

Three years after the intervention- was the assessment for learning culture sustained?

Professor Kari Smith, University of Bergen, Norway

Professor Knut Steinar Engelsen, Stord Haugesund University College, Norway

Research topic:

The research topic is assessment for learning, a topic central to educational discussions in Norway as well as in the other Nordic and European countries. There is solid research evidence that teachers' high competence and skills in formative assessment enhances student learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie, 2009). Recent Norwegian research has shown that long term projects are necessary in order to develop an AFL culture in school (Engelsen & Smith, 2010). However, little is known about how to sustain the formative assessment practice in schools which have succeeded in developing an AFL culture. The current paper examines the sustainability three years after a 2 years intensive AFL project in a Norwegian primary school.

Theoretical and methodological framework:

An AfL culture is about developing a learning dialogue between all partners in school, leaders, teachers and student, based on information collected from assessment activities (Smith & Engelsen, in progress). Thus the theoretical foundation is a socio-cultural perspective to learning and development (Dysthe, 2001; Säljö, 2001).

The current study is a phenomenological oriented (Postholm, 2004) case study of one primary school. Data is collected by interviewing the school principal and 3 focus group interviews with different groups of teachers, analyzed by acknowledged methods for analyzing qualitative data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Expected conclusions

Both the principal and the teachers claim that assessment practice in the school involves the students to a larger extent than prior to the R&D process five years ago. A second finding is that the school and the teachers have developed their own assessment practice informed by the knowledge acquired through the project. They claim that the reason for this is the long term and deep collective learning that took place during the R&D process. To get a better understanding of teachers' assessment practice and student perceptions further research is needed.

Relevance to Nordic education

All the Nordic countries are looking for ways to develop knowledge about how to enhance student learning. The current project contributes with new knowledge about how to develop a sustainable AFL culture in schools.

Literature

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31.

Dysthe, O. (2001). Sosiokulturelle teoriperspektiv på kunnskap og læring. In O. Dysthe (Ed.), *Dialog, samspel og læring* [Sociocultural theory perspectives on knowledge and learning] (pp. 33–73). Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Engelsen, K. S., & Smith, K. (2010). Is "Excellent" good enough? *Education Inquiry*, 1(4), 415–431.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.

- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* [The qualitative research interview] (2 ed.). Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Postholm, M. B. (2004). Kvalitativ forskning på praksis. Fra opprinnelse til forskerfokus. *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift*, 01/2004, 3-18.
- Smith, K., & Engelsen, K. S. (in progress). Assessment literacy. In.
- Säljö, R. (2001). *Læring i praksis. Et sosiokulturelt perspektiv* [Learning in practice. A socio cultural perspective]. Oslo: Cappelen Akademiske Forlag.