

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND BEGINNING TEACHERS: READY OR NOT?

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ABSTRACT

Quality Assurance Agency subject reviews of higher education indicate that assessment is an area of concern (Rust, *et al.*, 2005) though the usefulness of formative assessment strategies for supporting learning is well documented (Laurillard, 2002; Taras, 2001, 2002, 2003; Yorke, 2003; Falchikov, 2005). Concurrently, UK policy initiatives are in place to ensure the use of formative assessment in schools. There are few investigations of how teacher education institutions utilise assessment as a learning tool though teacher education merits detailed examination, sitting between higher education and the school sectors. This paper explores issues of formative assessment as a content element of educational studies modules. It gauges how assessment techniques are utilised in work with beginning teachers, specifically as exemplified in one teacher education institution. Finally it considers how teacher educators negotiate learning about assessment with student teachers within the context of a school-focussed national policy initiative to implement formative assessment.

INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes that it is time to reconsider the contribution of teacher education institutions to the implementation of national policy initiatives in education. The relationship between teacher education and policy management is a fruitful area for investigation beyond local or national boundaries though the particular example used in this paper is contextualised within a Scottish policy initiative for the implementation of formative assessment strategies in all schools by 2007.

At the present time a wide range of policy initiatives is being prioritised, among these active citizenship, sustainable development, ICT, health, enterprise, curriculum flexibility. Some national developments, however, have significant effects on pedagogy and in such situations teacher educators may find themselves challenged to respond to changes in their own educational practice, even as they continue with consultation, implementation or evaluation activity relating to the particular initiative. This paper suggests that formative assessment is an initiative that presents a challenge to educators in all sectors and merits special consideration in ITE courses as we move towards the implementation date.

The following brief account of the formal introduction of formative assessment into school practice gives the context for the analysis of the situation of beginner teachers completing their training as the policy initiative moves towards its implementation date. The initiative was based on the findings gathered and published by Black and Wiliam (1998a) as one corpus of international research work. Since 2002, when the *Assessment is for Learning* programme was initiated, inservice presentations and development projects have been undertaken with the intention that strategies are put in place in all schools. In keeping with the plans, the implementation of formative assessment strategies has been funded and supported centrally but driven by teacher willingness to apply four key approaches to assessment practice (Black, *et al.*, 2002). Teachers participating in the first project took the work of the research team of King's College and the developments of the research findings made by teachers in English schools in the King's Medway Oxford Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP) and incorporated the strategies into their own classroom approaches.

Typically local education authorities have allocated funds to support training and development projects in schools as and when and in whatever reasonable manner suited the circumstances of the cluster.

The *Assessment is for Learning* initiative has been described as an interesting change of direction for policy makers in Scotland. Some believe that it accords recognition to the failure of previous national assessment policies to alter how teachers operate in schools (Swann and Brown, 1997). It seems to adjust a previous development model by moving away from imposition by the Scottish Executive Education Department, and subsequent monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, towards individualising how schools, supported by development officers, incorporate changes to practice. As this initiative extends its influence to more and more schools across Scotland, teachers are being encouraged to adopt and adapt formative assessment strategies to enhance the learning of pupils from age three to eighteen years.

