

# Importance of monitoring assessment record keeping and reporting



Over the course of the previous 30 years assessment has been a major focus of educational discussion and research. It is generally accepted that assessment is a vital part of a teacher's role which needs to be carefully considered. According to Kellough and Kellough (1999, p. 417),

“ Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes that depend on and affect one another. Thus, the assessment component deals with how well the students are learning and how well the teacher is teaching”.

Haydn (2009 cited in Capel et al 2009 page 329) defines assessment as “ all those activities which are undertaken by teachers, and others, to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning”. Although this is a fairly broad definition, it does allude to the wider importance of assessment. Assessment is used to measure teaching and learning and to inform future practice by individuals on various levels related to education:

Pupils - to identify current achievement, attainment and areas for progression.

Parents / carers - can identify and aid student progression; additionally understanding individual and school performance compared to national standards.

Teachers - to identify areas of strength and weakness in their pupil's skills and knowledge, thus informing planning, providing work of an appropriate challenge, covering the national curriculum and ensuring progression.

Senior Leaders / Governors – to identify schools areas of strength and areas of development with regard to national standards and additionally to local issues and demographics thus informing the school development plan.

Government – can use a variety assessment data and statistical testing to measure school performance, identifying good / best practice or areas which may need closer monitoring and support.

The assessment process clearly provides an extensive range of uses for many people associated with education and schools. It is important to break the assessment process down into two widely accepted strands, ‘assessment of learning’ (AOL) and ‘assessment for learning’ (AFL). AOL is characterised by the use of tests, targets and exams whereby pupils’ receive a fixed mark, grade or exam result (e. g. the end result of a GCSE exam) (O’Neill & Ockmore, 2006). In comparison, AFL is concerned more with the process of collecting information from pupils so that both they and the teacher can identify the current stage of learning taking place and therefore highlight what needs to be done next for learning to continue (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; 2002).

The purpose of AOL is to report on the achievement and attainment of pupils at a given time or stage within their learning (Harlen 2007), the term summative assessment is commonly used. Summative assessment refers to measuring the total sum of learning at a given point in time. It uses end of topic, end of key stage or end of qualification assessments to provide data which can be used to assess learning or to compare performance to national standards. These comparisons can be in different areas such as comparison

to peers (normative assessment), pupils past achievements (ipsative) or set criteria (criterion referenced e. g. National Curriculum level descriptors) (Riding and Butterfield 1990).

Clearly, assessing achievement encompasses ipsative assessment, assessing pupil's progression from previous grades and assessments to their most recent activity. This can be done at the student, school and LA level.

Students can record end of unit grades to understand and identify their own progression made (this can be linked to AFL); the school and Local Authority (LA) can use the assessment as performance indicators i. e. has the child made appropriate 3 levels of progress, is the school adding value to the child. Adding value can be an important factor; even though a child may not compare well to national averages, the child may have made significant progress in particular areas showing great ipsative improvements. For a school in a deprived area with fourth generation unemployment (such as my second school) this can show teachers, students and LA that progression and improvements are being made, even if these improvements are not reflected in the schools exam results or league tables.

Normative assessment is the assessment of a student compared to their peers (Browning 1997). Normative assessment is used frequently by many in education: by schools to place students in pathways / sets, by teachers to differentiate work and provide challenge and by LA / Government to compare schools and groups of students. Normative assessment does require students to be taking the same assessment. Potential problems arise via alternative / vocational qualifications or teacher judgement and discretion of

which tests students in their class may sit if the assessment is not a school-wide focus or policy.

Criterion referenced assessment is a common feature of most summative / AOL tasks now employed. Students are marked and ranked against a given criteria, a set benchmark; this may be a mark scheme for a GCSE or National Curriculum level descriptors correlated to specific year group for key stage 3 (National Curriculum testing). Criterion referenced assessments are believed to be much fairer and more objective than normative assessment (Dunn et al 2002) as all students are measured against the criterion given. This however provides some positive and negative features for those involved; teachers will become familiar with content to cover allowing adaption of teaching and experimentation to find best practice and hopefully improve learning. Students should be aware of standards and expectations that they must meet (linking with AFL) allowing for focus and attention to be paid to particular areas. Both teachers and students can familiarise with grade boundaries and nature of questions asked. Finally at a LA or Government level an objective comparison can be made from school to school, town to town or demographic to demographic. Unfortunately the positives can have a negative aspect. Teachers and students may teach and learn to the test resulting in a poor understanding of the subject but excellent grades being attained by 'coached' pupils. This can lead to inaccurate or insignificant comparisons being made by LA or Government and incorrect inferences being made.

