

The Assessment of Students' Learning: A Major Challenge for Beginning Teachers in Québec and Ontario

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Teachers' role in the assessment of students

Specific tasks

- ▶ a) planning assessment protocols,
- ▶ b) preparing assignments, tests, and exams,
- ▶ c) providing feedback on students' learning activities,
- ▶ d) marking, and
- ▶ e) communicating assessment results to students and parents

Approaches

- ▶ Formative assessment (Allal, 2007; Mottier-Lopez, 2016)
- ▶ Assessment for learning, assessment as learning (Earl, 2003; Stiggins, 2005)
- ▶ Summative assessment (Scriven, 1967; Bloom, 1969)

Ministry of Education's role in assessment of student learning

Quebec	Ontario
Elementary School	Elementary School
Grade Four - French Writing & Reading	Grade Three - Reading, Writing, Math
Grade Six - French Writing & Reading, Math	Grade Six - Reading, Writing, Math
Secondary School	Secondary School
Year Two - French Writing	Grade Nine - Mathematics
Year Four - History and Citizenship Education, Math, Science and Technology and Applied Science and Technology	Grade Ten - Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test as graduation requirement.
Year Five - French Writing, English	

Assessment within Teacher Education Programs (examples)

Université du Québec en Outaouais

- ▶ One course on assessment of student learning during a four year program
- ▶ Ministry documents (assessment policy, evaluation frameworks, etc.)
- ▶ Type of assessment, tools, marking, etc.

University of Ottawa (before 2-year program)

- ▶ Approximately 10 hours within a course called « Curriculum Planning and Evaluation”
- ▶ Potentially also in subject-specific methods courses.

Teacher induction in Québec

- ▶ Brief overview of the situation
 - ▶ No provincial program or policy
 - ▶ School board, schools initiatives
- ▶ Existing programs (Mukamurera, Martineau, Bouthiette, Ndooreaho (2013))
 - ▶ School board wide formal programs (73%)
 - ▶ School wide formal programs (28%)
 - ▶ Informal practices (93%)

Beginning teachers' challenges with assessment

Identify factors underlying beginning teachers' decisions about their teaching career

Questionnaire (n=371 (43%))

Preparedness scale based on the 12 competencies of ITE

Career Intentions

Interviews (n= 40, 39, 35)

3 interviews over an 18 months period

Themes:

Preparedness, Induction, Looking ahead, (Choosing teaching), Being a beginning (year 1, year 2) teacher; self-efficacy, Identity status.

Results from the questionnaire

Areas identified as less prepared :

- ▶ *student assessment* (2.58) and, to a lesser extent,
- ▶ *collaboration* (2.88) and *research skills* (2.86)

Group 1: Intention to stay in teaching: 46%

Group 2: Intention to leave teaching eventually: 54%

t-test: Group 2: less well prepared in student assessment and classroom management

Results from the interviews

- ▶ Graduate secondary teachers' difficulty with assessment issues remains during the first 18 months of teaching. Reasons: not enough time on student assessment or content of the course not in line with the assessment philosophy of the educational reform (competencies based assessment) and henceforth, lacked in practical applications.
 - ▶ *I had a 45 hours class on student assessment but I'm still confused. I still don't know how to assess my students.*
 - ▶ *What I find hard is to build an exam that is going to cover everything but using competencies as the assessment target. It is hard to say if a student is competent or not and in which way. It is harder to assess competencies, to find criteria and do it the right way.*
 - ▶ *During initial teacher education, the emphasis should be put on assessment, how to assess, practical applications. We could assess our colleagues, we need to know how it works, interdisciplinarity matters.*

Teacher induction in Ontario

New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) initiated in 2006/2007.

- ▶ Orientation,
- ▶ Mentoring,
- ▶ Professional Learning Opportunities.

New Teacher Performance Appraisal

- ▶ New teachers are required to have two satisfactory formal evaluations within the first year of teaching.

Scope of the Study over five years 2007 - 2011

- ▶ Approximately 28,500 new teachers were hired in Ontario in the five years from 2007 to 2011.

Online Questionnaires completed by:

- ▶ More than 7,000 beginning teachers.
- ▶ A total of 4516 mentors.
- ▶ A total of 3029 principals and vice principals.

Interviews conducted (2007 & 2008) with:

- ▶ 182 New teachers
- ▶ 139 Mentors
- ▶ 70 Principals

New Teachers challenges with assessment

- ▶ *Like I really didn't understand how things worked, especially with the school year and significant events like reporting time. You have anecdotal reports, you have the report cards and then the whole process of putting the report cards together and also managing my time as a teacher and making sure things are marked and given back in a timely matter and ready for report card reporting and then even how to do assessments and evaluation, and especially because I'm in the arts it's different; in math, one plus one equals two and because these things are touched on during your Bachelor of Ed. but it's like night and day the experience of real life teaching. (Female, Secondary)*

- ▶ *it's at the assessment level, where I was totally lost. Those who were trained in Ontario already had something, a basis, except that our board customize things a lot, so they too had to have training ... because I was really lost, so that helped me a lot. If I didn't had that, the year would have been very difficult for me. [Translation]
(Female, Elementary)*

- ▶ *In terms of assessment and evaluation I think that's what I needed the most help with because with ESL we didn't really have that the same way the board does or the Ministry, so I've had a lot of help from the curriculum leader and the two other teachers in terms of giving me resources, checking my lesson plans, checking unit plans, looking at how I design units, like universal design and backward design, or however you want to call it. (Male, Secondary)*

Questionnaire data

- ▶ Bivariate correlations indicate that overall usefulness of working with their mentor is most strongly related to three items:
 - ▶ *Develop student assessment strategies;*
 - ▶ *Use assessment and evaluation strategies that accommodate the needs of all students; and,*
 - ▶ *Manage classroom time effectively to support student learning.*

Professional learning sessions:

Most useful Professional Learning Sessions:

- ▶ *Use assessment and evaluation strategies that accommodate the needs of all students (68% - 71%),*
- ▶ *Provide students with numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their abilities (67% - 70%)*
- ▶ *Develop student assessment strategies (66% - 68%).*

So What?

- ▶ Tensions among formal documents leading to confusion in practice (Quebec).
- ▶ Provincial commitment to induction program.
- ▶ Implications for Teacher Education.

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