An overview of recent and current depictions of the how this initiative is progressing gives a wide range of responses. *AifL* Development Officers, assessment consultants, and a number of researchers (Hayward, Priestley and Young, 2004; Priestley and Sime, 2005; Hayward and Hedge, 2005), in public discourses at least, suggest that the implementation of formative assessment strategies in schools indicates a paradigm shift. In contrast, anecdotal evidence and personal experience of informal chat indicate that some of the more cynical practising teachers are of the view that the development signals the latest initiative by the Scottish policy community to seem to be addressing concerns about attainment standards. Researchers and writers at a number of levels describe varying practice in classrooms in which formative assessment is employed. Reported but unpublished action research projects, such as are to be found within the GTCS Teacher-Researcher programme and *AifL* research web pages offer empirical evidence from small-scale investigations that formative assessment strategies can have an impact on pupil learning. In academic texts (Simpson, 2006) and practitioner development manuals (Clarke, 2001, 2005) there are argued cases made for interchanges between theory and policy and between research findings and classroom practice. However, unpublished research dissertations (Miller, 2004; Reid, 2005) offer evidence that some Scottish teachers may be utilising strategies within the context of a school development target but doing so without considering the deeper adjustments required in their approaches to learning. Black, *et al.* (2003) in their description of the KMOFAP findings classified the participating teachers in four ways: 'Experts' whose formative assessment practices were "embedded in and integrated with practice"; 'Moving pioneers' who were "successful with one or two key strategies, but having routinized these were looking for other ways to augment their practice"; 'Static pioneers' who restricted themselves to one or two successful strategies and 'Triallers' whose attempts had not lead to embedding of strategies into practice (2003: 28). In reporting on the Scottish initiative first phase Hayward, *et al.* (2004) identify support mechanisms to allow teachers to adopt new beliefs about learning: input from education authority assessment coordinators and other 'critical friends'; funding for meetings and training sessions; well-informed senior managers; school teams working together and a culture of participative learning. In such settings Hayward, *et al.* (2004), also citing Hallam, *et al.* (2003), note: "increased levels of pupil engagement, pupil confidence and pupil enthusiasm" (Hayward, *et al.*, 2004: 411). Furthermore Hayward (2004) records teacher perception of improved learning and evidence of positive attitudes in teacher satisfaction with their involvement. However where appropriate pre-conditions were not in place or where the school culture was not supportive of examining existing practice, the outcome was less certain: "teachers who showed little interest in reading, reflecting, accommodating, discussing and sharing practice and materials have enjoyed less success with the project" (2004: 406-7). Anecdotally

AifL Development Officers and teacher educators who observe practice in schools confirm that there are many teachers who have recognised the significance of the strategies in relation to learning and many others who teach the strategies without adjusting their approaches to use assessment as a core learning tool.

Against this background, the results of the investigation reported here suggest that teachers beginning their careers may be under-prepared for utilising the recommended strategies at the end of their teacher training courses. Given the SEED commitment to implementation in all schools by 2007 and in relation to the development model adopted of teacher as starting point, the pre-service experience of beginning teachers in assessment practice is a particularly pertinent area for investigation.

ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Student teachers are at the intersections of perhaps four communities of practice in relation to assessment. Having been pupils, most have experienced school assessment of their own learning; as students, they have been and are being assessed by higher education criteria; as pedagogues, they are learning about theories of assessment; as novice teachers, they are observing what their teaching colleagues do and say about assessing pupil work. An important issue for teacher educators is the recognition of the tensions and contradictions inherent in such a situation. The commentaries of the Assessment Reform Group (2002), Goos and Moni (2001) and others cited in this paper provide indications that this mixture of perception may lead to confused and ineffective practice of assessment.

There are various understandings that may be useful to this reconsideration of how teacher educators prepare beginning teachers to become assessors of pupil work. Postgraduate teachers in training and undergraduate student teachers completing the final year of their academic and professional education have personal and direct experience of assessment in ways that may impact significantly on the approaches they adopt as teachers. Their professional careers begin after a minimum of four years of study in higher education institutions in which recent concerns have clustered round the management of learning and assessment at a general level. As a starting point, therefore, current evaluations of assessment in higher education merit investigation.

In literature addressing the drive to improve student attainment in higher education generally, a wide range of strategies is offered and a large number of perspectives explored (Anderson and Boud, 1996; Lea and Street, 1998; Day, Grant and Hounsell, 1998; Brown, 1999; Boud, 1999; Entwistle, 2000; Lillis, 2001; O'Donovan, *at al.*, 2001; Holmes, 2001; Rust, 2002; McDonald and Boud, 2003; Hounsell, 2003). Common to this work is the view that there is the potential for improved practice in assessment and a concern that, in many courses, student learning may be at a superficial level and focussed on achieving module and course passes.

In the last fifteen years, as initiatives to widen higher education provision have developed, there has been debate about the role that assessment practices may play in affecting learning. Many writers agree with the evaluation of assessment in higher education as highlighted by Rust, *et al.* (2005) and offer suggestions as to how the matter can be remedied (Ramsden, 1992; Boud, 1995; Brown, 1999). For educators who place their allegiances with constructivist epistemology the types of assessment practice which value collaboration and cooperation between learners and between learners and tutors point the way forward for dealing with the weaknesses (Palinscar, 1998; Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003). As Black and Wiliam's (1998a) work has been impacting on the relationship between learning and assessing at school levels, there has been a concurrent general drive for change in tertiary sector assessment practice. In particular the sharing of criteria and introduction of peer and self-assessment opportunities have been the subject of many higher education initiatives, as the large number of writers cited above have indicated.