Coaching or teaching to the test is somewhat of a topical issue within keys stage 2 and 3 education; with many schools choosing not to entre students <https://assignbuster.com/importance-of-monitoring-assessment-record-keeping-and-reporting/>

into Standard Assessment Tests (SATS) at the end of key stage 2 and 3 because of aforementioned issues. As mentioned ‘coaching’ for a test can provide weakness in subject knowledge resulting in overinflated expectations of a pupil’s ability causing problems for teachers and senior leaders. Firstly teachers will have to retest or find true baseline information allowing for effective provision and challenge of work; later difficulties can be created due to students having over estimated predicted grades or potential. This is an obvious concern for senior leadership as school results may be affected by a child not achieving potential, a potential which may be unrealistic before intervention and provision. For senior leaders at key stage 2 and 4 the figures could produce a rather insignificant league table of results affecting reputation and intake. Such problems are trying to be resolved with alternative forms of testing. The Middle Years Information System (MidYis) test is now commonly used. Midyis tests are sat with no prior preparation and are designed to “test ability and aptitude for learning rather than achievement” (<http://www.cemcentre.org/midyis>). The tests are available for students at the end of key stage 2 and 3 and have good correlations with attainment. The test measures a whole host of skills including reading, writing, maths, perception and skills such as visualisation, block counting and spatial awareness. As no prior preparation is involved, teaching to the test is removed.

Many schools now deploy assessment points throughout the year to monitor progression of pupils. There are many ways of collecting this data to monitor progression. Some schools may use the discretion of the teacher to produce a level based on their professional judgement; this can be done for academic

ability / achievements and also personal qualities such as effort level.

Additionally data can be produced from blanket assessments across faculties for particular year groups; or again with discretion of teachers to provide an assessment for their particular classes. Both rationales have merits and drawbacks to be considered before advancing with a particular methodology.

Indeed at key stage 4, summative assessments are mainly produced by or with reference to qualifications being studied by pupils. Qualification boards provide the criteria to judge students objectively within cohorts studying the same qualification; however differences in qualification expectations are vast. There is great provision set aside for young people in an attempt to ensure every child can achieve, make a positive contribution and ultimately develop and become employed. Depending on demographics and catchment the provision made by the school will vary greatly. A more affluent catchment area consisting of employed families with a higher regard for education is more likely to encourage academic achievement and qualifications, such as triple award science and GCSE qualifications; providing a more academic qualification base instead of a more skills, practical base. From limited experience these differences have been apparent; with a more affluent lead school offering a wider range of academic qualifications and GCSE's compared to a more deprived second school which provided a whole host of alternative qualifications such as BTEC, OCR National or applied GCSE's. Indeed this reflects engagement and choice from students but also shows the judgments which must be made by schools to match students to appropriate qualifications and assessments.

Due to the nature of KS4 assessment teaching to the test is not an option. Skills based, practical qualifications often involve students producing evidence of meeting benchmark standards or gaining experience. The more academic qualifications ask questions in a variety of ways, including open questions, forcing students to understand their subjects. There is some discrepancy and controversy in data being produced at the end of key stage 4 due to GCSE equivalent qualifications. Schools currently use equivalents as a part of the data produced for Key stage 4 A-C grades; with many arguing that equivalents do not have the same rigour as GCSE's, an issue currently being reviewed at Government level by Professor Alison Wolf on behalf of the Department of Education.

