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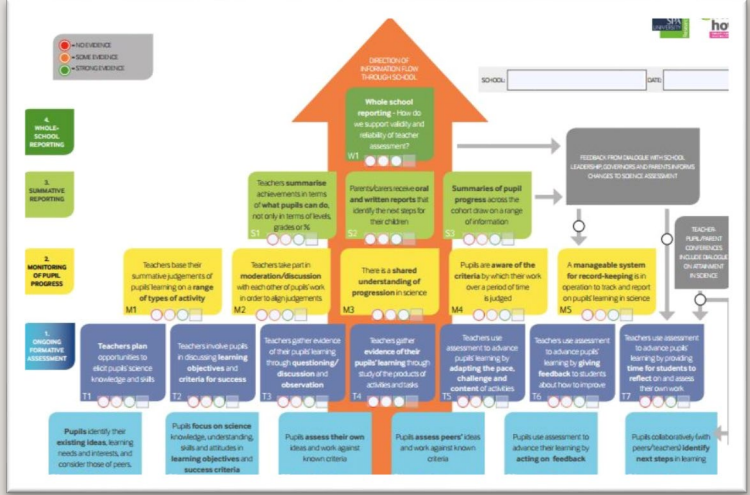
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS WHERE SCHOOLWIDE CHANGES TO PRACTICE ARE POSSIBLE?

BY ISABEL HOPWOOD STEPHENS, BATH SPA UNIVERSITY



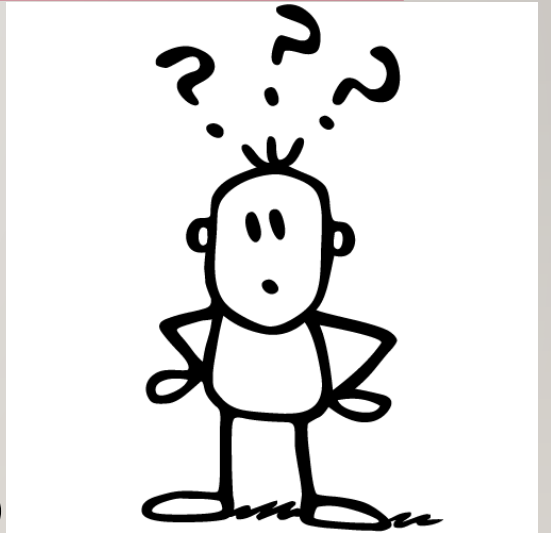
INTRODUCTION

- Three part study of the dissemination, interpretation and enactment of a resource aimed at primary practitioners
- This paper considers the findings relating to factors which enable or inhibit professional learning among in-service teachers that results in changes to pedagogical practice
- Problem, aims, methods, findings and their implications



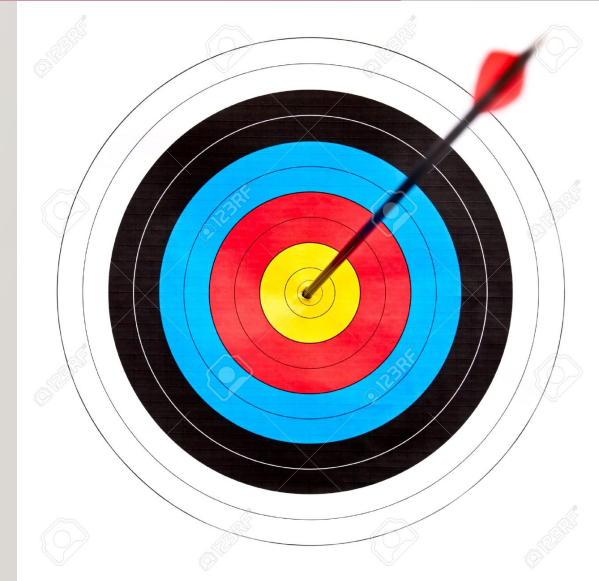
THE PROBLEM

- Changes to assessment policy require development of formative assessment practice (DfE, 2014)
- ITE: formative assessment training is “weak” (Carter Review, 2015)
- Limited budgets mean more in-house provision of training and development (Teacher Development Trust, 2017)
- Teachers are not always the most co-operative learners! (Dooner et al., 2008)
- Teaching is an isolated, private profession with limited horizons of observation (Little, 2003)
- Workplaces can limit professional learning as well as enable it (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005)