Though the *Assessment is for Learning* initiative has concentrated most of the support and research activity directed to school, rather than tertiary sectors, there is some evidence that higher education and particularly teacher education institutions have had opportunities to engage with these types of formative assessment strategies.

Very specifically a project team 'Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Feedback' (SENLEF) supported by the Higher Education Academy has been in operation since 2004. The project describes itself as: 'a resource for practitioners wishing to improve their feedback practice' (www.heacademy.ac.uk/senlef.htm). It offers principles of effective feedback, research findings, case studies of projects undertaken by Higher Education Institutions across Scotland (none of which refers to any faculty of education or teacher education work) and a very detailed briefing paper (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2004). However, the SENLEF Seven Principles proposed for good feedback practice are couched in terms very similar to those used to describe *Assessment is for Learning* 'big ideas'. Nor are the recommendations much different from the "Student centred learning: assessment practices – a checklist" offered by Boud (2004) as a means of examining assessment practices to support lifelong learning.

While teacher educators in the faculty in which this study was conducted have been seeking to apply the principles of sustainable assessment and lifelong learning in the terms employed by Boud (2004), it is the Assessment Reform Group approaches which have been incorporated into the content of educational and professional studies modules. However, the strategies of *sharing criteria*, *selfassessment* and *peer assessment* which were identified as the key areas for investigation are the major elements proposed by most of the writers concerned with improving student learning.

ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Considerable work has been published in the United Kingdom on the research foundations, on implementation approaches and on the efficacy of formative assessment in school level use (Black and Wiliam, 1998b; Clarke, 2001, 2005; Assessment Reform Group, 2002; Black, *et al.*, 2003; Smith, 2003). There is less on how teacher educators might develop the strategies specifically in work with teachers in training.

The Assessment Reform Group (2002) judges that there are two stages and modes of professional development: formal preservice and continuing professional training and informal peer observation and interaction. Earlier commentaries from the Group (1999) indicate concerns about how Initial Teacher Training might deal with the starting points of the pre-service stage:

The trainees' own experience of being educated is likely to lead them to view assessment primarily as a process of summarising and grading. The education system at the national level currently also appears to be concerned more with generating indicators of pupil performance than with making effective use of assessment information in the classroom. In these circumstances, how much attention will assessment for learning be given in training institutions' courses and in training schools? (1999: 9)

Nor are the issues pertinent only to the UK context. Goos and Moni (2001), working as teacher educators in Australia, recognise the gaps between pre-service training and classroom assessment requirements as being an issue for teacher educators and cite evidence from a range of literature review and research contexts:

It has been argued that the main reason for this [teachers' feeling that they lack knowledge about assessment] may be inadequate pre-service training in assessment which has led to teachers having a limited understanding of assessment issues. (Bateson, 1994; Daniel and King, 1998; Stiggins and Conklin, 1992). (2001: 74)

The Australian perspective recognises the part to be played by teacher education in promoting a changed approach, shifting focus from assessment of learning to assessment in learning. In their own practice, Goos and Moni (2001) deal with gaps between teacher education and school approaches by adjusting methods so that strategies are modelled in workshops and tutorials that they conduct with student and inservice teachers. This paper contends that it is an important challenge for teacher educators in Scotland to find ways of integrating their practice with their espoused theories of assessment and learning as this particular policy initiative moves towards an official implementation deadline.

Evidence of the current recognition of the need for work in teacher education in Scotland is demonstrated by the establishment of a Higher Education Institution group, representing every teacher education institution in Scotland, in the *Assessment is for Learning* programme. In the Spring 2005 *AifL* Newsletter Louise Hayward describes the contribution of the group as having three elements: offering research insights to those who were establishing the programme in its early phase; promoting investigation of the projects set up in schools; raising awareness of *AifL* for teachers enrolled in further study courses in teacher training institutions (2005: 18). What emerges from close examination of the text presented in the HEI group newsletter page is the prioritisation of research and evaluation within higher education input and rather less consideration of developing pre-service teachers' knowledge and practice. This study makes the argument that the further shift that is required is in teacher educator modelling and use of formative assessment with student teachers.

Against this background how do the graduate and postgraduate beginning teachers experience and understand assessment in their learning as they prepare to work in Scottish schools? This question was the starting point for the audit of practice in the modules of three courses – Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary), Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary) and Final Year Bachelor of Education with Honours.

