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Developing research-informed assessment practice in education programmes

Pete Boyd pete.boyd@cumbria.ac.uk



An age of measurement

Imagine if the people of the Soviet Union had never heard of communism. The ideology that dominates our lives has, for most of us, no name...

George Monbiot 2016



Monbiot, G. (2016) Neoliberalism: The ideology at the root of all our problems. The Guardian.

An age of mismeasurement?

High graduate salary \neq High quality teaching



An age of government from Whitehall

Quasi free-market = Centralised government intervention

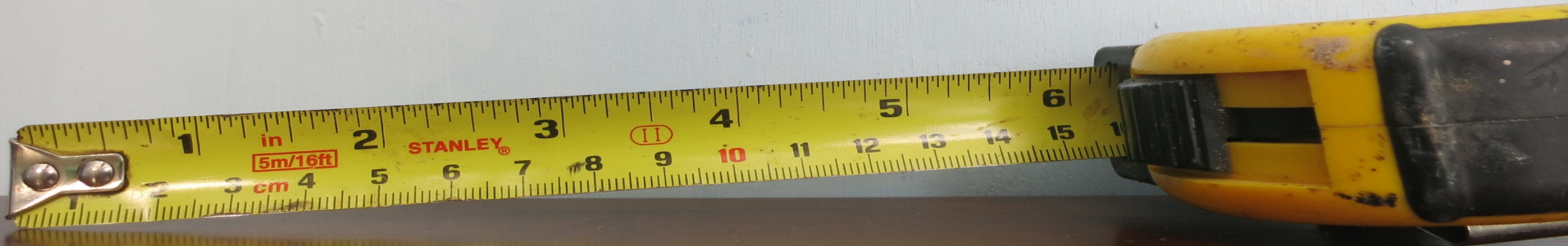


The overlapping purposes of education

Qualification

Socialisation

Subjectification



Gert Biesta: Good Education in an Age of Measurement

The knowledge (economy) society

Move away from the 'thin morality' of competitive individualism to the 'thick morality' of citizenship and the common good (Apple 2001)



Language, values, purposes and contested knowledge

Requiring a reflexive, collective, inquiry-based
approach to leading change in practice within a
Neoliberal policy framework

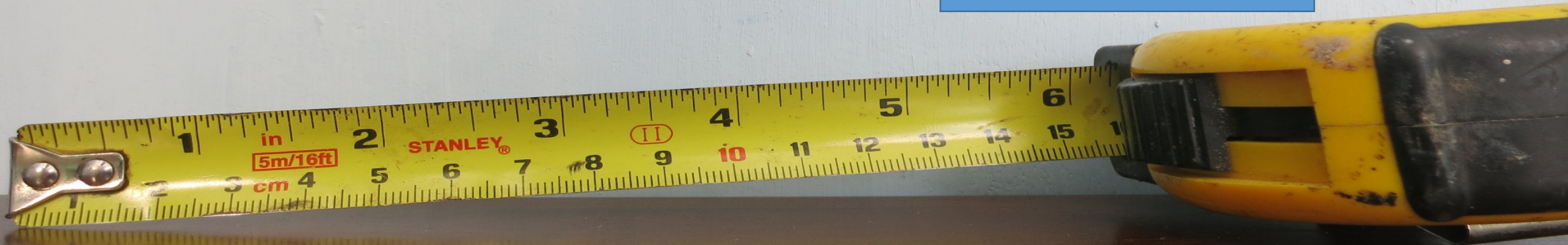


Boyd, Hymer & Lockney (2015) Learning Teaching

An age of measurement

Is neoliberalism crumbling?

Neoliberalism
1980 to 2020
RIP



Enhancement Efforts across the HE Sector

The quality of assessment processes
Pragmatic evaluation

AND

The academic standards of student work
Developing research-informed practice

✓ *good effort*

x *must try harder!*

A Marked Improvement: transforming assessment in higher education www.heacademy/amedmarkedimprovement



Realistic Clinical Practice:

Proposing an inquiry-based pedagogy for teacher education

Focus on core teacher practices – asking how AND why?

