

Assessment for Learning in International Contexts (ALIC): understanding values and practices across diverse contexts

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Conceptualising Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning (AfL) has been characterised as 'not a test but a process' (Popham, 2008, p.6), focused on providing qualitative insights into student understanding (Shepherd, 2008; Black and Wiliam, 1998). The Assessment Reform Group summarise AfL as: "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there" (ARG, 2002). The involvement of engaged, reflective professional teachers is seen as central to the development of classroom-based assessment practices that are the foundation of AfL (Black, McCormick, James and Pedder, 2006) and these sentiments cohere with the learner centred approach found in the teacher development programmes offered by Cambridge International Examinations (<http://www.cie.org.uk/aboutcie>).

The language of AfL belongs to a ubiquitous educational discourse, being used across diverse social, economic and cultural boundaries (Swaffield, 2011). It is either seen as synonymous with formative assessment, and thus includes such practices as targeted observation or marking of work by teachers to develop students' next steps in learning (Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, and Black, 2004; James and Pedder, 2006); or it is seen as describing only those components of formative assessment that focus on students' involvement in their own learning. Here, we use the term as synonymous with formative assessment. Black and Wiliam (2009) conceptualise formative assessment as consisting of five key strategies, intended to provide contingent information upon which both teachers and students can act to progress student learning. These are:

1. *Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success;*
2. *Engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding;*
3. *Providing feedback that moves learners forward;*
4. *Activating students as instructional resources for one another; and*
5. *Activating students as the owners of their own learning.*

(Black and Wiliam, 2009, p.8)

Towards an understanding of international classroom practice

Despite the apparent clarity of pedagogic intentions and associated strategies, AfL classroom practices vary across Western educational contexts. Both Black and Wiliam (2005) and Sebba (2006) point to the differing policies, politics and cultures, both micro- and macro-, that impact upon classroom assessment practices. These influences include

the nature of national curricula, the presence or otherwise of selective education and the prominence given to the outcomes of summative assessments within a society. Black and Wiliam (2005) indicate that, even within what might superficially be seen as relatively homogenous national systems, regional and local variation in teaching and assessment practices is clear. For example, the influence of schools boards in various States in America means that a State-wide consensus on such issues as classroom-based approaches to assessment can be difficult to evidence.

When considering non-Western contexts, differing policies, politics and cultures are as likely to be important determinants of pedagogical approaches and classroom-based assessment practices as in Western contexts. With diverse national and regional educational priorities, and the different languages within which educational ideas are interpreted, comes another layer of complexity. In such international contexts, therefore, it is unsurprising to find that the development and embedding of successful assessment for learning practices seems to differ (Johnson and Burdett 2010; Akyeamong, Pryor, and Ampiah, 2006). Evidence of this comes from Johnson and Burdett's study which highlighted that, internationally, the ambitions of educators to engage with assessment for learning principles might be hindered by factors such as teacher competency levels or the promotion of conflicting theories of learning. Acknowledging the differences of AfL interpretation and practice within Western and non-Western contexts also raises the important spectre of those differences being present between Western and non-Western contexts.

Professional meaning making in relation to learning and assessment therefore seems inextricably linked to the social context in which such interpretations are based, and 'commonly used' language can be open to interpretation across different contexts (Smith, 1995). It may be, therefore, that the seemingly ubiquitous nature of the language of formative assessment within international educational discourse masks a poor shared understanding of the underlying meanings around such phraseology. Thus, if "differences between cultures are greater than those within" and "...concepts assumed to be universally understood were found to have contextually located meanings" (Andrews, 2007, p.490 and pp.495–496), then differing cultures may ascribe different levels of value to the strategies associated with AfL, and may evidence these differing values through differing classroom practices. A useful research contribution to this area of understanding would thus be to focus on eliciting the valued assessment practices held by teachers.

When examining the issue of values and practices in the UK, and possible gaps between the two, the Learning How to Learn Project surveyed 558 teachers in England (James and Pedder, 2006; Pedder, 2006). Reflecting earlier work by Torrance and Pryor (1998), James and

Pedder (2006, p.119) suggest that items in their survey relate to four themes:

- 'convergent assessment tendencies' (where there is an emphasis on linear and curriculum-oriented planning, and the use of closed questioning and summative feedback);
- 'divergent assessment approaches' (where students can take forward their own learning objectives and peer assessment practices are used);
- the promotion of guided self-assessment and opportunities for students to assess their own work and learning;
- teachers learning more about their students' learning.

James and Pedder's results revealed three underlying dimensions of assessment practice. These were:

- Making learning explicit* (defined as eliciting, clarifying and responding to evidence of learning; working with students to develop a positive learning orientation).
- Promoting learning autonomy* (defined as a widening of scope for students to take on greater independence over their learning objectives and the assessment of their own and each other's work).
- Performance orientation* (defined as a concern to help students comply with performance goals prescribed by the curriculum through closed questioning and measured by marks and grades).

James and Pedder found sizeable values-practice gaps on two dimensions that appear to be in tension (*promoting learning autonomy and performance orientation*), along with evidence that over half of the sample were unable to sustain practices across all dimensions in line with their values. Further evidence of the existence of three dimensions of assessment practice, and the presence of values-practice gaps, was found by Winterbottom *et al.* (2008a, b) when they used the Learning How to Learn survey tool with English teacher trainees. These values-practice gaps are particularly interesting and are a specific focus of this study.