METHODS

The aim of this study was to investigate the links and gaps between the treatment of assessment in the teacher training year and the policy intention of teachers' implementation of formative assessment strategies in schools.

Course experiences of student teachers

Having confirmed from the literature that prior experience of formative assessment could not be assumed from undergraduate learning, the starting point for the audit was the teacher training course experience. The three particular areas chosen for examination were: the module coverage of the topic of assessment; the application of assessment procedures to student teacher work; beginning teacher perceptions elicited by end-of-course questionnaire responses.

Coursework Coverage

The first element of the audit was an analysis of the documentation relating to assessment as a topic of the educational and professional studies modules, these being where policy, educational contexts and the principles of learning and teaching are covered. One example is examined here in order to establish the module coverage of formative assessment as a study topic.

Assessment is the topic of three lectures and constitutes one of the assessable assignments of the one-year secondary postgraduate course. This element of the course is highlighted as significant by the status of the presenting lecturers and by the topic being assessed in one of only three formal course assignments. The recommended readings, the content of the lectures and the tutorial activities deal

with policy, theory, practitioner strategies and the tensions between assessment as a tool of measurement and assessment as a learning tool.

The reading list refers to ten chapters in the core texts for the module, to Black and Wiliam (1998b; 2002) and to a number and range of recent SEED, Scottish Council for Research in Education and Scottish Qualification Authority documents. The core texts offer recently updated and authoritative presentations of assessment, taking account of relevant, current research findings and policy decisions and current thinking on the place of assessment in the learning and teaching of the secondary school. Web links for the work of Dylan Wiliam provide possibilities of extensive additional exploration of theory, research findings and practical applications relating to formative assessment. The *AifL*, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Scottish Executive Education Department and related education agencies' web addresses are also recommended.

In the general presentation on assessment, delivered by a professor of education, formative assessment is an important focus and a local authority adviser working as a staff development officer for formative assessment presents the key lecture on the topic. The final session delivered by the Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority deals with the qualifications system and classroom teacher roles in assessment for certification of learning. All three presenters are experts with high status professionally and their contributions are authoritative. A range of aspects of assessment perspectives is incorporated by the choice of these three representatives: educational research and academic publishing; Local Education Authority staff development; and government agency and policy community. Tutorial sessions involve student teachers in discussion and activity to support the learning about assessment.

In summary, the coursework coverage makes it possible for beginning teachers on this particular course to gain cognitive appreciation of what it means to use assessment in classrooms. For each of the other two cohorts there is very similar provision. In relation to the nature of the course content and the priority given to the topic, there may seem to be little to criticise in how student teachers are prepared for assessment roles in schools. The findings of the survey reported in this paper, however, cast doubt on whether cognitive appreciation and prioritising of the topic lead to readiness to adopt the strategies.

Coursework Assessments

For PGDE (Secondary) students this learning about assessment is checked by means of an assignment, given to student teachers in the Course Handbook issued from the first day of the course. It is scheduled for submission after attendance at the entire Educational Studies lecture and tutorial programme and at the end of 14 weeks of school placement. The assignment relates directly to course coverage of assessment as a topic and exploits placement experience. The task is constructed to take account of knowledge about formative assessment and to encourage reflection on the uses of assessment to support learning.

However the assessment applied to the assignment widens the gap between modelling of professional practice and the experience of the student teachers as learners in a number of significant ways. There are no formative tasks in advance of the assessable assignment. No task-specific criteria are issued or negotiated with learners. No collaborative activity is recommended in the tutor notes. The assignment is a summative assessment task graded as Merit, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. And so, it could be argued, student teachers discover the gaps between what they have read and been told about formative assessment and the assessment system applied to their assignments.

While there are similarities between all three cohorts in how assessment as a topic is taught the PGDE (Primary) is the student group who have direct personal

experience of the application of formative assessment in their learning and who explore the links between policy and assessment practice. In following the instructions for the assessment it is possible for students: to apply the criteria in the construction of the submission; to work collaboratively with others in the preparation stages; to use the checklist for peer and/or self assessment of their own submission. The assessment procedures for the task incorporate: peer assessment; specified criteria issued in advance of the construction of a group presentation; three way dialogue feedback between assessed group, assessing group and tutor. In terms of the sequencing of the three parts of the assessment task there are common strands of principles, policy and practice to be addressed and a requirement to incorporate reading and research. Only in the final and summative task are the criteria applied as mastery indicators of end-of-course assessment, rather than as scaffolds to learning.