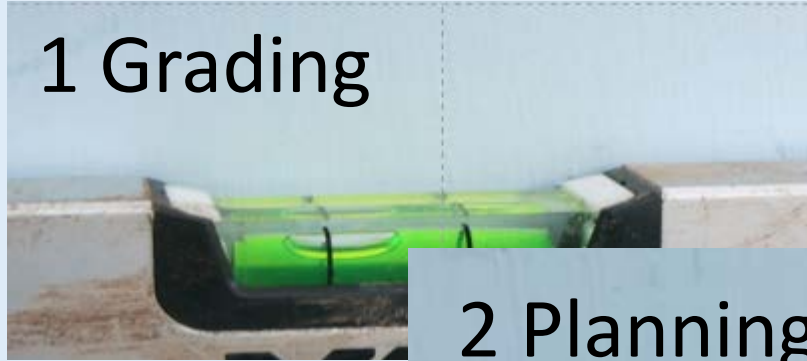
Pete Boyd (2017)

<http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/2580/>



Core teacher practices of assessment in higher education: asking how AND why?

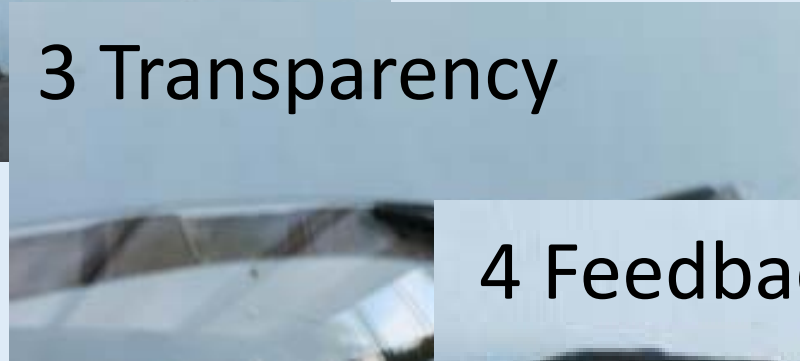
1 Grading



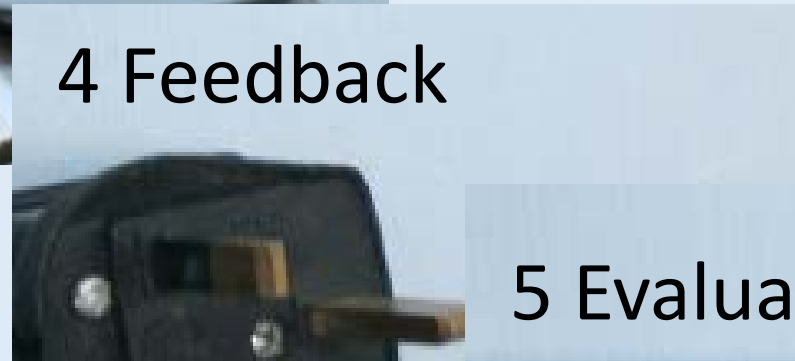
2 Planning



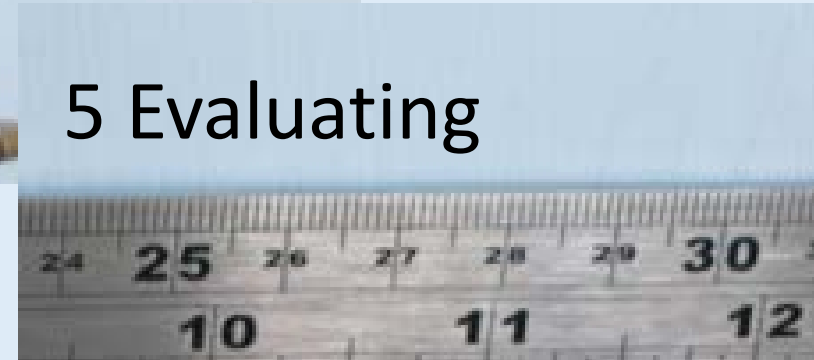
3 Transparency



4 Feedback



5 Evaluating



6 Enhancing



Grading student work: Variation

- Standards are mediated by language and interpreted differently by people based on tacit knowledge
- Standards are socially constructed and develop meaning in use within communities
- Grading complex higher education assignments relies on tacit knowledge and requires holistic judgment



For example: Elander & Hardman 2002; Newstead 2002; Baume, Yorke & Coffey 2004; Norton 2004; Hanlon et al. 2004; Read et al. 2005; Price 2005; Shay 2004; Shay 2005; O'Hagan & Wrigglesworth 2014; Bloxham et al. 2015; Bloxham et al. 2017)

Grading student work: Norm referencing

This is quite interesting because I've already read another student's work who's working on the same area, so in my head I've got something to compare it to.

I'm inclined to go with 56-ish, mid 50s. A bit more than that and I'll compare that to another one later.