Research questions

The Assessment for Learning in International Contexts (ALIC) project extends earlier understandings around AfL through using an adapted version of the James and Pedder (2006) survey tool with teachers across different international contexts. The following questions informed the ALIC project:

- Which assessment practices seem to be valued by teachers in national contexts other than the UK?
- To what extent does there seem to be congruence in the assessment values and practices of these teachers?
- Do teachers working in different national contexts evidence the importance of the same dimensions of assessment practice as those found in studies in England? (This question is not a focus of this article.)

It should be stated that there is not a presumption of a 'model classroom' sitting behind the research questions. They are broadly framed in order to be able to build a picture of the range of values and practices that seem to be important to teachers across diverse national contexts.

ALIC project methods and sample

The ALIC project gathered survey data from teachers working in national contexts that differed in terms of their linguistic and historical educational traditions. Sample selection and recruitment took into account a number of pragmatic considerations. Teacher recruitment for the project was maximised by focusing on teachers working in schools and colleges with a strong identification with Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). This focus also added a practical importance to the project outcomes. Through generating insights into the localised practices and values of teachers working in schools and colleges, the research project would enable 'feed-forward' to CIE's ongoing programme of teacher professional development provision.

The project used CIE's regional organisation structure to aid data gathering. Nations with the greatest number of schools and colleges with active CIE links were identified across each of CIE's five global regions, with a decision made not to recruit nations from the same region. This helped to maximise the geographical diversity of the sample and to potentially maximise the number of returns. This sampling approach suggested that the project should focus on teachers in Argentina, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. An appeal for participation from at least two teachers from each approached school or college was intended to bring a sense of collegiality to the process for individual teachers, since it was anticipated that there might be a future opportunity to build a community of teachers around shared professional discussions through involvement with this project.

The ALIC project builds on the work of James and Pedder (2006), which had used a validated survey to explore the assessment values and practices of teachers in the UK. In electing to work with an existing survey instrument, the ALIC research team considered whether the James and Pedder questionnaire was sufficiently relevant to the ALIC research questions, whether it was appropriate to use in the different international contexts, and whether it facilitated collection of this information with maximal reliability and validity. Here, reliability can be understood to be the extent to which a measure – the underlying variable(s) of interest – is stable or consistent and produces similar results when administered repeatedly. This is of special value to the ALIC project, given that measurements are taken in different national contexts.

Whilst the use of validated methods (Alderson, 1992; Hawkey, 2006) should contribute positively to the validity of a research design, it is important to bear in mind that validation is context specific and has consequences if a research method is applied to a situation for which it was not designed. The ALIC project took the constructs that underpinned the original James and Pedder (2006) teacher survey and ensured that these were accessible to teachers working across a variety of national contexts. A critical review of each of the James and Pedder survey items was undertaken to ensure that the language of the survey (both the instructions accompanying the survey and the survey items themselves) was accessible to teachers for whom English may not necessarily be a first language. This involved an iterative process of discussion between the research team members. An original and a revised item are illustrated in Figure 1.

A draft of the ALIC survey was piloted with a small group of teachers in some of the sample nations in order to validate its format. Once it was complete, the survey was distributed via a dedicated website to schools and colleges in the five sample nations. 613 schools and colleges were contacted directly in three of the five study nations (Argentina: 186

Figure 1: An example of an original and a revised teacher survey item

Scale X <i>Your assessment practices</i> <i>(About You)</i>				Assessment practices	Scale Y <i>How important are assessment practices for creating opportunities for students to learn?</i> <i>(About your values)</i>			
Original Survey Item								
<i>Never true</i>	<i>Rarely true</i>	<i>Often true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>		<i>Not at all importance</i>	<i>Of limited importance</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Crucial</i>
				The next lesson I teach is determined more by the prescribed curriculum than by how well my students did in the last lesson.				
Revised Survey Item								
<i>Never true</i>	<i>Rarely true</i>	<i>Often true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>		<i>Not at all importance</i>	<i>Of limited importance</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Crucial</i>
				The subject curriculum I have to teach is a greater influence on what I will do in my next lesson than how well my students did in the last lesson.				

schools/colleges; India: 288 schools/colleges; Indonesia: 135 schools/colleges). Taking into consideration local arrangements in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, indirect contacts were sent to schools and colleges through British Council offices.

The first data analysis stage involved descriptive analysis of the survey return data, and it is this phase that is reported on in this article. In order to explore comparisons between teachers' values and practices, a gap analysis compared the extent to which teachers' reported practices matched their reported values; any discrepancies were thus indicated between their professional assessment aspirations and their actual practices. The second data analysis stage of the ALIC project will be to replicate the statistical methods used by James and Pedder (2006) and Pedder (2006) in their work with teachers in the UK (not reported in this article).

Findings

Teacher demographics

Two hundred and forty two ALIC surveys were returned, with five containing no indication of teacher nationality. The data in Table 1 show that most teachers who returned the surveys were female (69%), had more than 5 years of teaching experience (83%), and were teaching 15–18 year old students (62%). There was a spread of subjects taught by teachers in the sample, although Science/Maths and English teachers made up the majority of the sample (67%). It is worth noting that the initial process of 'teacher subject' coding defined those teachers who taught multiple subjects as 'not specified', partly explaining the relatively large number of teachers who appear in this category.