For all three groupings the criteria used in the assessments of assignments are given in student course books and tutorial time is specifically allocated to covering formative assessment and yet the questionnaire responses reveal that only a small proportion of the entire survey group of 481 ITE students perceive themselves to have had experienced directly a small number of the strategies of formative assessment in their own learning.

Questionnaire responses

Questionnaires were completed during the final classes of each of the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary), the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary) and final year Bachelor of Education with Honours courses, all from 2004–2005 cohorts. These questionnaires consisted of 7 questions requiring an indication of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as the response to statements.

The questions have the following five purposes:

- to ascertain the student teachers’ recognition of the SEED implementation date as a detail of policy management;
- to check recognition of the term ‘sharing criteria’ from course documentation;
- to identify student teachers’ recognition of tutor reference to criteria;
- to identify student teacher perception of tutor support for applying strategies;
- to record the claims of student teachers of their use of the self assessment strategy.

The responses are reported as recorded and the results are presented in the form of the percentages of affirmative or negative responses in relation to the total number of participants in each of the groupings. The totals recorded reveal the affirmative or negative responses in relation to the 481 participants. In a few cases students did not answer particular questions or made a comment rather than choosing either of the offered responses.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

General Points

In synthesising the analyses a number of points for initial consideration emerge. Though the issue of formative assessment is addressed and the teaching content is in place, not all student teachers in the final year of teacher education courses recorded themselves as having significant direct experience of applying formative assessment strategies in their own learning. For many their understanding of the strategies would seem to be limited to hearing about, reading around and commenting

on their observations on school placement. In a small number of instances student teachers recorded that tutors employed peer assessment in tutorials or offered model assignments to which assessment criteria were applied. In a larger number of cases students claimed to have created self-assessment questions which matched assessment criteria and applied these to assignments before submitting for assessment.

Table 1: Completion and Return Rates

	Number Returned	Total Group	Percentage Returning
Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary)	249	560	44%
Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary)	138	259	53%
Bachelor of Education with Honours (Final Year)	94	133	70%

The completion and return rates reveal a pattern of compliance with the research intention which is worthy of comment. Remembering that these three sessions of issuing of questionnaire forms took place at the final class meetings, the percentage returns of the Final Year BEd. student teachers is significantly higher than either of the other groupings and the PGDE (Secondary) is less than half of the course cohort. Student teachers, having been invited to complete the questionnaire, had the choice of declining. While it is impossible to account validly and reliably for the differences in return rates of the three groups it may be important to remember the trend when analysing the responses to the seven questions posed and for this reason the cohort response is recorded in each table.

Table 2: Knowledge of Implementation Date

Do you know by which year the Assessment is for Learning programme is to be in place in all Scottish schools?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	1%	88%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	12%	86%	53%
BEd Graduands	2%	97%	70%
Total (481)	9%	89%	

There were only 'yes' or 'no' answers offered so it is impossible to gauge the accuracy of knowledge claimed by respondents but the question was posed to check beginning teachers' perceptions of their knowledge. A small number of participants responded with a comment rather than a specified affirmative or negative answer and this accounts for 2% of the total percentage of answers. Were this investigation to be replicated for the 2006-2007 cohort who begin work in schools at the implementation date a supplementary question requesting the precise date would be a useful gauge of actual knowledge.

The PGDE (Primary) respondent group whose coursework required them to undertake research into policy in Scotland demonstrate the highest level of awareness of the *AifL* implementation date, though the percentage is nevertheless low. This may suggest that policy research on specified current initiatives leads to knowledge of policy. However, the low figures across the three groups indicate that the 2007 implementation date has not come across in either coursework or school placement experience. It might have been reasonable to expect that the BEd. Final Year beginning teachers would have had more knowledge of the implementation date of a policy which has been in process throughout their period of teacher training. These are student teachers who have had a number of school placements in a variety of schools as the development programme was being undertaken in local education authorities nationally.

The lack of knowledge displayed by beginning teachers may give indications that the administrative and research elements of the policy community do not always work to similar outcomes. As research bodies continue to investigate the work in progress the policy administrators are moving towards an established date for implementation. Teacher education institutions in role as research community participants may involve themselves in the investigatory aspects, as suggested in Louise Hayward's commentary in the *AifL* newsletter cited, but without taking account of their part in preparing beginning teachers to work with the policy as SEED requires it to be implemented. There may be issues here worth further detailed exploration for the freedom of teacher education institutions to critique policy implementation in progress.