Bloxham, S., Boyd, P. & Orr, S.
(2011) Mark my words



MAC
ALLISTER

Grading student work: Holistic judgments

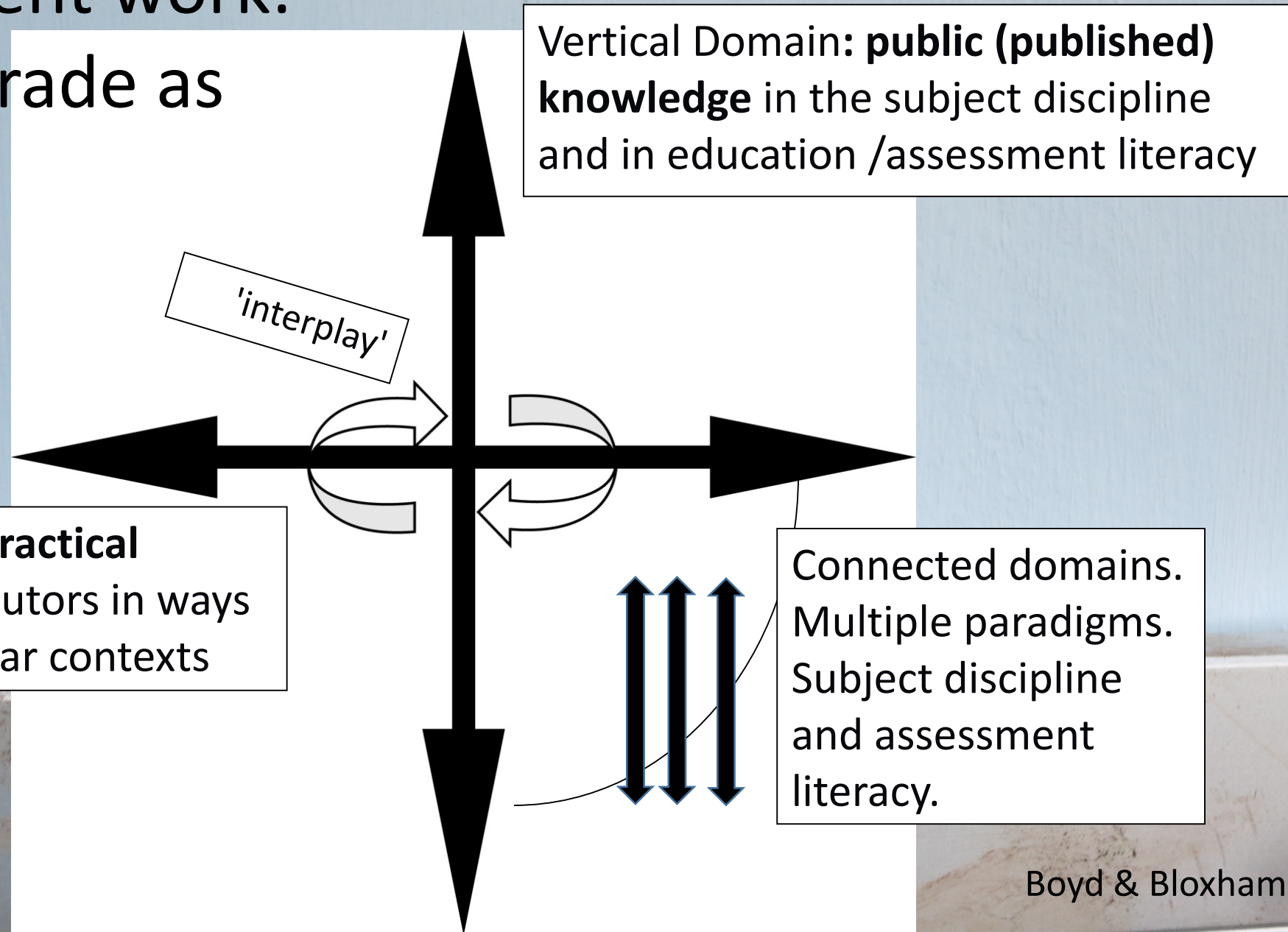
OK. He concludes it quite well. So I'd say that's a good essay and I'm thinking it might be, it's certainly in the 60s. It might be a 70 so I'm just going to check. I've got a grid with the criteria here for the different marks that I might give.

