Presentation Title

‘Exactly what do you mean by consistency?’
Exploring concepts of consistency and standards in Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland

Introduction

• The Scottish context for teachers' judgements
• What is meant by 'standards' and 'consistency'
  • research and policy
  • policy and practice

Beginning to reconcile research, policy and practice

The Background of Assessment is for Learning

A receptive context? – assessment for learning

• What and why - influenced by the ARG, in particular, Black & Wiliam (1998) and the teachers of the KMOFAP project
• ‘A quiet revolution in Scottish Education’
  Supporting Scotland’s People’ award
• Increasingly part of day to day practice in primary and secondary schools
• Coherent national assessment system more problematic

Assessment of Learning
Assessment for Accountability

A receptive context? – Assessment for learning

• How - influenced by research on transformational change, in particular, Senge & Scharmer (2001)

‘…rests on a basic pattern of interdependency, the continuing cycle linking research, capacity-building and practice: the ongoing creation of new theory, tools and practical know-how. We believe this pattern is archetypal and characterises deep learning at all levels. The unifying feature of all is a commitment to integrate the knowledge-creation process to sustain fundamental social and institutional change, be it the local schools or multinational corporations.’
(Senge & Scharmer, 2001, p. 248)
A receptive context? – assessment for learning

- Why was AllL perceived to be successful?
- Integrity - educational
  - personal and professional
  - systemic
  [Hayward & Spencer, 2010]

Curriculum for Excellence: the national debate

Analysis of findings from the national debate:
Rationale for Change

- Perception that the world was changing rapidly and thought was needed to ensure that the curriculum was fit for the 21st century
- Perception that the curriculum was overcrowded and perceived as linear with teachers ‘getting through’ the curriculum
- In primary schools too much emphasis on assessment in limited areas of the curriculum – reading, writing and mathematics (teachers overly dependent on national assessments – counter to policy)
- In secondary schools upper stages assessment driven

Curriculum for Excellence: values and aspirations

Values from the Scottish Mace
- Justice, Wisdom, Integrity & Compassion

Vision of educated young Scots in the 21st century
- Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Effective Contributors, Responsible Citizens

Eight Curriculum Areas:
- Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Languages, Mathematics, Religious and Moral Education, Sciences, Social Subjects and Technologies

Literacy, Numeracy, Health & Wellbeing Across Learning

Curriculum for Excellence: implications for Assessment

Assessment will

- support learning that develops the knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities which contribute to the 4 capacities
- give assurance to parents, learners and others that young people are progressing in their learning and developing in line with expectations
- provide a summary of what learners have achieved, including through qualifications and awards
- contribute to planning the next stages of learning and help learners to progress to further education, higher education and employment
- inform future improvements in learning and teaching

Curriculum for Excellence: Breadth, Challenge and Application

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th

DEVELOPING    CONSOLIDATING    SECURE

LIT 3-06a

Early qualifications and awards

LIT 3-06a

Values from the Scottish Mace
- Justice, Wisdom, Integrity & Compassion

Vision of educated young Scots in the 21st century
- Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Effective Contributors, Responsible Citizens

Eight Curriculum Areas:
- Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Languages, Mathematics, Religious and Moral Education, Sciences, Social Subjects and Technologies

Literacy, Numeracy, Health & Wellbeing Across Learning

Curriculum for Excellence: values and aspirations
Curriculum for Excellence and Assessment is for Learning

Some key messages

- Assessment practices will follow the new curriculum, giving more autonomy and professional responsibility to teachers
- Learners will play a far more significant part in the learning
- Standards and expectations will be defined in a way that reflects CfE, supporting greater breadth and depth in learning and focusing on skills development
- A national system of quality assurance and moderation for 3-18 will be developed to support teachers in achieving consistency and confidence in their professional judgements
- A national assessment resource will support professional practice in assessment

Perceptions from research and policy

(UNESCO, Mons)

- Definitions and understandings vary widely across jurisdictions
- Standards and accountability are often part of an economic model: 'hard accountability' - rewards and penalties, 'high stakes'; 'Soft accountability' - results-based frame of reference, 'mirror effect'.
- Policy assumptions
- Issues and tensions

What is meant by ‘standards’ and ‘consistency’?

