

# **Assessment Literacy – How does being an examiner enhance teachers’ understanding of assessment?**

Conference abstract

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## **Abstract**

Assessment Literacy (AL) is an important component of teacher professionalism, and encompasses the basic understandings, skills, and applications that underpin a teacher's ability to use and understand assessment. It has been conceptualised in various ways; with recent definitions encompassing conceptions (beliefs and feelings) of assessment, recognising that the relationship between AL and assessment practice is complex, multidirectional and impacted by external factors (Opre, 2015; Xu & Brown, 2016). Concerns have been raised that many teachers do not have sufficient AL which has implications for teacher professionalism and classroom practice, particularly given that a typical teacher will spend up to a third of their professional time on assessment related activities (Stiggins, 2010). In a UK context, this is perhaps explained by findings that assessment is not taught sufficiently in many initial teacher training courses, as well as findings that in-school training and opportunities for continuing professional development in assessment are often limited (NAHT, 2014; Millard et al., 2017).

Thinking about the transformation of teachers' AL, it is useful to use the metaphor of an 'assessment career' (Deneen & Brown, 2016). AL is changeable over time and is influenced by both personal and professional experience. A teacher's assessment career may start when they themselves are students, and be developed through their teacher training where they learn to assess others and are themselves assessed. AL may then continue to develop during their teaching career, through classroom practice and training opportunities. In addition, participation in examining offers another avenue for teachers to gain experience and may act as a form of professional development in assessment, thus enhancing their AL. With many teachers choosing to examine we wanted to consider what motivates them and what professional benefits they gain from examining. Moreover, any information that we could gain from such an exploration would allow us to better understand whether examiner activity has any general influence on teachers' AL development and on subsequent classroom practice.

## **Methods**

In this project we investigate the contribution that professional examining work has on transforming teachers' AL and the impact this has on their everyday teaching practices. Given the complex, and highly interconnected conceptualisation of AL that we adopt, and the limited extant research base around teacher-examiner AL, we utilise an exploratory two-phase mixed-methods design. In Phase 1, we use concept maps and interviews with a sample of Science and English teacher-examiners to explore the influence of examining on their AL. In Phase 2, the findings from Phase 1 are used to inform the development of a survey to explore AL amongst a wider sample of international teacher-examiners.

## **Findings and Conclusion**

The outcomes of our study will consider whether examining experience contributes to Teachers' AL, and whether this also has an impact on teaching practice. We will also explore the tensions between the teachers' instrumental (exam specific) and more general AL, as we recognise that the teacher-examiners possess role duality (being both assessor and teacher). We will also explore whether there are any similarities across teacher-

examiners from different subjects and levels, since there is some prior literature that suggests that we could expect this to be the case.

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