The survey return rate differed for each nation (i.e. the proportion of schools and colleges from which surveys were received compared with the number of schools and colleges approached). This national difference might reflect the national variation in the methods used to approach the schools and colleges. Figure 2 shows that Indian teachers submitted the

Table 1: ALIC Survey Participant Data

<i>Teacher Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Male	70	28.9
Female	166	68.6
Not specified	6	2.5
Teacher Experience		
Less than 2 Years	2	0.8
2–4 Years	20	8.3
5–10 Years	65	26.9
11–20 Years	84	34.7
21+ Years	52	21.5
Not specified	19	7.9
Experience in Current School		
Less than 2 Years	51	21.1
2–4 Years	52	21.5
5–10 Years	73	30.2
11–20 Years	30	12.4
21+ Years	11	4.5
Not specified	25	10.3
Age Taught		
10 and Under	7	2.9
11–14	60	24.8
15–18	151	62.4
18+	2	0.8
Not specified	22	9.1
Subject Taught		
Science/Maths	85	35.1
English	77	31.8
Languages	2	0.8
Social Sciences/Humanities	32	13.2
Arts	3	1.2
Not specified	43	17.8
Total	242	100

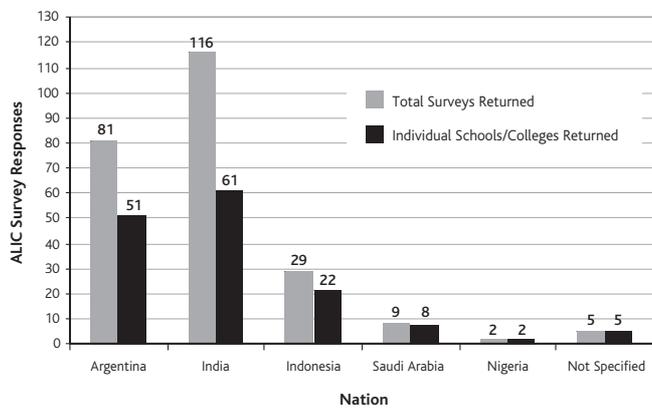


Figure 2: ALIC Returned Responses by Nation and School/College

greatest number of survey returns (a 21.2% return rate), followed by Argentina (a 27.4% return rate) and Indonesia (a 16.3% return rate).

The national survey data (Appendix 1) demonstrate variances in the profile of teacher demographics. Teachers from Argentina and Saudi Arabia were the most experienced; a majority of teachers in both nations had more than 10 years of teaching experience. The length of time that teachers had worked in their current school/college also differed across the nations. India was the only nation where the majority of teachers had worked in their current school/college for less than five years. The profile of subjects taught differed across the teachers in the different sampled nations. Teachers of English formed the largest group of respondents in Argentina, contrasting with the profile of teachers from the other nations where Science/Maths teachers formed the largest group.

Comparisons between teachers' values and practices

This article focuses largely on considering teacher values and on a values-practice gap analysis across the whole teacher cohort in general and for Indian and Argentinean teachers specifically. No attempt is made in this article to compare the data with that from the UK.

The values-practice gap analysis data show the level of match between what teachers value about their assessment work and the extent to which they feel they enact these values in practice. Data analysis looked at the comparison between those assessment practices that the teachers thought were 'important/crucial' against those that they reported using 'often/mostly'. Where there were any mismatches between assessment values and practices, a positive difference suggests that the teachers value the assessment practice more than they actually enact it. On the other hand, a negative mismatch suggests that the teachers were enacting practices that they did not value.

Findings across the data set

The data in Appendix 2 show that two-thirds of classroom assessment practices listed in the survey were highly valued by a majority of responding teachers, with 20 of the 30 survey items being considered to be 'important/crucial' for at least 88% of the surveyed teachers. The data also show that there were seven practices that were highly valued by less than a quarter of the sampled teachers.

Of the highly valued practices across the whole ALIC teacher cohort data, 10 items relate to teachers' concern with understanding more about student learning. Of these items, some relate to using evidence of learning to influence planning (Item 1), and using open questioning, encouraging discussion, clarifying learning objectives, lesson purposes and success criteria (Items 11, 18, 21, 25 and 28). These items clearly link with the first

and second of Black and Wiliam's AFL Strategies (*Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success, and Engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding*). Some items relate to providing formative feedback to respond to evidence of learning and encourage pupil involvement in learning (Items 4, 10, 15 and 20) and link with Black and Wiliam's third AFL Strategy (*Providing feedback that moves learners forward*). Item 22 ('Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments') might be considered to be linked to these items, but it is not given the same value by teachers.

Teachers also placed a very high value on practices relating to the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning. This coheres with Black and Wiliam's fifth AFL Strategy (*Activating students as the owners of their own learning*). These items are connected to such things as providing opportunities for students to assess their own work and learning (Items 13, 14 and 24) and develop independence in learning (Item 9); a concern that students should engage with mistakes and problems in their work (Items 15, 16 and 25), should build on their strengths (Items 14 and 26) and should view effort as important (Item 27); and that students should be encouraged to think critically about their learning (Items 17 and 30).