Perceptions from research and policy

- Stakeholder views?
  - Teachers, managers, students
- Sharing the language at all levels in the system

Standards? Cabinet Secretary’s foreword:

17 sentences, 9 references

Public Accountability and Standards

- Reporting to stakeholders about the standards that have been achieved
- Reporting to parliament and Scotland’s people
- There is confidence that these standards are being adhered to

Raising Standards

- How the new assessment system will raise standards and expectations, promote depth of understanding and improve skills
- Ensuring that Scotland has an education system that promotes and supports the highest possible standards of attainment and achievement

Measuring performance or improving achievement?

A standard is something against which we measure performance. Curriculum for Excellence has the clear aim of building on current practice to raise achievement” (p16)

Stakeholders’ views?

- Teachers, managers, students
- Sharing the language at all levels in the system

BtC5 main text
What is meant by "standards" and "consistency" in Scotland?

Too much information or too little?

"The standards and expectations that form our aspirations for all learners from 3 to 18 are set out for the whole curriculum in the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence and their equivalent in the specifications for qualifications and awards. Reflecting the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, progress is defined in terms of 'how well' and 'how much', as well as learners' rate of progress."

"Literacy
I can independently select ideas and relevant information for different purposes, organise essential information or ideas and any supporting detail in a logical order, and use suitable vocabulary to communicate effectively with my audience.
LIT 3-06a"

What is meant by "standards" and "consistency" in Scotland?

- The openness of CfE means that these statements contain insufficient information to enable judgements to be made about standards and expectations.
- The government realises this: significant programme of professional learning on sharing standards and social moderation planned
- Until teachers are involved in social moderation tensions exist
- It is not yet clear whether the Scottish Government will address the infrastructure questions raised by Daugherty (2011) any more effectively than the government in Wales.

The aim will be to support the development of a shared understanding to achieve consistency in standards and expectations and build trust and confidence in teachers' judgements..."

'Education authorities will provide assurance that schools in their area are consistently applying national standards and expectations'

Many factors affect the reliability of an assessment including, for example, the clarity of instructions to learners about how to demonstrate their learning, the timing in relation to programmes of study and consistency of marking from one teacher to another.

Assessment at Transition – Scottish Government

- Very different practice in different local authorities
- Some local authorities appear to have the confidence to hold to the assessment principles of CfE, others are moving ahead but with a less clear link between assessment principles and practices.

Each approach makes sense in its own terms.

- If the dominant model is the economic model progress in schools will be judged by their ability to demonstrate changes in pupils' learning then it makes sense to have that learning linear and divided into very small steps.
- If you believe that the accountability is softer and main drive is to extend and to deepen learners' experiences then it is crucial that schools and teachers develop shared models of progression.

Next steps for Scottish Education

Starting from where people are:
- imagine the worst possible scenario and plan for it (James)
- beliefs rather than research evidence (Wiliam)

Demands of the reporting framework imply levels statements:
- timing is out of sync with where teachers are just now
- standards seen as learning on an exact point on a line (the "flight path" analogy).

People do need consistency in their understandings and clear ideas of purpose, if teachers are going to be judged on pupils' results.
Next steps for Scottish Education

• Consistency of expectations is important: we need to share our expectations if learners are going to be appropriately challenged, if we are going to understand progress in learning and all learners’ needs are going to be met.

• Moderation needs to be mediated and supported: what it is, what it is for.

• Engaging the wider community together in learning communities to address accountability issues – SSLN survey, European improvement purposes for national testing

• Need to take care with standardized approaches and their relationship to individual learners and progression

Not a task for the faint hearted

……………but there is no alternative