

**Measurement and Assessment in the Service of Learning – International Symposium at
Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem**

Esther Fairstein

The subject of measurement and assessment in education has assumed importance in Israel, as it has in many other countries. The principal focus is on three types of tests: (1) monitoring in elementary and middle school in a manner that has no direct impact on the students but that could constitute a basis for interpreting various processes taking place in the school, as well as for determining the quality of the educational system in general, and that of schools in particular; (2) voluntary tests (such as matriculation tests and SATs), serving principally for classification; and (3) international tests (e.g. PISA), used on only a small sample and serving as an index of quality.

The profusion of tests has given rise to controversies among educationists, assessment experts and policymakers. The aim of the International symposium (Measurement and Assessment in the Service of Learning) was to lay bare this subject and discuss it in depth from a number of perspectives.

In this article I will focus on the role of assessment in the process of induction into the teaching profession. Dr. Bennett of Princeton University, New Jersey, presented the program known as CBAL (Cognitively Based Assessment of, for, and as Learning), which focuses on assessment based on cognitive principles and serves for assessment **of** learning (documentation of students' achievements), assessment **for the purpose of** learning (assistance in instruction planning) and assessment **as** learning (an educational experiment in its own right). In his address, Dr. Bennett reviewed the method and theory of action involved in CBAL and demonstrated how its assessments improve teaching practice. CBAL components include: (1) domain-specific competency models; (2) summative assessment; (3) formative assessment; and (4) professional support.

I wish to focus on the concept of formative assessment, which was emphasized repeatedly throughout the delivery as being significant for future development of desirable behaviours. The lecturer stressed that effective formative assessment necessitates pedagogic knowledge, an in-depth understanding of the connection between knowledge and learning, and an appreciation of the aspects being measured, although it should be understood that the processes that occur have a substantial impact on development of the teacher's self-efficacy. Although the ultimate goal of the project is achievement of more meaningful information for policymakers on effective teaching, learning and decision-making, which will lead to improved learning on the part of students, it is important to state that formative assessment is meaningful

to interns in exactly the same way as it is to students – "Formative assessment induces professional development while identifying teachers' strong and weak points, providing constructive feedback on their practices and directing them to professional development tracks for improving their capabilities" [16, p.3]. Feedback is perceived as a key component in aiding learning, and formative assessment is seen as a feedback loop, since the information obtained from the feedback is of no avail per se unless used for improvement and for narrowing the gap between actual and ideal situations [7].

Dr. Sever of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in her role as symposium respondent, emphasized that the concept reinforces the link between assessment and pedagogy, and deepens teachers' understanding of the subject they teach. Dr. Sever's comments return us to the professional literature and to the claims made by Clark [3] that formative assessment improves the learning process by developing learning strategies based on students' self-determination, since it is a question of developing the skill of "learning how to learn" – a meaningful condition for the intern's success, both during his internship year and throughout his professional career.

Nusche of OECD presented an international perspective on evaluation and assessment in school education, but also referred to the aspect of teacher assessment, a subject that has gained greatly in importance in recent years in various countries, both on the formal and informal level. She supported the publication of the European Commission, which identified teachers as being the most important factor influencing the quality of education in schools, as well as student development and achievements [5]. In addition, Nusche emphasized that the research proves the value of professional development in teachers and confirms the connection between teacher assessment and career advancement. In parallel, she presented a number of issues that call for special attention: (1) assessment is at times instrumental in determining one's fate and could therefore cause emotional stress; (2) there is an over-reliance on a single source of information; (3) overly simplistic use is made of results; (4) observation is the best way to assess the work of the teacher provided it is conducted effectively; (5) while assessment provides a springboard for personal growth, insufficient career opportunities exist for teachers. The first issue is meaningful for every teacher, but is doubly so for interns, who are under tremendous pressure owing to their need to cope with systemic and pedagogic difficulties, as referred to in the professional literature [11, 14, 17], as it is too for those (in Israel) undergoing assessment at the end of their internship year ahead of being granted a teacher's licence. Entering the system with great enthusiasm and a readiness to lead their students to successes, interns discover that the reality does not always square with their expectations; their dreams are shattered, and they consequently experience feelings of frustration, isolation, alienation and lack of confidence from the professional point of