Bloxham, S., Boyd, P. & Orr, S.
(2011) Mark my words

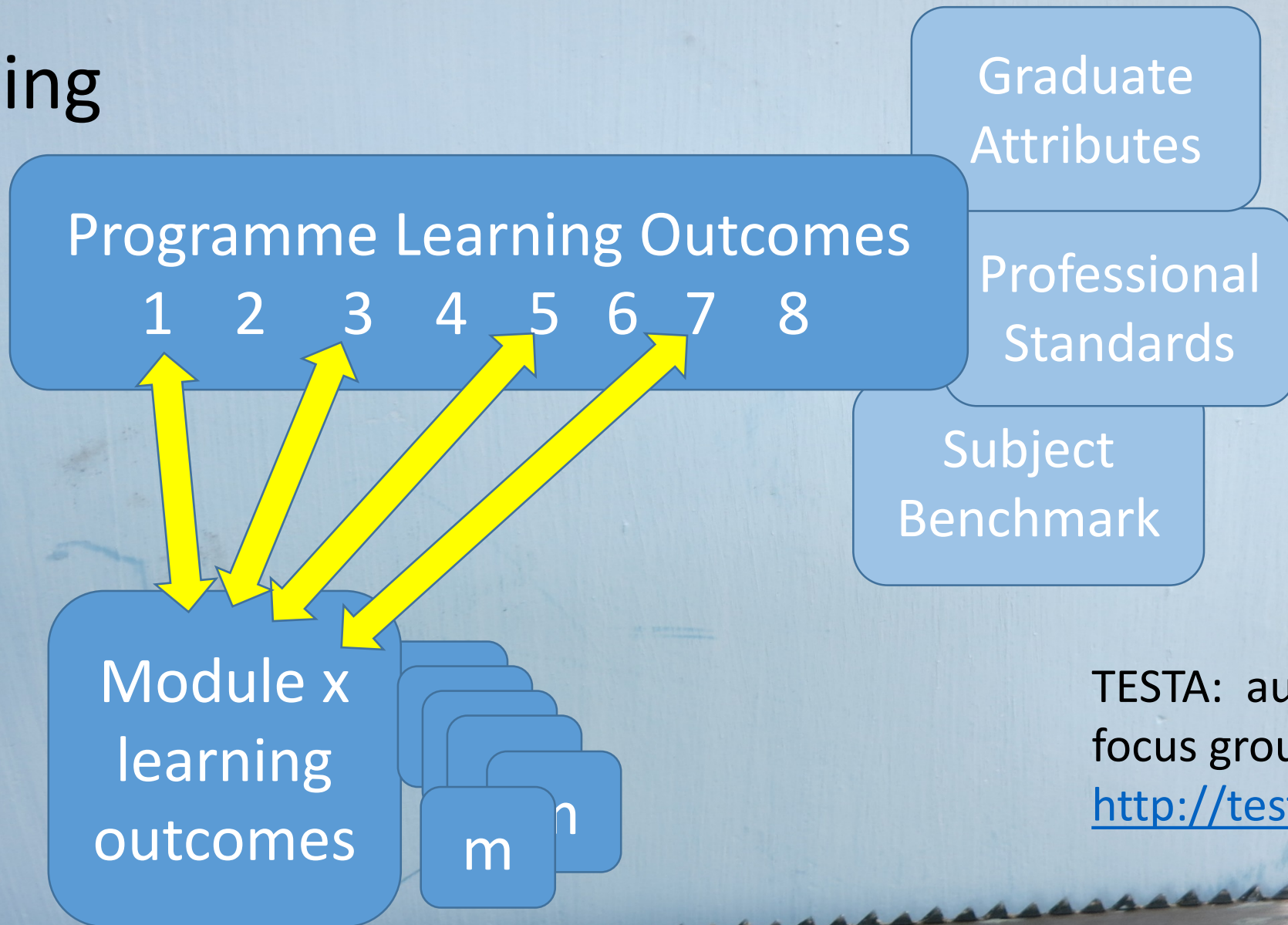


**MAC
ALLISTER**

Grading student work: Learning to grade as 'interplay'



Planning



TESTA: audit, student survey,
focus groups, team workshop
<http://testa.ac.uk/index.php>

Planning: Constructive Alignment

The student constructs meaning...

The tutor aligns the learning...

Learning Activities	Learning Outcomes	Assessment Tasks
Controlled by the tutor, collaborating with peers, or self study.	Expressed as verbs that students have to enact. The verbs chosen reflect the level of the course.	Evaluate how well the learning outcomes are demonstrated.

Adapted from
Biggs & Tang 2007

Planning learning activities:

Are tightly defined learning outcomes the cutting edge of Neoliberal policy?

‘I did not really get an A Level in Geography...

