the materials together and can share ideas about teaching approaches and assessment. However, this is more difficult if a school has pupils from a large number of feeder primaries. Sometimes pupils also feel that they are doing 'old work' if the bridging unit is strongly associated with their primary schooling.
- The use of induction or 'learning to learn' programmes early in Year 7, to develop study skills and problem-solving strategies.
- Structured intervention programmes in secondary schools to re-engage pupils with learning if they show signs of disaffection. These can involve providing time for pupils to talk about the difficulties they are having, often with pastoral support staff such as learning mentors, involving pupils in setting their own targets for improvement and acknowledging small steps in their progress.

(Culham, Gray and Bullock, 2003)

Continued concerns about maintaining levels of achievement and engagement with learning have meant that some secondary schools are now utilising forms of curriculum organisation and teaching similar to those operating in primary schools. The recent changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum support these approaches, which involve subject integration and fewer changes of teacher and teaching environment, to enable more focused pupil assessments, better pastoral support and greater stability for vulnerable learners. Other developments in bringing schools closer together arising from ECM may also increase shared understanding of teaching and learning approaches.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter has considered the range of influences, operating both within and beyond the school, which impact directly and indirectly on the classroom. The teaching and learning encounter can be imagined as taking place within a series of interdependent circles of influence on both teacher and learner. The classroom context is affected by the ethos of the school and by the demands of local and national policies on curriculum and classroom organisation. While these may have been informed by evidence from research, inspection evidence and analysis of statistical information about pupil achievement, policies will also be influenced by economic and ideological factors. Pupils within the 7-14 age range will have had to adjust to at least two different school contexts, and their motivation and engagement with learning will in part depend on how well these transitions are managed.

**Learning mentors:** person working within a primary or secondary school to support pupils identified as being 'at risk' of academic failure. They form a bridge between pastoral and academic concerns.

End of chapter **Summary** boxes pull together the key topics covered in the chapter, to help consolidate your understanding.