AIMS OF THE STUDY

- By studying the dissemination and enactment of a resource upon assessment practice in primary schools:
- Discover the mediating factors within a school which can influence attempts to improve practice at a schoolwide level
- Define the characteristics of learning opportunities that are most valued by teachers, and why
- Provide recommendations for school leaders who wish to enable professional learning across the staffing body



METHODS

- Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods (Creswell, 2013) design
- Macro to micro approach: large online survey (n=100), quantitative analysis; smaller qualitative case study (2 schools), thematic analysis
- Case study schools drawn from survey participants
- Analysis of results at each stage; then drawing together of findings to consider the implications



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

- Workplace characteristics of schools: expansive/restrictive continuum (Fuller and Unwin, 2004; Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson, 2005)
- The role of formal and informal contacts in the transfer of innovative knowledge; demonstrated in business (Aalbers, Dolfsma and Koppius, 2014)
- Communication style: linear, interactive or transactional, demonstrated to affect communication between schools and parents (Harris and Nelson, 2008; Schneider and Arnot, 2017)
- How useful might these be to explain how new knowledge is transferred?
How might these different ideas interact?

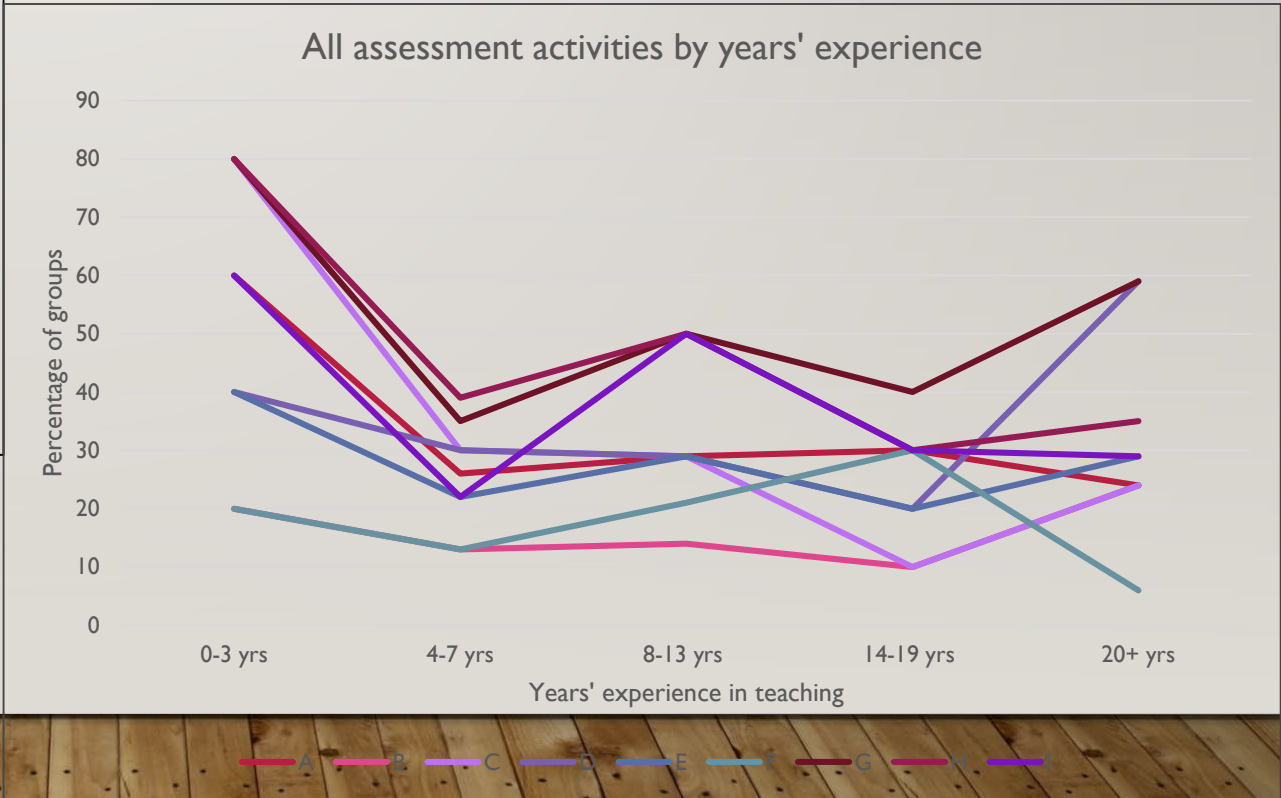
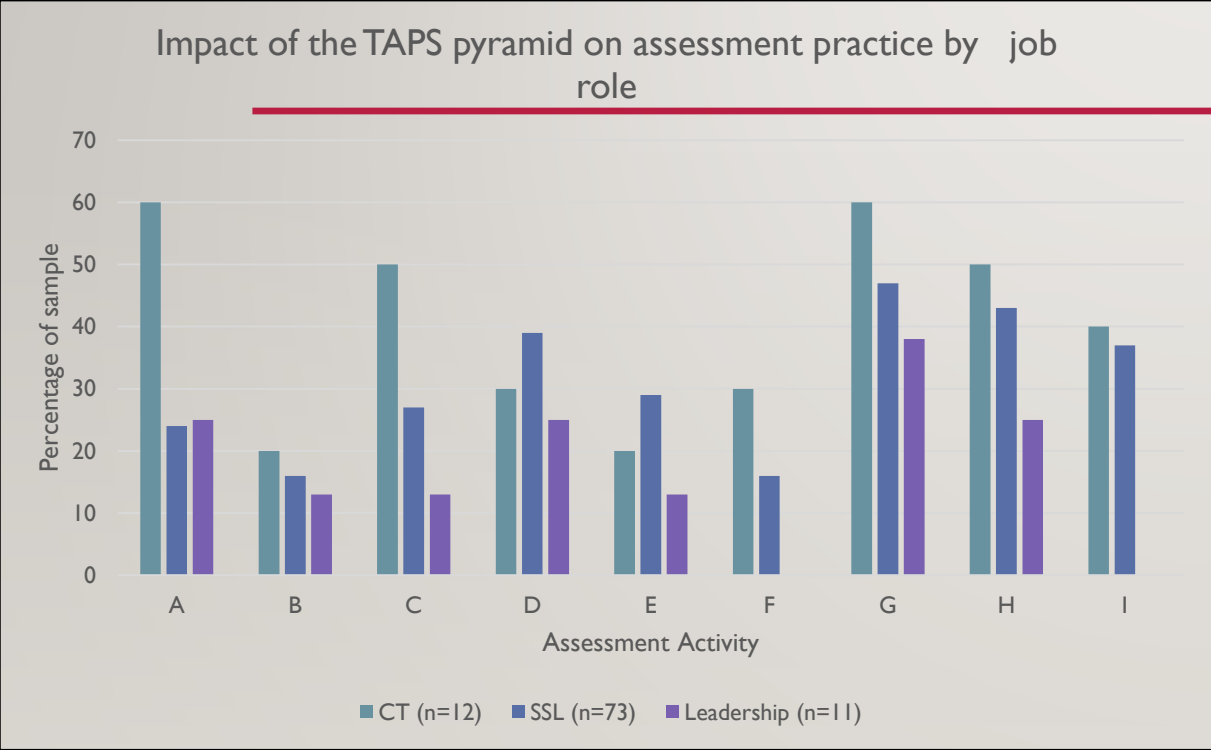