I got an A level... in how to get an A grade... in A Level Geography’

George (aged 19)

Trevor Hussey & Patrick Smith (2008): Learning outcomes: a conceptual analysis, Teaching in Higher Education, 13(1)

Threshold concepts: <https://www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/~mflanaga/thresholds.html>

Planning: University Teaching

- Teacher as 'curriculum deliverer' - teaching as telling – learning as acquisition
- Teacher as 'task manager' - teaching as facilitating – learning as participation
- Teacher as 'concept and identity builder' – teaching as framing – learning as contribution (learning as being)

Sam Twiselton: Student Teachers <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/162121.htm>

Anna Sfard: On Two Metaphors for Learning <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X027002004>

Pete Boyd: Learning Conversations <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/1802/>

Transparency: Text Alone is Insufficient

To make meaning of written criteria or rubrics, tutors and students need to use and evaluate them by judging and debating exemplars or draft writing

Rubrics are popular and have 'instructional leverage' but more research is needed on their impact on self-regulated learning



(Rust, Price, O'Donovan 2003; Bloxham & Boyd 2007; Bloxham & Boyd 2012; Boyd & Bloxham 2014; Reddy & Andrade, 2010)

Transparency: Using Rubrics

Some students seek more and more precise guidance

Some students are happy with an idea of standards (Bell et al. 2013)

Increasingly transparent guidance may lead tutors to feel that assessment is fair, but it is a technical-rational fix for what is a socio-cultural problem (Sadler 2014)



Bell, A., Mladenovic, R. & Price, M. (2013) Student perceptions of the usefulness of marking guides, grade descriptors and annotated exemplars.

Sadler, R. (2014) The futility of attempting to codify academic achievement standards.

Transparency: Working with Exemplars

- The tutor team grade high, medium and low assignments from last year BEFORE planning for a module¹
- Students, with tutor facilitation, grade exemplars and debate, alongside a connoisseur,² to gain some level of shared standards



1. Bloxham, S., Hughes, C. & Adie, L. (2016) What's the point of moderation?

2. Bloxham & Boyd (2012) Accountability in grading student work

Transparency: Peer Assessment

- Students learn by giving peer feedback using the assignment criteria or rubric¹
- Peer review, to complement tutor feedback, is an important element of dialogue²
- Such dialogue moves into informal peer networks with possible implications for social justice³



1 Marjo van Zundert et al. (2010) Effective peer assessment processes.

2 David Nicol et al. (2014) Rethinking feedback practices in HE: a peer review perspective.

3 Rita Headington (2018) Students' informal peer feedback networks. <https://ojs.cumbria.ac.uk/index.php/prhe>

Feedback: Formative Assessment has Learning Power

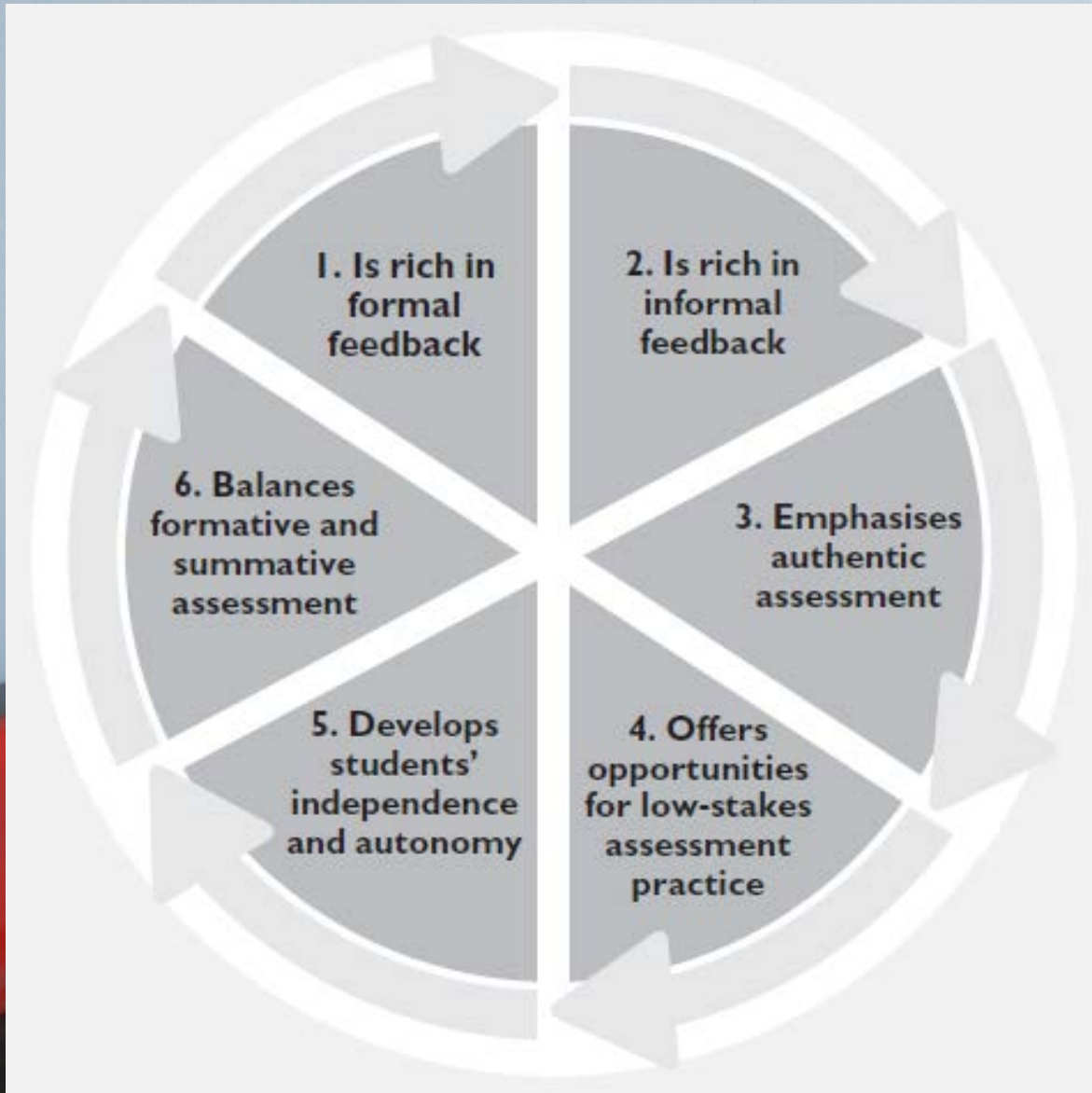
- Students get strategies for improving their work
- Tutors get evaluation to amend their teaching
- Tutors and students develop shared academic standards
- Develop a learning environment valuing struggle and mistakes
- Create a cycle of guidance, review and feedback activities
- Use peer and self assessment to develop self-regulated learners