Item 3 ('The main thing I look for in my assessments is whether my students know, understand or can do key sections of the curriculum') is also highly valued and is the only item that might be interpreted as sitting outside the items that can be linked with Black and Wiliam's AFL Strategies.

With respect to the least valued items, only one item fell below 50% in terms of being valued. This was Item 5 ('I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class'), which emphasises the development of a competitive classroom ethos and a strong focus on performance orientation. Overall, items that were highly valued by a small number of teachers were those that might be linked to teacher control of assessment processes and a focus on performance goals. These included items associated with curriculum orientated planning (Items 2 and 23); closed questioning (Item 7); the provision of summative feedback, including marks and grades (Item 12); and the prioritising of teacher assessments (Item 8). A second group of items less valued by teachers were those associated with student control over assessment processes, including students taking forward their own learning objectives (Item 6) and developing peer assessment practices (Items 19 and 29).

Table 2 provides data derived from a comparison of teachers who placed a high value ('crucial'/'important') on a particular practice, against the percentage suggesting it was 'often true' or 'mostly true' in their own practice. These data only relate to items where the values-practices gap is of +/- 5 points or greater. A positive gap indicates that a practice is more valued than it is employed with students; a negative gap suggests a practice that is strongly used but is less in tune with teacher values. The data presented here focus on the most marked gaps.

The group of items (6, 19 and 29) associated with giving students more control over assessment processes was not particularly highly valued, and the largest positive gap is for Item 6 ('I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives'), with Item 19 having a six point gap and Item 29 an eight point gap.

For those items that were more highly valued by teachers, there is an apparent gap between values and practices for items associated with the development of pupil agency. There are thus relatively large positive gaps between values and practices that link to promoting opportunities for students to assess their own work (Items 13 and 24), build on their

Table 2: Comparing ALIC teachers' assessment values and practices across five national contexts (only differences of +/- 5 points or greater are shown; data shown in highlight represents a negative values-practice gap)

Item		Values (%) important/ crucial	Practices (%) often/mostly	Values- Practices Gap
6	I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives	73	55	+18
26	I help students to plan the next steps in their learning	88	71	+17
17	I help students to think about how they learn best	96	87	+9
29	I give students the opportunity to assess each other's work	73	65	+8
13	I give guidance to help my students assess their own work	94	86	+8
24	I give guidance to help students assess their own learning	94	86	+8
19	I give guidance to help students to assess one another's work	70	64	+6
22	Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments	75	70	+5
14	I tell students about their strengths and help them to develop these strengths	98	93	+5
23	The subject curriculum determines students' learning objectives	81	88	-7
12	Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades	64	77	-13

strengths (Items 14 and 26) and think critically about their learning (Item 17).

With respect to the items with a negative gap, indicating well-used practices that are less in tune with teacher values, the largest gap occurs with respect to Item 12, the provision of feedback in the form of marks and grades.

Given that the survey return rates from Argentina and India were large enough to enable statistical manipulation, the data from these two countries can be examined in more detail.

Argentinean and Indian perspectives

The data in Appendix 3 show that 19 of the 30 classroom assessment practices listed in the survey were highly valued by a majority of responding teachers from Argentina.

The data also show that there were eight practices that were highly valued by fewer than three-quarters of the Argentinean teachers. Two items fell below 50% in terms of being valued – Item 5 ('I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class') and Item 7 ('I use questions mainly to get factual knowledge from my students').

Table 3 shows the items where the level of congruence between the values and practices of the Argentinean teachers were least marked.

Items with the largest positive values-practice gap are associated with giving more control over assessment processes (Items 6, 19 and 29). However, practices seem to be well behind aspirations. Even where such practices are not particularly highly valued, as with Item 6 (see Table 3),

Table 3: Comparing Argentinean ALIC teachers' assessment values and practices (only differences of +/- 5 points or greater are shown; data shown in highlight represents a negative values-practice gap)

Item		Values (%) important/ crucial	Practices (%) often/mostly	Values- Practices Gap
26	I help students to plan the next steps in their learning	80	48	+32
6	I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives	67	37	+30
17	I help students to think about how they learn best	96	79	+17
29	I give students the opportunity to assess each other's work	71	55	+16
24	I give guidance to help students assess their own learning	95	80	+15
13	I give guidance to help my students assess their own work	96	84	+12
19	I give guidance to help students to assess one another's work	64	53	+11
21	I help students to understand the learning purposes of each lesson or series of lessons	90	79	+11
22	Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments	81	71	+10
8	My assessments are more useful than formal assessments	75	69	+6
15	I help students find ways of solving problems that they have in their learning	99	93	+6
16	I encourage students to see their mistakes as valuable learning opportunities	98	93	+5
14	I tell students about their strengths and help them to develop these strengths	99	94	+5
4	The feedback that my students get helps them improve	100	95	+5
30	I often talk to students about how they can improve their learning	100	95	+5
18	I use questions mainly so that my students give me reasons and explanations	88	93	-5
3	The main thing I look for in my assessments is whether my students know, understand or can do key sections of the curriculum	90	95	-5
23	The subject curriculum determines students' learning objectives	78	88	-10
7	I use questions mainly to get factual knowledge from my students	43	54	-11
12	Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades	56	85	-29

actual classroom practice seems to be well behind aspirations; in this case the gap is +30 points. Similarly, items associated with the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning (Items 13, 17, 24 and 26) show significant gaps between values and practices.