FINDINGS: ONLINE SURVEY



DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Impact upon practice varies with job role and experience of teaching; demonstrates range of assessment literacy within teacher workforce



A B C D E F G H I

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS



FACTORS LINKED TO SCHOOLWIDE CHANGE

Variable	p value
Meetings: had a clear purpose	.67
Meetings: link between assessment practice and learning clear	.06
Meetings: can reflect upon and discuss practice	.20
Meetings: able to raise concerns and suggest ideas	.01
Meetings: opportunity to work collaboratively	.02
Workplace: collaborative working	.009
Workplace: ongoing professional development encouraged	.012
Workplace: attend training courses	.38
Workplace: work with colleagues across year-groups	.017
Workplace: innovation is encouraged	.021
Other: Discussion with a colleague	.001
Other: Discussion with a group of colleagues	<.001

CONCLUSIONS: ONLINE SURVEY

- Discussion is key to reports of whole school changes to assessment practice: between two *or* more colleagues...
- Teachers are learning from and with each other; but not necessarily within the mandated, formal contact of the staff meeting
- Informal contacts (peer-to-peer discussion) could be an important part of this learning process (Aalbers et al., 2014)
- An expansive workplace (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005) which enables frequent informal contacts through collaboration, innovation and ongoing professional development could be more significant in enabling this type of professional learning than the formal contacts of a staff meeting
- So: what is the **format and nature of the discussion** between teachers changing their practice?

FINDINGS: CASE STUDIES

- All participants wanted to learn from and with each other (Hood, 1990), either at staff meetings or in 1:1 conversations. (Variation in teachers' preferences: newer teachers preferred more private and tailored support)
- All participants valued informal contacts and felt that they assisted their professional learning
- Communication style during contacts deemed valuable to the teachers' learning was rated as interactive or transactional
- Transactional communication underpinned the following activities entailed in all teachers learning to change their assessment practice: negotiation of shared aims; questioning to clarify goals; reflection upon progress; sharing of good practice; using each other for support

NEGOTIATION OF SHARED AIMS

“[290] All the staff were there ... I think the fact that we did this as a whole teaching team had a big impact. I don't think it would have the impact if just your science co-ordinator did it on their own and then came up with their action plan. But if you do it with your whole staff team, then you're agreeing what are your next steps.”