view [5, 6]. All these result in a crisis of professional identity [10]. And this is where the role of mentor during the process of induction into the teaching profession becomes relevant thanks to the support and guidance he provides in advancing learning through development of a relationship based on trust and acceptance. Alongside provision of emotional support, an effective mentor will know how to build up feedback and reflection such that the focus in assessment will be more on processes (feedback per se) and less on the outcome (grading of the lesson) [12]. This is undoubtedly no simple issue, one that raises questions about the duality inherent in the job of the mentor – his ability to support the intern on the one hand and assess him on the other while maintaining objectivity – as well as the feelings of interns [13]. This is an issue whose solution can be found in the findings and conclusions of the experiment presented in the research I conducted and the recommendation that every mentor undergo training.

Frumin too, of Harvard University, stated that efforts to incorporate high standards exert considerable pressure on teachers to improve their instructional methods. However, she adds, although they may express a vision, they do not offer a practical answer as to what must be done to introduce improvements. She therefore recommended a program by the name of Data Wise Improvement Process that includes eight stages for collaborative analysis of data and development of a focused program for improving teaching – one in which assessed teachers would be partners and would assume responsibility for improving their own instruction.

Fisher of the Yad Hanadiv Foundation, who responded to this lecture, claimed that an important systemic process is involved that calls for strong leadership on the part of the school principal in spearheading improved student achievements. Furthermore, the emphasis in this program is on the school as an organization, with each teacher being responsible not only for his own class but for the entire instructional-learning process taking place in the school.

A look at the collaborative process proposed by Frumin, from the point of view of the interns, shows that a joint process is put in place that can lead to a feeling of belonging, as suggested by Deci & Ryan [4]), and ease the burden of coping with the systemic problems that have been noted by various researchers [1, 6, 9, 17]. However, it is important throughout to bear in mind the role of interns and the fact that they are new and perhaps lacking in confidence. It should be understood that just as self-efficacy is influenced by defining events and enhances positive feelings and motivation among interns, it is also affected by events that create in them negative feelings of low self-perception. Once an intern develops a negative self-perception it becomes something that is very difficult to change, even when he has positive experiences [8]. The intern's belief in himself, his knowledge and his capabilities has a significant impact on his motivation and performance level because of the interdependency that exists between the feeling

of self-efficacy and the processes of developing professional identity [4]. This feeling is greatly affected by factors that are considered by interns to be significant from the professional-pedagogic point of view [6, 15]. The principal factor is the mentor, but in the proposed model other teachers also enter the arena (even though this may be to a partial extent only). Accordingly, as stated by Fisher, application of the model necessitates leadership and effective spearheading by a principal who is interested, on the one hand, in creating a learning community that will lead to professional development of his school staff and to improving his students' achievements, and on the other hand, in viewing the teacher (and the intern in particular) as an individual in need of emotional strengthening alongside pedagogic support.

A number of panel discussions were held during the course of the symposium by presidents of teacher training colleges and by officers and policymakers from the Ministry of Education. Ram, Vice Director-General of the Ministry of Education, emphasized that one must not rely on assessment alone and that suitable solutions must be found that fit the complex reality in which we live and teach. Ram wants the processes of assessment to also include reference to factors such as creativity, critical thinking and group work, which means that attention must be paid to the use of diverse assessment tools. In addition, he states, a separation must be made between assessment (as practiced currently in Israel) and professional advancement (the teacher's grade and salary) in order to create an authentic process of teacher development – one that should already be included in teacher training programs as a built-in component of every course, requiring students to undergo processes of reflection. He claims that it is possible to learn from the PBS model and from the newly planned "academia-class" model ahead of the coming academic year, calling for three days of practical work in the last year of training, including meaningful dialogue and mutual learning.