A number of items in Table 3 exhibit values-practice gaps worthy of some consideration (+/- 5 points or greater) including two items associated with providing formative feedback to respond to evidence of learning and to encourage pupil involvement in learning (Items 4, 15) and four additional items associated with the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning (Items 14, 15, 16 and 30).

Items 23 and 12 show evidence of a negative values-practice gap, indicating practices that are less in tune with teacher values. The gap for Item 12 ('Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades') is very large (-29 points). Other items falling into this negative gap category include Item 3, valued by 90% of Argentinean teachers and practised by 95%; Item 18, valued by 88% and practised by 93%; and Item 7, valued by 43% and practised by 54%.

The data in Appendix 4 show that 21 of the 30 classroom assessment practices listed in the survey were highly valued by a majority of responding teachers from India. Item 26 ('I help students to plan the next steps in their learning') exhibits a difference greater than +/- 5% and was highly valued by 96% of Indian teachers.

The data also show that there were seven practices that were highly valued by fewer than three-quarters of the Indian teachers. Item 5 ('I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class') was firmly rooted at the bottom of all items in terms of the extent to which they are valued by teachers. Item 22 ('Assessment of students' work is mainly given in marks and grades') also falls into this group, being highly valued by 70% of teachers.

Table 4 shows the items where the level of congruence between the values and practices of the Indian teachers were least marked.

With respect to the items that exhibit a positive values-practice gap (indicating that a practice is more valued than it is employed with students); only 4 items are included here. The values-practice gap for all of these items is relatively small (i.e. between +5 and +8 points).

Table 4: Comparing Indian ALIC teachers' assessment values and practices (only differences of +/- 5 points or greater are shown; data shown in highlight represents a negative values-practice gap)

Item		Values (%) important/ crucial	Practices (%) often/mostly	Values- Practices Gap
2	The subject curriculum I have to teach is a greater influence on what I will do in my next lesson than how well my students did in the last lesson	64	56	+8
6	I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives	78	70	+8
26	I help students to plan the next steps in their learning	96	89	+7
17	I help students to think about how they learn best	98	92	+6
12	Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades	64	71	-7

This group includes Item 2, relating to curriculum-orientated planning, and Item 6, relating to the development of student control over assessment practices. Item 2 is both practised and highly valued by relatively few teachers, whilst Item 6 is practised and highly valued by a greater percentage; in both cases the positive gap suggests an aspiration outstripping practice.

Item 12 is the only item to exhibit a negative values-practice gap for Indian teachers, indicating a practice that is not valued as much as it is employed with students (Table 4).

Discussion

It is important to say at the outset that the ALIC survey relied on self-reporting by participants. Unlike James and Pedder (2006), the ALIC team were unable to corroborate statements made in the survey through empirical sampling of teacher practices. And with respect to AfL strategies, others studies have found that teachers can be less confident than they claim to be in putting actual strategies in place (Sach, 2012). Nevertheless, if 'teachers' professional consciousness is a...fundamental determinant of teaching practices' (Yung, 2002), and if teachers' conceptions of learning are central to understanding and enacting assessment practices (Marshall and Drummond, 2006), then it is crucial to consider how they view their practices and to examine their aspirations for the future.

James and Pedder (2006) suggest that their original survey incorporated items relating to the themes of 'convergent assessment tendencies'; 'divergent assessment approaches'; the promotion of guided self-assessment and opportunities for students to assess their own work and learning; and teachers learning more about their students' learning.

In considering findings of the highly valued practices across the data set, 10 items relate to teachers' concern with learning more about student learning. Certainly, a concern with understanding student's learning, and acting upon that understanding, lies at the heart of the five key AfL strategies discussed at the start of this article. If "...formative assessment is concerned with the creation of, and capitalization upon, 'moments of contingency' in instruction for the purpose of the regulation of learning processes" (Black and William, 2009, p.10), then learning more about student's learning is vital. Yet in differing national contexts, what is considered to be an appropriate 'assessment repertoire' might include approaches that are not bounded by Black and William's (2009) key strategies. Thus Item 22 ('Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments') is included, yet with relatively low value attributed to it compared to the rest of the items in the group. This may indicate that formative feedback is seen as primarily to be given in a spoken, rather than a written, form.

The very high value placed on practices related to the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning (Zimmerman, 2008) suggests a concern to develop students' metacognitive understanding of their own learning, and coheres with the sentiment of Black and William's AfL Strategy aimed at 'activating students as owners of their own learning'. Thus there is an emphasis on the learning orientation of the student, rather than on performance orientation (Dweck, 2000), together with a focus on students developing learning strategies that work best for them in a particular circumstance. Placing high value on these items suggests that teachers aspire to move students towards

self-regulated learning through appropriate scaffolding related to the contingent position of learner. Further, it again seems to suggest a clear concern amongst teachers with promoting the intentions of the five strategies of formative assessment (Black and William, 2009).

As we have indicated in the findings section, Item 3 ('The main thing I look for in my assessments is whether my students know, understand or can do key sections of the curriculum') is also highly valued and is the only item that might be interpreted as sitting outside concerns with either learning more about student learning or the development of pupil agency. Certainly it might be comfortably part of a group of items associated with curriculum-oriented concerns, and James and Pedder (2006) place it with items that suggest a performance focus. But the prescribed curriculum does not have to be a driver for a particular pedagogy and the focus on student understanding embedded in Item 3 suggested to the ALIC team that it might easily be placed with several groupings of items, not just those related to 'convergent assessment tendencies'. Thus it seems there is little contradiction amongst the highly valued items in the survey as a whole, though the meanings attributed to Item 3 deserve further investigation.