Sadler, R. (1998) Formative Assessment: Revisiting the Territory.

Zimmerman (1990) SRL and Academic Achievement: An Overview.

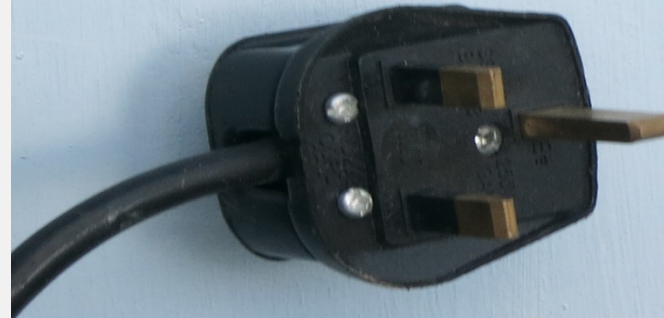
Feedback: Formative Assessment has Learning Power



'...feedback is viewed as a relational process that takes place over time, is dialogic, and is integral to the whole process of learning and teaching itself'

Kay Sambell

<http://escalate.ac.uk/8410>



Feedback

- Name the student and give some encouragement
- Refer to specific aspects of the work in relation to the criteria
- Provide three strategies for improving the future work
- Consider adding a less formal audio comment
- Encouraging ending



Student Self-Regulated Learner (+ PAT) brings collated goals and strategies informed by previous feedback

The Guidance and Feedback Cycle

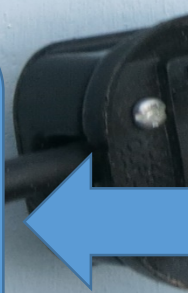
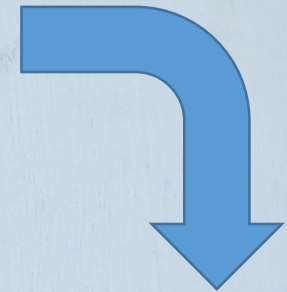
Student Self-Regulated Learner (+ PAT) collates strategies and sets goals informed by feedback

Summative Assessment: assignment with tutor feedback – three strategies for improvement

Transparency: Engage with module guide and rubric to conflate learning outcomes, criteria and grade descriptor

Formative Assessment: More substantial formative assessment with tutor (and peer) feedback