Table 3: Sharing Criteria with Learners

Have you covered the <i>sharing criteria with learners</i> strategy in your teacher training course?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	78%	19%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	82%	18%	53%
BEd Graduands	56%	40%	70%
Total (481)	75%	23%	

An evident generalisation is that respondents seem to indicate confidence that this formative assessment strategy had been covered in their course but this finding may need to be interpreted in relation to the responses recorded in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. While beginning teacher respondents are willing to claim to have 'covered' the strategy, responses to questions about direct experiential use of the strategy are less conclusive. A possible explanation for this response trend is that what student teachers perceive themselves to have is a greater degree of cognitive understanding and a lesser degree of experiential awareness.

Of the three strategies investigated in this project this is possibly the most problematic in relation to learning from formative assessment. The statements of competence in 3–18 curriculum programmes can be used as summative assessment criteria and teachers may use the statements in their work with pupils without adjusting management of learning. Teachers with a less sophisticated understanding of the principles of formative assessment may claim to be sharing criteria with learners but this might occur with little learning discourse incorporated into the

sharing. Research evidence of teacher practice (Miller, 2004: Reid 2005) and anecdotal evidence from *AifL* Development Officers concur with this judgement.

More positively, though at a superficial level, this set of responses suggests that one of the significant formative assessment strategies is becoming part of the vocabulary of many beginning teachers.

The more equivocal result of 56% 'yes' and 40% 'no' in the responses of the BEd Final Year grouping merits closer examination. Almost half of the respondents from this particular grouping demonstrated a level of uncertainty of a core principle of formative assessment despite four years of faculty of education experience in a higher education institution.

Nine respondents chose neither of the offered responses but gave instead commentaries to explain that they had tutors who were knowledgeable about formative assessment and that they had spent time considering the strategies in detail. Two tutors were named among this type of response and these were tutors who had led seminar sessions with staff. Such responses were given across the three groupings. In some cases these types of comments were given as responses to a number of the later questions and in other cases students used their comment responses for this first 'strategies question' to establish that they perceived the implications of formative assessment for deeper learning.

Criteria and Assessable Assignments

From Tables 4, 5 and 6 certain themes emerge about student and tutor practices.

Table 4: Publishing Criteria

When you had assessable assignments to do this year did you use the performance criteria <i>from the course notes only</i>?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	60%	38%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	62%	38%	53%
BEd Graduands	84%	15%	70%
Total (481)	65%	33%	

The majority of respondents indicate making use of criteria published in course documentation and for a sizeable proportion this was not the only source of their knowledge.

In seeking to interpret the responses two issues must be addressed. Firstly, there may be a flaw in the question wording: the underlined phrase 'from course notes only' may not have achieved its purpose of specifically distinguishing tutor practice from course notes inclusion. Alternatively, it may be that a number of tutors do not engage with the *sharing criteria* strategy. In the higher education institution assessment literature, considered earlier in this paper, there is support for this latter interpretation of these responses. Also the high proportion of 'no' responses to the questions relating to tutorial application of strategies (Tables 5 & 6) may confirm that tutors do not refine their use of the strategies in their own practice.

Table 5: Making Criteria Explicit

When you had assessable assignments to do this year did your tutor <i>explicitly</i> cover the performance criteria with you?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	42%	57%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	56%	41%	53%
BEd Graduands	46%	48%	70%
Total (481)	47%	50%	

There is evidence that respondents perceive some limited tutor application of the sharing criteria strategy in preparation for assignments as yes/no responses are more evenly distributed for this question. However, as is evident from the audit of course documentation, the criteria are presented as tools of summative assessment in two of the three courses and as tools of formative assessment in one course only, namely PGDE (Primary). The higher number of affirmative responses for this particular course may suggest student recognition of how this strategy is incorporated into course practice.