REFLECTING UPON PROGRESS

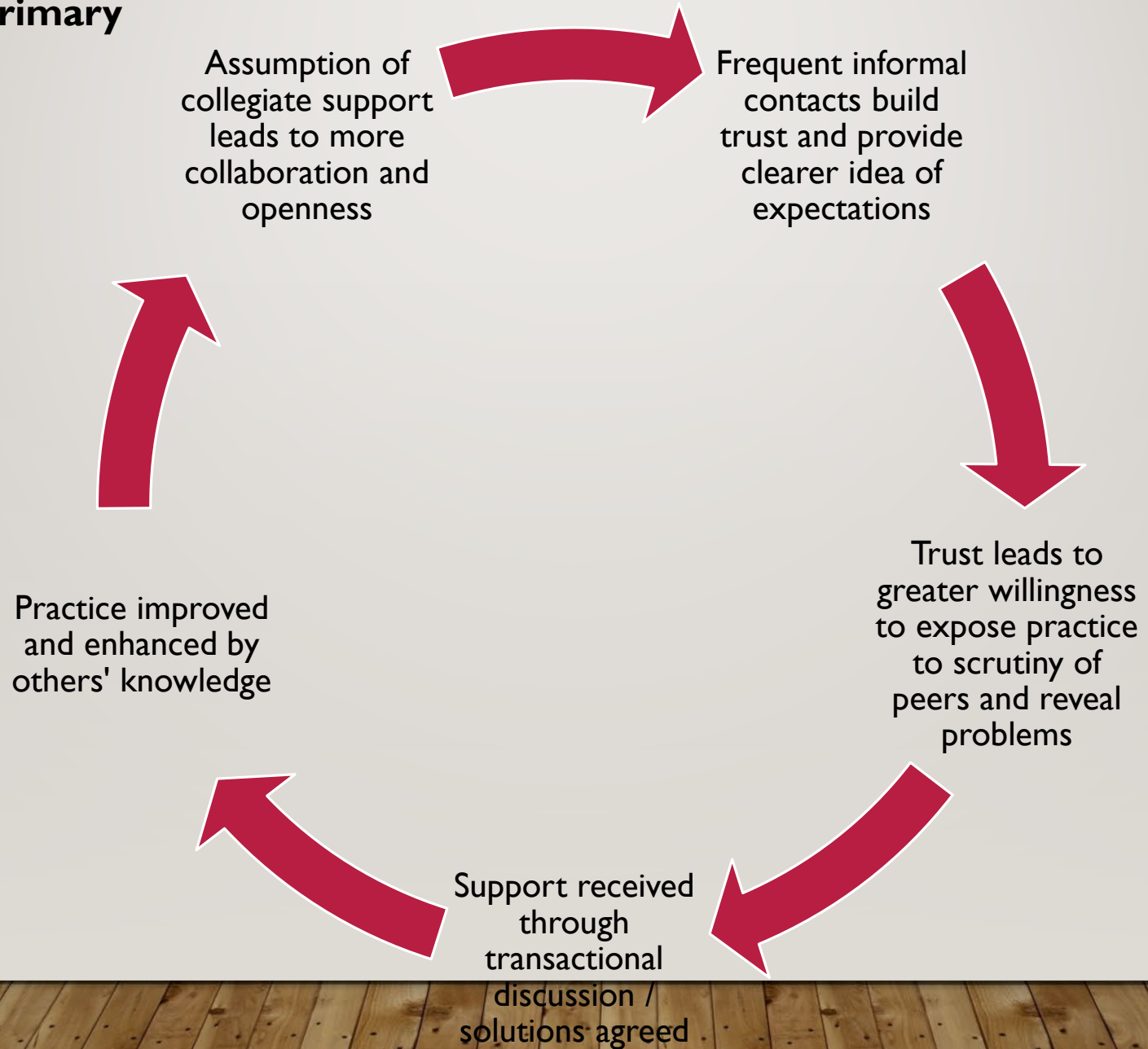
“[59] We came back to it several times and thought, ‘right, we looked at that last time, have we now improved our practice?’”

“[57] It’s something that comes up quite regularly really in the staff meetings. It’s not like, ‘oh we’ve done this once this year, we won’t have to think about that for another year’.”

DEPRIVATISATION OF PRACTICE

“[295] It’s not like a judging of what they’re doing, it’s an asking. It’s a, ‘how are you doing it in this year group? How does it look in this year group? Yes, but also what have you done that’s different and had a good impact?... Has it had a good enough impact that we should all be doing it?’”

The role of trust in the cycle of pedagogical change in primary schools



CONCLUSION:WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SCHOOLS?

- Transactional communication underpins negotiation of aims, reflection on progress, clarification of goals
- Informal contacts increase understanding and foster interpersonal trust
- Messages from the wider workplace seem to encourage collaborative working, innovation and value professional learning
- Meetings to support learning are important; but the workplace and the contacts a teacher has within it are *more* important

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCHOOL LEADERS

- Teachers learn to change their practice through ongoing and reflective discussion of practice; schedule opportunities for this
- Ongoing, reflective dialogue between teachers is more effective when the communication style is transactional: model this and find ways to enable this (e.g.: “communication template” for meetings)
- Teachers’ learning preferences vary: provide a range of learning formats, such as staff meetings, learning pairs, observing, mentoring
- Teachers’ professional learning is shaped by the characteristics of the workplace; to what extent is collaborative working enabled or encouraged? Could this be improved?

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