The data being produced at the end of key stage 4 via summative assessment plays a vital role in school performance. RAISEonline provides “analysis of school and pupil performance data” with aims of “allowing school to better self evaluate, provide common data analysis for schools, LA, inspectors and school improvement partners and better support teaching and learning”; it will enable schools “to examine context, attainment and value added data – explore hypotheses about pupil performance and moderate pupil targets” ([https://www. raiseonline. org/About. asp](https://www.raiseonline.org/About.asp)). The subjects mainly covered by RAISEonline are English, Maths and Science with some information on all GCSE subjects at the end of Key Stage 4. The document can provide a comparative of the school relative to national standards not only on attainment but also context and demographics. It is possible to see percentage of pupils on free school meals indicating deprivation, looked after children, percentage of pupils from ethnic



backgrounds or that has Special Educational Needs status; all of which bring about varied challenges for schools. This allows schools to be put into to context in terms of pupils, catchment and demographics. Additionally prior attainment can be considered. Those schools with a higher than average number of pupils achieving a level 4 (on average) and a lower than average achieving a level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 will find it more difficult to achieve a higher percentage of A-C grades (as with second school experience). This may result in more intervention being made for a larger number of students on C/D borderline to help increase attainment levels.

RAISEonline uses an average point score (each level given an equivalent number to allow for statistical testing) to provide a picture of the attainment of pupils of all abilities. This can be used as mentioned above or it can be used to identify groups which may need more assistance e. g. a high score for GCSE points but low A-C points would suggest many students received qualifications for GCSE or equivalents but only managed 4 or less and not 5. This may suggest that middle ability students need to be extended further to achieve a C or that equal opportunities could be better promoted as other schools on average attain more C grades. At the lead school, average point score for English, Maths and Science is consistent with the national average however A\*-C score is higher, this may suggest that middle ability students are focused on more for the core subjects with optional subjects being better resourced and focused to achieving higher grades.

The final piece of RAISEonline data I will consider is the Contextual Value Added (CVA) score. CVA is a prediction of attainment that accounts for pupil background, prior attainment, demographical or situational difficulties (as <https://assignbuster.com/importance-of-monitoring-assessment-record-keeping-and-reporting/>

mentioned). If a school has a high CVA score (as with second school) it would suggest that the school is making very good progress with students, this may not be reflected in the average point score for A-C grades; but catchment area of pupils will limit that potential. If a school is very high in CVA it would suggest that the pupils are making more progress than predicted compared to national average. If this is not the case, further investigation can be complete to determine areas which need more attention and support to raise attainment, thus affecting the school development plan; an area which should continually evolve with the use of RAISEonline data. Over the next few months and years RAISEonline itself is likely to be adapted and evolved as current government reviews will change how schools and education is measured. The aforementioned Wolf Review will focus on vocational qualifications to determine which are sufficiently rigorous and useful to students and economic society. The recently released White Paper - The Importance of Teaching is set to change how schools are measured; with an inclusion of Science to English and Maths as a floor target. The paper also outlines the importance of GCSE's and the movement away from vocational qualifications; rendering such vocational or alternative qualifications as obsolete and ineffectual.

Within the exploration of summative assessment, there have been improvements in my knowledge of the range of assessments (Q12 appendix 2), which have incorporated the assessment requirements for those who I need to teach and their qualifications (Q11 appendix 1). The range is vast and importance must be placed on suiting the student to the qualification, considering rigour of qualification, strengths of the student and their

aspirations. This is particularly important for student attainment and achievement and also school performance. Due too much of the data generated in summative assessment being used to provide data for statistical analysis (Q13 appendix 3); its importance must not be undervalued. Having accurate information on student ability, school context and issues can only serve as a benefit for teachers, a benefit which should be maximised. The information can be used coherently as part of the teaching and learning process, raising standards and levels of attainment.

The second strand of assessment, Assessment For Learning (AFL), is very different to AOL. AFL is more concerned with the process of collecting information from pupils so that both they and the teacher can identify the current stage of learning taking place and therefore highlight what needs to be done next for learning to continue, rather than assess the learning taken place (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; 2002). The term formative assessment is commonly used in place of AFL being described by Bell and Cowie (2001) as “ assessment which is intended to enhance teaching and learning”.