Item 5 ('I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class') was the least valued item. It emphasises the development of a competitive classroom ethos and a strong focus on performance orientation (Dweck, 2000). Overall, the group of items that were highly valued by fewest teachers were those that might be linked to teacher control of assessment processes and a focus on performance goals. Item 8 ('My assessments are more useful than formal assessments') could be placed in this group of items, but it might be interpreted in a number of different ways; it may be seen as stressing the primacy of the individual teacher (perhaps regardless of evidence from pupils) or it might be strongly linked to the idea that considered formative assessment has more to offer than testing. Given this ambivalence, it is perhaps not surprising to see this item somewhat equivocally valued by teachers.

Items associated with student control over assessment processes were also amongst the least valued. These "divergent approaches to assessment" (Torrance and Pryor, 1998, pp.153–154) are clearly not of high value to these groups of teachers, and mirror the findings from research with teachers in the UK (James and Pedder, 2006; Winterbottom *et al.*, 2008a, b). These 'divergent' ambitions might be considered to be an end point or aspiration in terms of AfL practices, even in countries and schools where such practices are embedded, so their relatively low attributed value across nations is unsurprising.

When considering values and practices gaps a number of challenges for teachers are evident. In line with the argument made above, the group of items associated with giving students more control over assessment processes was not particularly highly valued. It nevertheless appears that for any teacher with an aspiration to achieve this level of student involvement in formative assessment there is still some way to go. The largest positive gap is thus for Item 6 ('I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives').

For those items that were more highly valued by teachers, there is an apparent gap between values and practices for several items that can be broadly grouped through their association with the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning. Teachers seem much more comfortable with assessment approaches linked to developing their own understanding of students' learning than they are with promoting opportunities for students to assess their own work, build on their

strengths and think critically about their learning. This is unsurprising, as building such elements into assessment repertoires is not easy. However, the high value attributed to such practices suggests a strong aspiration to develop practice in this direction.

For items with a negative gap, it is interesting to see that the largest gap occurs with respect to the provision of feedback in the form of marks and grades. The strong drivers of accountability cultures (both on a micro-level in such things as direct accountability to parents and on a macro-level in terms of school, regional and national data comparisons) clearly have an influence here (Black and William, 2005). But it is nevertheless interesting to see how little comparative value is given to this practice compared to the level of practice itself. And though the gap is less marked, it seems clear that teachers would like some flexibility with respect to the setting of learning objectives, beyond the constraints of the prescribed curriculum.

There are some subtle differences between the perspectives of the Argentinean teachers and those reflected by other teachers in the data set, e.g. differences in the response to Item 26 ('I help students to plan the next steps in their learning') might be seen to imply rather less of a concern with children understanding how to build on their strengths and analysing areas for development in their own work. This is particularly interesting, given that other items related to the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning are given similar value ratings to those evidenced across the cohort. It might suggest a rigid curriculum structure that constrains the extent to which teachers feel that they can have an input on an individual's 'next steps for learning'. Certainly large values-practice gaps that relate to the provision of formative feedback, encouraging pupil involvement in learning and the development of pupil agency suggest a strong concern amongst Argentinean teachers to develop this area of their work.

Few Argentinean teachers highly valued those practices associated with student control over assessment practices. Of other practices highly valued by fewer than three-quarters of the Argentinean teachers, closed questioning (and the focus on performance goals with which it is often associated) and the provision of summative feedback were valued substantially less than they were by teachers in the overall study. This is interesting given what is suggested about actual classroom practices; a consideration of the values-practice gap suggests that aspirations for Argentinean teachers in many cases appear to be far ahead of current practices. For example, the gap for Item 12 ('Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades') indicates a strong, embedded practice that is considerably at odds with teachers' aspirations. It is tempting to speculate on the reasons why practices that accord with formative assessment principles lag so far behind teacher aspirations, but the data does not enable fruitful speculation in this area.

Turning to a consideration of the data from India, in general, there are small gaps between values and practices for those items linked positively to formative assessment practices. Indian teachers seem confident that their values and practices are broadly in harmony, though again we must add the caveat that interpretation without empirical evidence of practice can only be speculative. Looking in more detail at the Indian data through the lens provided by the Argentinean data, Item 26 ('I help students to plan the next steps in their learning') was much more highly valued, suggesting that Indian teachers place somewhat greater value overall on this aspect of helping children understand how to build on their strengths and analyse areas for development in their work. If Argentinean teachers are constrained by a rigid curriculum with respect

to this item, as we have speculated above, we might suggest that Indian teachers feel greater freedom in suggesting 'next steps' for individual learners.

In the Indian data, Item 8 ('My assessments are more useful than formal assessments') appears as a highly valued item, in a way that it does not in the Argentinean data. This may again be an issue of interpretation in a given national context. It might sit well with other items associated with teacher control of assessment processes and a focus on performance goals, as James and Pedder (2006) suggest. Alternatively, it might be interpreted as being associated with the idea that formative assessment has more to offer than formal testing.