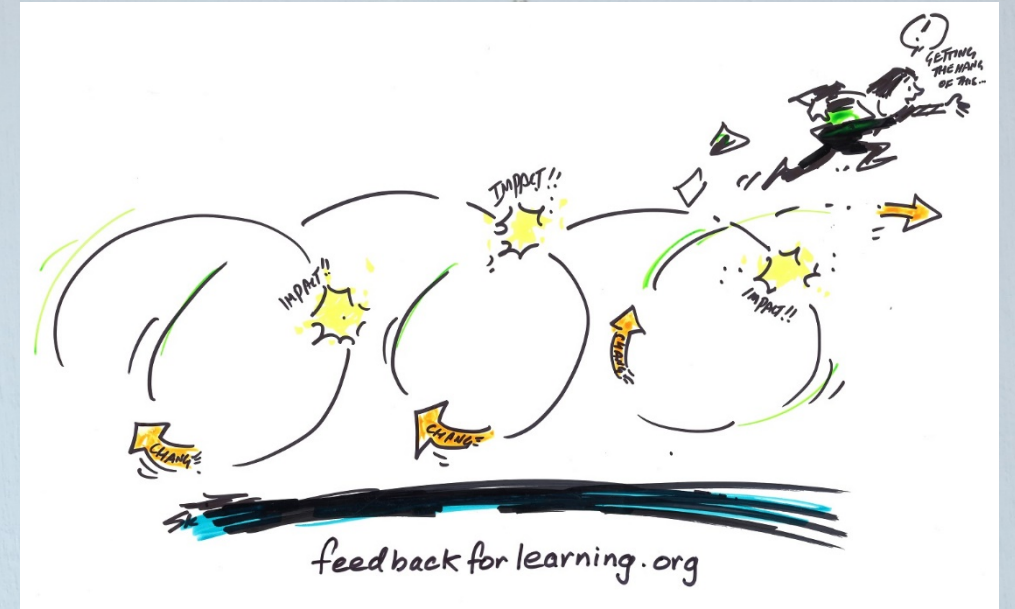
Socialisation: Using the rubric to debate standard in exemplars, peer draft work and self assessment



feedbackforlearning.org

Useful research-informed guidance and case studies from Australia:

‘Feedback is a process in which learners make sense of information about their performance and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies.’



<http://newmediaresearch.educ.monash.edu.au/feedback/>

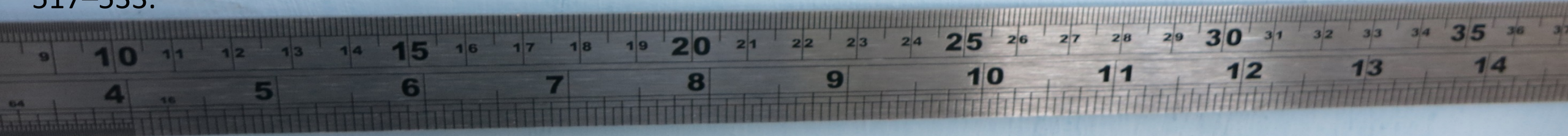


Evaluation of teaching

It is important to establish links between student evaluative feedback activity and professional development.

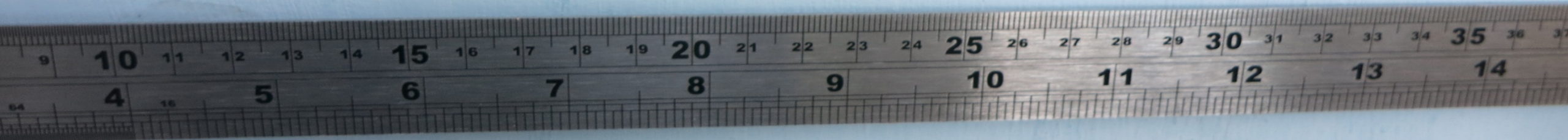
Stein, S. et al., (2013) Tertiary teachers and student evaluations: never the twain shall meet? *Assessment & Evaluation* 38 (7).

Smith, C. (2008) Building Effectiveness in Teaching Through targeted Evaluation and Response: Connecting Evaluation to Teaching Improvement in Higher Education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 33 (5): 517–533.



Evaluation of teaching

- Formative assessment activities should inform teaching
- Mid module student evaluative feedback may be useful
- Student evaluative feedback needs to be analysed
- Gathering 'group feedback' during marking may be useful
- Grade distribution is of some value
- Meaningful moderation of student work should be a key part of evaluation to create a focus on academic standards