An analogy of making soup describes the difference most clearly; when a soup is being prepared, the cook tastes the soup, adjusting amounts of ingredients and determining what needs to be added, this is formative assessment. When the soup is served and tasted by customer that is summative assessment (Guskey 2000, cited in Lund and Tannehill 2010 p86). AFL is usually an informal process, entrenched in all facets of teaching and learning (Black et al 2003). As figure 1 illustrates, formative assessment can be best described as an ongoing process that interlinks with other <https://assignbuster.com/importance-of-monitoring-assessment-record-keeping-and-reporting/>

elements such as planning, teaching and learning (Casbon and Spackman, 2005)

Figure 1. The plan-teach-learn-assess cycle (cited Bailey, 2001 p141)

The cycle illustrated reflects the relentless approach needed by teachers to meet best practice. Assessment must be used in order for the teacher to glean understanding of ability and set appropriately challenging work. This clearly links to planning to organise such work, allowing effective teaching and progressive learning. As teachers glean this knowledge of the group, they often require baseline data to assist their own judgments. Diagnostic Assessment (DA) is often used; it involves teachers assessing pupils' progress against a given criteria (a potentially summative task), allowing them to become informed about their next steps in planning for effective learning (a largely formative task). There is debate over DA forming a part of formative assessment, summative assessment or being an individual, separate entity. In my opinion, due to its very nature of ascertaining previous knowledge, strengths, weaknesses and skills to inform planning, it is a part of the assessment for learning process. Indeed the DA may be an overlapping area of the 2 strands of assessment; completed in a more summative or formative way, largely depending on teaching style and preference.

Upon completion of DA, the continual cycle mentioned above will become an inherent focus for the teacher. As emphasised by O'Neill & Ockmore (2006), assessment should not be viewed as a separate entity, but rather an imbedded principle as the other elements are dependent on this to develop

and progress effectively. Using the levels ascertained in summative or diagnostic assessment, the teacher can then enhance learning and future attainment. An influential paper by Black and Wiliam (1998) “ Inside The Black Box; raising standards through classroom assessment” showed formative assessment to have a pivotal role in raising standards, particularly when students are actively involved in the assessment process; and the results of assessments are used to inform planning. This information is invaluable to teachers. As mentioned via the learning cycle assessment is vital to inform planning and thus facilitating effective teaching and learning. By incorporating students into the process, focusing on quality of learning and feedback, educational and learning standards can be raised. Additionally, Black and Wiliam (1998) explored developmental areas for improvement; providing some indication of evidence to support particular improvements of formative assessment methodology; indicating that the process requires further developments.

The Assessment Reform Group (ARG) attempted to provide such developments; as a follow up to Inside The Black Box, the ARG produced Assessment For Learning: Beyond The Black Box (1999) identifying five key factors in effective AFL:

providing effective feedback to pupils;

actively involving pupils in their own learning;

adjusting teaching to take account of assessment results;

recognise the influence of assessment on pupil motivation and self-esteem, both vital to learning

considering the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and to understand how to improve.

In practice, for educators, the factors clearly allude to facilitating understanding of what good learning or work is to students; they can therefore identify their stage of learning, areas to develop and how to improve. The ARG (1999) also provided risk factors with regard to assessment, factors which undermine the AFL process and should be avoided, these include;

having an emphasis on quantity and presentation rather than valuing quality of learning;

lowering confidence / self-esteem by concentrating on judgements and thus not providing advice for improvement;

providing feedback to serve managerial / social purposes rather than helping pupils learn more effectively;

working without a sufficient understanding of pupil learning needs.

Building on the ARG's work and their own work in developing formative assessment Black and Wiliam et al (2002) produced *Working Inside The Black Box; Assessment For Learning In The Classroom*; hoping to pick up where they had left off and further develop AFL pedagogy under four main headings:

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## **Questioning**

To develop educators questioning skills, asking pertinent questions, allowing thought and response time for students, having follow up activities that are meaningful, and finally, only asking questions for which the teacher requires information or that the students need to think about. These are fairly simple points and a concept which can be considered and introduced to teaching practice quickly and efficiently; improving teaching and learning with a fairly immediate effect.

## **Peer and Self Assessment**

Criteria for evaluating learning must be shared with and be clear to pupils; thus facilitating a clear overview of the aims of the work and what it means to be completed successfully. Pupils should be taught the habits and skills of self and peer assessment so that students can keep in mind the aims of the work and assess progress as they proceed. This will hopefully allow pupils to develop learning in a unique way which cannot be achieved in any other way. Practically this means sharing learning objectives and outcomes of lessons and activities and making self and peer assessment a common process. Revisiting aims of learning and assessing success can then be used to guide learning both for the teacher and by the student, promoting independence.