Conclusions

Given the global prominence given to AfL by governments, assessment agencies, researchers and others, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that, in very broad terms, the items most valued by the teachers in this study demonstrate the considerable value placed upon practices linked positively to formative assessment principles and strategies. Certainly it seems that teachers have a particular concern with learning more about student learning and with promoting the development of pupil agency in assessment and learning. These concerns not only form the foundation of Black and Wiliam's (2009) five key strategies, they might also be seen more globally as being related to what teachers think about 'positive' pedagogy (Wiliam and Thompson, 2007). Importantly, the idea of pedagogy as we use it here includes individual and culturally-informed perspectives on communicative approaches (Mercer and Littleton, 2007), classroom participation structures (Cazden, 1986), the importance of students' metacognitive understanding of learning (Dweck, 2000; Zimmerman, 2008), the importance of student interaction and collaboration (Kutnick *et al.*, 2005), and the accountability structures that impinge on the work of the teacher (Black *et al.*, 2003).

Concern with such aspects of pedagogy, and associated assessment practices, suggests that the survey data reflect the views of professionals who are engaged, reflective and responsible. But it does seem clear that an individual teacher's response to the survey items is also likely to be considerably nuanced and strongly related to prevailing contextual imperatives. Thus, the data suggest that Indian teachers feel relatively confident that their practices match their aspirations with respect to classroom-based assessment, whilst for Argentinean teachers there are constraints that militate against their positive aspirations.

Factor analysis of the data, which will be the next step in our research, will consider how items group and this will provide further insights. The issue then will be to examine whether the underlying dimensions of assessment practice differ from those revealed by James and Pedder (2006) and why that might be the case.

The survey data as it has been interpreted thus far might suggest different ways of working with teachers in different countries. For example, Indian teachers might be helped to analyse their practice through classroom-based research, providing them with the tools to articulate good practice in their context; Argentinean teachers, on the other hand, might wish to develop peer observations that enable discussions about how best to develop their AfL aspirations. Whatever the survey data might suggest, however, it seems clear that an analysis of practices 'on the ground' is necessary if the nuances of national practices are to be fully revealed.

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APPENDIX 1: ALIC Survey Participant Data by Nation

		Argentina		India		Indonesia		Nigeria		Saudi Arabia	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Survey Returns		81	33	116	48	29	12	2	0.0	9	<0.0
Schools/ Colleges		51	35	61	42	22	15	2	0.0	8	<0.0
Teacher Gender	Male	10	12.3	38	32.8	16	55.2	2	100.0	4	44.4
	Female	70	86.4	78	67.2	13	44.8	0	0.0	5	55.6
Teacher Experience	Less than 2 Years	0	0.0	1	0.9	1	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
	2–4 Years	3	3.7	15	12.9	1	3.4	0	0.0	1	11.1
	5–10 Years	16	19.8	34	29.3	12	41.4	1	50.0	2	22.2
	11–20 Years	27	33.3	40	34.5	12	41.4	0	0.0	5	55.6
	21+ Years	31	38.3	17	14.7	1	3.4	1	50.0	1	11.1
	Not specified	4	4.9	9	7.8	2	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Experience in Current School	Less than 2 Years	9	11.1	35	30.2	4	13.8	1	50.0	2	22.2
	2–4 Years	12	14.8	33	28.4	6	20.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
	5–10 Years	24	29.6	30	25.9	12	41.4	1	50.0	6	66.7
	11–20 Years	23	28.4	3	2.6	3	10.3	0	0.0	1	11.1
	21+ Years	8	9.9	3	2.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Not specified	5	6.2	12	10.3	4	13.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Age Taught	10 and Under	3	3.7	2	1.7	2	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
	11–14	21	25.9	34	29.3	4	13.8	0	0.0	1	11.1
	15–18	53	65.4	68	58.6	19	65.5	2	100.0	8	88.9
	18+	1	1.2	1	.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Not specified	3	3.7	11	9.5	4	13.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Subject Taught	Science/Maths	7	8.6	59	50.9	12	41.4	1	50.0	6	66.7
	English	47	58.0	22	19.0	6	20.7	1	50.0	1	11.1
	Languages	0	0.0	2	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Social Sciences/Humanities	13	16.0	17	14.7	1	3.4	0	0.0	1	11.1
	Arts	3	3.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Not specified	11	13.6	16	13.8	10	34.5	0	0.0	1	11.1

APPENDIX 2: Comparing ALIC teachers' classroom-based assessment values and practices – percentage of positive responses across five national contexts