Pragmatic evaluation - Professional inquiry - Practitioner research



More focused questions that are more clearly owned by the teaching team

More inclusive and collaborative engagement with all of the stakeholders

More critical engagement with public (published) knowledge

More systematic approach to data collection and analysis

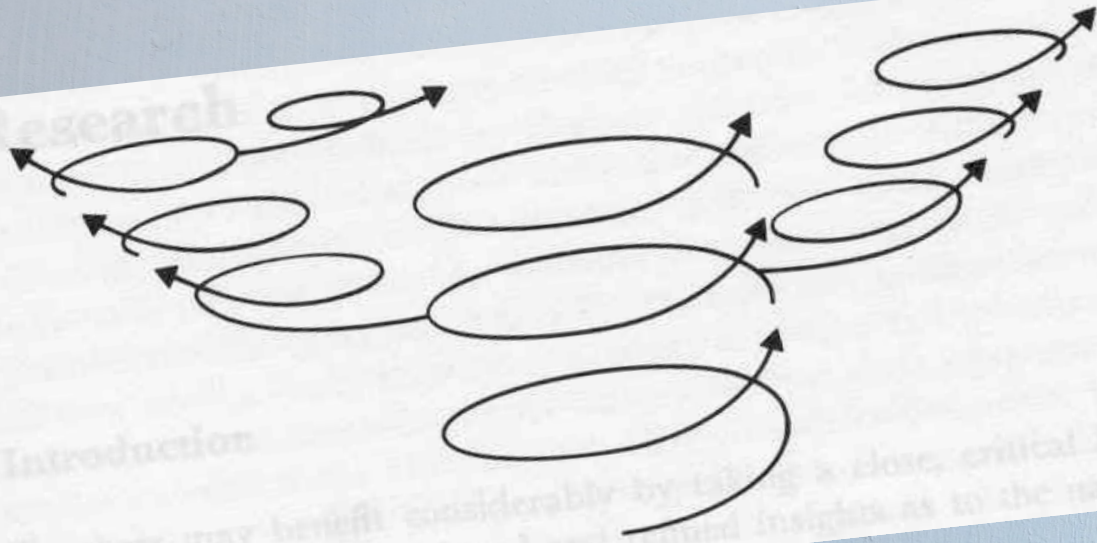
More ethical framework that creates a safer space for sharing practice

More collective leadership of change in practice

More aligned to professional values of autonomy and scholarship

Boyd & White (2017) Teacher Educator Professional Inquiry in an Age of Accountability.

Practitioner Research in Higher Education



What is going on?

What if?



Questioning social justice issues, the purposes of education or institutional policy
– to go beyond merely evaluating the techniques of higher education



An Academic Literacies Approach

A socio-cultural perspective: 'learning as acquiring the capacity to participate in the discourses of an unfamiliar knowledge community, and teaching as supporting that participation'



An Academic Literacies Approach

Adopting a 'community-centred' rather than purely 'student-centred' approach to teaching a diversity of students

Theresa Lillis and Mary Scott (2007) Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics* 4(1).



An Academic Literacies Approach

Lending students a concept and sending them on an excursion into the discourse of the subject discipline or field

Andrew Northedge (2003) Rethinking Teaching in the Context of Diversity. *Teaching in Higher Education* 8(1).

Andrew Northedge (2003) Enabling participation in Academic Discourse. *Teaching in Higher Education* 8(2).





Newman University's focus is on formative education: the development of the whole person through transformative learning. Our students are members, alongside our staff, of a diverse and inclusive learning community...



Congruent teaching and explicit modelling in teacher education

‘How I teacher IS the message’ (Tom Russell 1997)

‘How I continue to learn to teach IS the message’ (Pete Boyd 2014)

Boyd (2014) Using 'modelling' to improve the coherence of initial teacher education

<http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/1987/>



Enhancement of assessment practice through collective instructional leadership within programmes, departments and universities that is based on professional inquiry and practitioner research



Developing research-informed assessment practice in education programmes

Pete Boyd pete.boyd@cumbria.ac.uk



A Marked Improvement: transforming assessment in higher education
www.heacademy/amarkedimprovement

Kay Sambell (2011) Rethinking feedback in higher education: an assessment for learning perspective <http://escalate.ac.uk/8410>

TESTA: audit, student survey, focus groups, team workshop
<http://testa.ac.uk/index.php>

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Boyd, P., Hymer, B. & Lockney, K. (2015) *Learning Teaching: becoming an inspirational teacher*. Critical Publishing.

Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Stoll, L., Thomas, S. Wallace, M. (2005). *Creating and sustaining professional learning communities*. Department for Education and Skills Research Report 637. Retrieved on 04 October 2017 from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5622/1/RR637.pdf>

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Kolsaker, A. (2008) Academic professionalism in the managerialist era: a study of English universities. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33 (5), 513-525.

Theresa Lillis and Mary Scott (2007) Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics* 4(1).

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Andrew Northedge (2003) Rethinking Teaching in the Context of Diversity. *Teaching in Higher Education* 8(1).

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