Prof. Bar-On, President of Oranim College, too claimed that effective teaching is associated with academic achievement, but also with behaviour, the learning experience, and a sense of acceptance and respect. Practical application of this belief alongside the statements made by Ram can lead to empowerment of the intern's position and to more accurate assessment that will allow room for practices demonstrated by them – this following on proper implementation of the pedagogic dialogue that is required in the process of formative assessment. Prof. Livman, President of the Kibbutz College, reinforces the statements made and claims that at present teachers do not in general feel that assessment benefits them and are of the opinion that it does not examine the right things. This then returns us to the need for additional assessment of a different nature which relates to practices, in line with that presented by Ram.

As mentioned, the symposium presented a wide range of opinions, tools, concepts and insights relating to measurement and assessment in the service of learning. Most of the statements made perhaps did not refer directly to the internship stage, but I believe that in order to inculcate proper learning processes in students, the intern who has just begun his career must arrive from a position of empowerment, with a feeling of confidence and understanding of all the processes at work. From such a position, and using parallel courses of action, the intern can invest efforts in collaboration and implementation of recommendations made, allowing him on the one hand to provide his students with solutions, and on the other to improve professionally and develop his professional identity.

REFERENCES IN ENGLISH

1. Bartell C. A. The challenges facing beginning teachers. In: *Cultivating high-quality teaching through induction and mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 2005. p. 1-19.
2. Bennett B., Rijn P. and Deane P. *Measuring Well and Modeling Good Teaching and Learning Practice: An Example from CBAL*. Presentation at the Van Leer Jerusalem institute conference on assessment and evaluation in the service of learning, 2014
3. Clark I. Formative assessment: Assessment is for self-regulated learning. In: *Educational Psychology Review*, 2012, nr 24, p. 205-249.
4. Deci E. L., Ryan R. M. Self-determination theory. In: P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, and E. T. Higgins (Eds.) *Handbook of theories of social psychology*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2012. p. 416-437.
5. *Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers: A handbook for policymakers*. Brussels: European Commission, 2010.
6. Gavish B., Friedman I. A. Novice teachers' experience of teaching: A dynamic aspect of burnout. In: *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 2010, nr 13, p. 141-167.
7. Heritage M. Formative assessment and next-generation assessment systems: Are we losing an opportunity? In: *Council of Chief State School Officers*, 2010.
8. Korthagen F. A. In search of the essence of a good teacher: Towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. In: *Teaching & Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 2004, nr 20, p. 77-97.

9. Lesley M., Gee, D., Matthews, M. Separating the chaff of bureaucracy from the grain of pedagogy: creating quality new teachers in the age of accountability. In: *Teacher Education Quarterly*, spring 2010, vol 37, nr 2, p. 33-51.
10. Orland-Barak L. Maskit D. Novices 'in story': What first-year teachers' narratives reveal about the shady corners of teaching. In: *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 2011, nr 17, p. 435-450.
11. Patrick F. et al. The importance of collegiality and reciprocal learning in the professional development of beginning teachers. In: *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 2010, nr 36, p. 277-289.
12. Tillema H., Smith K., Leshem S. Dual roles—conflicting purposes: A comparative study on perceptions on assessment in mentoring relations during practicum. In: *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 2011, nr 34, p. 139-159.
13. Yusko B., Feiman-Nemser S. Embracing contraries: Combining assistance and assessment in new teacher induction. In: *The Teachers College Record*, 2008, nr 110, p. 923-953.

REFERENCES IN HEBREW

14. Dvir N., Shaz-Oppenheimer A. Looking at the mirror: The process of building the professional identity of beginning teachers as reflected in their stories. In: Shaz-Oppenheimer, A., Maskit D., and Zilbershtrom S. (Eds.) *Being a teacher*. Israel: Mofet Institute and the Ministry of Education, 2011. p. 91-116.
15. Fisherman S., Weiss I. Professional identity of teachers: The concept and its measurement. In: *Dapim: Periodical for Review, Research and Instruction in Teacher Training*, Mofet Institute, 2011, nr 51, p. 39-56.
16. Hartaf H., Ratner-Avrahami E., Beller M. The teacher evaluation process in Israel: Initial steps and future considerations. *The National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education*, 2011.
17. Shaz-Openheimer A., Mandel B. Zilbershtrom S. E. *Mentoring teaching interns*. Israel: Publications Division, Israel Ministry of Education, 2014.