## **Feedback Through Marking**

Written tasks should encourage pupils to develop and show understanding of key features of the subject studied. Written feedback should identify areas of strength, improvement and how to make that improvement; additionally

providing opportunity for the improvements to be made. And finally to be effective, feedback should stimulate thinking to take place. In an area often rushed, it is clearly invaluable for teachers to consider their comments.

Providing effective feedback empowers the student and allows for independent improvement; indeed, opportunities for learners to make the improvements are vital. The effective feedback concept is one which can be closely linked to peer and self evaluation. Having a consistent approach with clear criteria, making assessment and feedback a habitual process, will assist all feedback to be thought about and considered by the learner.

## **Formative Use Of Summative Tests**

Summative tests should be seen to be a positive part of the learning process. Pupils should be engaged in a reflective way of the work they have done to revise effectively. This may and should involve students setting and marking questions within given criteria, to help them understand how the assessment process works and ways to improve. This can be linked closely to peer and self assessment and effective feedback once again promoting self ownership to students.

It is imperative that teachers consider the formative assessment process and apply principles effectively and frequently. Teaching and learning goes hand in hand emphatically underlying the need for an open, clear process, which involves the student to think and consider at every possible opportunity.

At the lead school many different activities have been engaged as part of the formative assessment process; many of which reflect the aforementioned principles and features of AFL. There is however a clear scope for



improvement; especially in providing a transparent criteria for students to understand in completing their work. This does not reflect coaching to the test as mentioned in summative assessment, more of an understanding of what is expected to classify excellent work and how expectations can be met. To improve practice it is important to habitually employ the features of good AFL technique; this will assist students in becoming very aware of the learning process and their own learning needs whilst allowing teachers to facilitate the learning to maximal effect and efficiency.

Within my exploration of AFL there have been vast improvements to my pedagogy and practice of assessment. The formative assessment process has immense importance to ensure effective teaching and learning (Q12 appendix 2). The AFL process can encapsulate all other forms of assessment to make the purpose more beneficial to the student; enhancing the learning cycle and thus teaching and learning. Statistical data and national information (Q13 appendix 3) can be used to inform the AFL process; likewise AFL can be used to enhance the summative process. In my opinion, AFL is one the most important aspect of classroom practice. It will allow further knowledge of students and ability, both by the student themselves and the teacher; leading to better planning, teaching and learning. This can only better serve the student and facilitate improvements in attainment.

An area for development at the lead and second school was the recording of AFL. Formative assessment can provide a far more holistic picture of a child, the learning journey and performance comparatively to summative assessment. It removes individualised responses to the test condition and pressure felt at the time. Additionally, recording the formative assessment <https://assignbuster.com/importance-of-monitoring-assessment-record-keeping-and-reporting/>

process enables teacher reflections of the learning taken place; ensuring all range and content is covered whilst facilitating better planning and enhancing the active learning cycle. This is an area which has little focus but could play a vital part in best practice for teaching and learning.

A particularly important area for me is to ensure improved links between the formative and summative process. The summative process must be used in a more engaged, learning centred way stimulating thought and encompassing more AFL ideology. Thus making the learning journey more meaningful and enjoyable for students; hopefully promoting confident, motivated, independent, life long learners; of which all reach their full potential.

In conclusion, all forms of assessment have merits and advantages. It is however the skill and knowledge of the teacher, in selecting the best suited assessment for the task, student ability and aims of learning which is most vital. The assessment process for the student must be transparent and informed allowing for thought and reflection thus facilitating higher standards and superior learning.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

Q11 - Know the assessment requirements and arrangements for the subjects/curriculum areas in the age ranges they are trained to teach, including those relating to public examinations and qualifications.

## **Appendix 2**

Q12 - Know a range of approaches to assessment, including the importance of formative assessment.

## **Appendix 3**

Q13 - Know how to use local and national statistical information to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching, to monitor the progress of those they teach and to raise levels of attainment.