Table 6: Applying Criteria

When you had assessable assignments to do this year did you use the performance criteria to assess any example assessments <i>in tutorials</i>?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	19%	79%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	22%	78%	53%
BEd Graduands	24%	70%	70%
Total (481)	21%	77%	

The rather stark results for this question may suggest that there are gaps between those who take lead roles in lecturing on the strategies and developing course materials and the tutors who deliver tutorial activity. Are these perhaps tutors who are overwhelmed with the subject content of educational and professional studies modules to the detriment of processes of learning about assessment? Or is it possible that the enthusiasts lead on course topics and others continue with unrevised practice for managing tutorial sessions. The debate over coverage or deeper learning is familiar territory in the area of formative assessment. For whichever reason it is worth noting that tutors act as assessors of student assignments on formative assessment but may not be matching practice with the course content.

Table 7: Applying Criteria

When you had assessable assignments to do this year did you use the performance criteria for <i>peer assessment on practice assessments</i> before your actual assessment task?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	22%	74%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	22%	78%	53%
BEd Graduands	16%	82%	70%
Total (481)	20%	77%	

When questions are posed which contain refinements to the sharing criteria strategy, for example applying criteria to example assessments or using peer and practice assessments, the divergences between affirmative and negative responses become wider. This pattern is evenly evident across all three respondent groupings but the number of affirmative answers corresponds to earlier findings that a small number of tutors are making use of the strategies according to the perceptions of the students.

Table 8: Self assessment

When you had assessable assignments to do this year did you use the performance criteria as self assessment questions before you submitted your assignment?			
	Yes	No	Cohort Response
PGDE (Secondary)	61%	36%	44%
PGDE (Primary)	80%	20%	53%
BEd Graduands	64%	34%	70%
Total (481)	67%	31%	

The group with the largest number making self-conscious use of self assessment is again the particular course which specified approaches to be used in the construction of an assignment. Once more, therefore, the links between coursework approaches and student perception of strategy use seem to be demonstrable.

CONCLUSIONS

There are some implications and proposals emerge from this examination of student teachers' perceptions, despite the limitations on what can be claimed justifiably from findings arising from a small scale evaluative investigation of one cohort in one teacher education institution.

Firstly the discussion of formative assessment as a priority for ITE institutions is set against a background of several policy initiatives for implementation within short time frames. There are continuing concerns about the time allocated to school experience and educational and professional and curriculum and pedagogy modules in higher education institutions which offer initial teacher education

courses (McIntyre, 2006; Smith, Brisard and Menter, 2006). The new Framework for Professional Recognition/Registration (2005) and the Curriculum for Excellence (2006) may be leading towards adjusted structures of teaching and learning in schools and the extent of teacher educators' involvement in preparing beginning teachers for these two initiatives has yet to emerge. Such ongoing changes constitute pressures on teacher education and how the initial teacher education courses are managed.

Notwithstanding this context, *AifL* progress reports indicate that the majority of the beginning teachers starting their teaching careers in Scottish schools will find posts in schools where the implementation of formative assessment is underway. At whatever point of development the project has reached in particular schools there is likely to be variation of practice among teaching colleagues of the beginning teacher. Research reports cited in this paper (Black, *et al.*, 2003; Hallam, *et al.*, 2003; Hayward, *et al.*, 2004) indicate that some teachers have adopted learning approaches consonant with the philosophy and others have made some adaptation to practice and some resist the move towards further change. The matching of each beginner teacher with each community of practice in individual schools will affect how the project proceeds locally and nationally.

Though it is a commonplace to record a wide and variable range of enthusiasm for policy initiatives and development of practice, this limited study reveals gaps between policy implementation intention and teacher education practice. This observation causes more or less concern depending on one's view of this particular policy initiative. If formative assessment is to be the key to meeting the priorities of raising attainment or of lifelong learning, then aligning teacher education effectively with this particular policy is very significant in relation to policy management.

There are two aspects to this initiative that distinguish it from other policy projects: it has been designated as a 'bottom up' development and the claim is made that it changes how learning is fostered. It follows, therefore, that preparation of, and support for, teachers to work in new ways is important for the success of the policy. If the concerns, explored in earlier sections of this paper, about higher education assessment practices are well founded, then the graduate entrants to the profession may begin their teaching careers without personal and direct experience of using assessment for learning. If there are gaps and disparities between policy and practice in the teacher education experience, as suggested in this investigation, the difficulties for beginning teachers are compounded. Goos and Moni (2001) propose that teacher educators may support the development of teachers by demonstrating the alignment of policy, theory and practice. The contention underpinning this paper is that teacher educators may have a significant part to play in moving the vision to reality by modelling those formative assessment practices which are advocated by so many theorists and researchers as the way forward for lifelong and sustainable learning.

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