<i>Item</i>	<i>Values (%) important/crucial</i>	<i>Practices (%) often/mostly</i>
30 I often talk to students about how they can improve their learning	100	97
4 The feedback that my students get helps them improve	99	96
15 I help students find ways of solving problems that they have in their learning	99	95
14 I tell students about their strengths and help them to develop these strengths	98	93
16 I encourage students to see their mistakes as valuable learning opportunities	98	94
1 Assessment gives me useful evidence of my students' understandings which I use to plan my next lesson	97	98
11 I talk about learning objectives with students in ways they understand	97	94
10 I tell students how well they have done compared with their own earlier performance	96	95
17 I help students to think about how they learn best	96	87
27 I think student effort is important when I assess their learning	96	99
28 I talk about assessment criteria with students in ways that they understand	96	95
20 I find students' errors are helpful because they give me information about how students are thinking	95	97
9 My classroom assessment practices help students to learn independently	94	94
13 I give guidance to help my students assess their own work	94	86
24 I give guidance to help students assess their own learning	94	86
3 The main thing I look for in my assessments is whether my students know, understand or can do key sections of the curriculum	93	95
21 I help students to understand the learning purposes of each lesson or series of lessons	92	88
25 My assessment is mainly about what students know, understand and can do	89	88
18 I use questions mainly so that my students give me reasons and explanations	88	89
26 I help students to plan the next steps in their learning	88	71
8 My assessments are more useful than formal assessments	81	77
23 The subject curriculum determines students' learning objectives	81	88
22 Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments	75	70
6 I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives	73	55
29 I give students the opportunity to assess each other's work	73	65
19 I give guidance to help students to assess one another's work	70	64
2 The subject curriculum I have to teach is a greater influence on what I will do in my next lesson than how well my students did in the last lesson	64	60
12 Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades	64	77
7 I use questions mainly to get factual knowledge from my students	52	54
5 I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class	26	29

APPENDIX 3: Comparing Argentinean ALIC teachers' classroom-based assessment values and practices: percentage of positive responses

<i>Item</i>	<i>Values (%) important/crucial</i>	<i>Practices (%) often/mostly</i>
4 The feedback that my students get helps them improve	100	95
30 I often talk to students about how they can improve their learning	100	95
14 I tell students about their strengths and help them to develop these strengths	99	94
15 I help students find ways of solving problems that they have in their learning	99	93
16 I encourage students to see their mistakes as valuable learning opportunities	98	93
10 I tell students how well they have done compared with their own earlier performance	97	94
13 I give guidance to help my students assess their own work	96	84
17 I help students to think about how they learn best	96	79
27 I think student effort is important when I assess their learning	96	99
1 Assessment gives me useful evidence of my students' understandings which I use to plan my next lesson	95	99
9 My classroom assessment practices help students to learn independently	95	91
11 I talk about learning objectives with students in ways they understand	95	91
20 I find students' errors are helpful because they give me information about how students are thinking	95	98
24 I give guidance to help students assess their own learning	95	80
28 I talk about assessment criteria with students in ways that they understand	95	95
25 My assessment is mainly about what students know, understand and can do	93	91
3 The main thing I look for in my assessments is whether my students know, understand or can do key sections of the curriculum	90	95
21 I help students to understand the learning purposes of each lesson or series of lessons	90	79
18 I use questions mainly so that my students give me reasons and explanations	88	93
22 Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments	81	71
26 I help students to plan the next steps in their learning	80	48
23 The subject curriculum determines students' learning objectives	78	88
8 My assessments are more useful than formal assessments	75	69
29 I give students the opportunity to assess each other's work	71	55
6 I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives	67	37
2 The subject curriculum I have to teach is a greater influence on what I will do in my next lesson than how well my students did in the last lesson	64	68
19 I give guidance to help students to assess one another's work	64	53
12 Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades	56	85
7 I use questions mainly to get factual knowledge from my students	43	54
5 I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class	14	15

APPENDIX 4: Comparing Indian ALIC teachers' classroom-based assessment values and practices: percentage of positive responses

<i>Item</i>	<i>Values (%) important/crucial</i>	<i>Practices (%) often/mostly</i>
30 I often talk to students about how they can improve their learning	100	98
4 The feedback that my students get helps them improve	99	97
15 I help students find ways of solving problems that they have in their learning	99	98
16 I encourage students to see their mistakes as valuable learning opportunities	99	96
11 I talk about learning objectives with students in ways they understand	98	96
14 I tell students about their strengths and help them to develop these strengths	98	96
17 I help students to think about how they learn best	98	92
1 Assessment gives me useful evidence of my students' understandings which I use to plan my next lesson	97	99
3 The main thing I look for in my assessments is whether my students know, understand or can do key sections of the curriculum	96	97
10 I tell students how well they have done compared with their own earlier performance	96	97
26 I help students to plan the next steps in their learning	96	89
27 I think student effort is important when I assess their learning	96	99
28 I talk about assessment criteria with students in ways that they understand	95	94
9 My classroom assessment practices help students to learn independently	94	97
20 I find students' errors are helpful because they give me information about how students are thinking	94	97
21 I help students to understand the learning purposes of each lesson or series of lessons	94	96
24 I give guidance to help students assess their own learning	94	92
13 I give guidance to help my students assess their own work	93	91
18 I use questions mainly so that my students give me reasons and explanations	89	88
8 My assessments are more useful than formal assessments	88	84
25 My assessment is mainly about what students know, understand and can do	88	88
23 The subject curriculum determines students' learning objectives	84	87
6 I give students the opportunity to determine their own learning objectives	78	70
29 I give students the opportunity to assess each other's work	71	71
19 I give guidance to help students to assess one another's work	70	71
22 Assessment of students' work is mainly in the form of comments	70	73
2 The subject curriculum I have to teach is a greater influence on what I will do in my next lesson than how well my students did in the last lesson	64	56
12 Assessment of students' work is mainly given as marks and grades	64	71
7 I use questions mainly to get factual knowledge from my students	51	51
5 I tell students how well they have done compared to others in the class	34	38