

Understanding teachers' enactment of assessment for learning: A theoretical framework

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| Article Detail: | Abstract |
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| <p>Received: 01 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 27 Jul 2025; Accepted: 30 Jul 2025; Available online: 23 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords—assessment for learning, teacher-based assessment, enactment, teacher agency, pedagogical nexus</p> | <p>Assessment for learning has received extensive interest in assessment research and practice. However, despite the research on teachers' assessment for learning practices, there has been limited attention paid to understanding and theorising teachers' enactment of assessment for learning. This paper develops a theoretical framework for understanding teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in their situated contexts. Specifically, this paper draws on four layers of theories which address teacher-based assessment, the role of teacher, situated educational contexts and assessment practice transfer and enactment. This framework not only focuses on assessment practice itself but also focuses on the process in which assessment for learning is filtered through teacher agency and the situated pedagogical nexus. It understands teachers' enactment of assessment for learning as a product inevitably shaped and transformed by teachers' professional knowledge, agency, and wider educational contexts.</p> |

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment for learning has become an area of research that has received theoretical and practical attention. Developed from studies typically conducted in Anglophone contexts, the idea of assessment for learning has been adopted, decontextualised and recontextualised in other contexts across the world. Studies have been conducted on teachers' enactment of assessment for learning worldwide, and the challenges of implementing assessment for learning in different classroom settings have been acknowledged. For instance, Nusche (2016) argued that the alignment between curriculum, standards, teaching and assessment is difficult to ensure, especially in the case of teacher-based assessment. The lack of clarity in assessment goals, the transversal nature of students' competencies and the pressure from

standardised testing regimes all contribute to the difficulties in teachers' implementation of assessment for learning (Nusche, 2016). Klenowski and Carter (2016) reported that in contexts where increasing accountability demands occur, formative and teacher-based assessment receives less acceptance and support. Xu and Harfitt (2019) also noted that contextual factors such as large class size, limited opportunities for individual feedback and immense teaching and marking responsibilities could contribute to the challenges in any implementation of assessment for learning.

Despite the extensive research on teachers' assessment for learning practices to date, there has been little effort at understanding and theorising teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in situated settings, especially those in non-Anglophone contexts. By enactment, the researcher means "the

diverse ways [teachers] creatively work to fabricate and forge practices out of policy texts and policy ideas in the light of their situated realities – a process of recontextualisation that produces some degree of heterogeneity in practice” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 142). Baird et al. (2017) argued that assessment for learning risks becoming a group of practical techniques in classrooms with only implicit theoretical underpinnings. Leong et al. (2018) also suggested that assessment for learning suffered from a lack of debate around its theorisation in situated contexts. In response to these calls, the purpose of this paper is to propose a theoretical framework to help understand teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning in their situated contexts. The framework builds on multiple layers of theories, which address not only teacher-based assessment practices but also the role of teachers, the educational contexts they work in, the transfer of practice and the enactment of assessment for learning. The researcher argues that teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning should not be understood as a practice of an individual but rather should be viewed as a product shaped and transformed by their professional knowledge, agency, and wider educational contexts.

The framework draws on four layers of theory. Firstly, theories of teacher-based assessment help conceptualise key issues, such as the purpose and use of assessment and alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The reasons for the challenges in implementing assessment for learning in classrooms are presented and explained. Secondly, Priestley et al.’s (2015) teacher agency model offers a lens to understand teachers’ role in assessment practices. Three dimensions of teacher agency – iterative, practical-evaluative and projective dimensions (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) – will be used to understand teachers’ roles as meaning-makers and agents of change in educational assessment and to understand the interplay between teachers and the environment in which they work. Thirdly, Hufton and Elliott’s (2000) concept of pedagogical nexus will be drawn upon to understand the situated contexts where assessment practices occur and the interplay between assessment practice and the established pedagogical nexus. Fourthly, theories of practice transfer and policy enactment will be addressed to illustrate how assessment for

learning can be filtered through teacher agency and pedagogical nexus, and then be transferred and enacted in a situated context. Fig. 1 shows the structure of the theoretical framework.

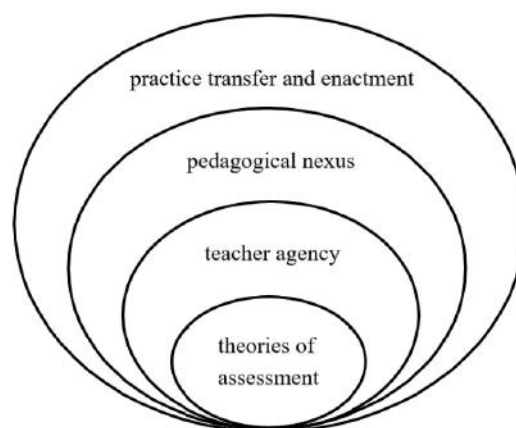


Fig.1: Theoretical framework

II. ASSESSMENT: PURPOSE, USE AND ALIGNMENT

In this first section, key issues related to teacher-based assessment are discussed to understand teacher’s assessment practices and the challenges in implementing assessment for learning. With the development of learning theories, the definition of assessment evolves accordingly. From behaviourist learning theory to constructivist theory then to sociocultural theory, learning is no longer viewed as adoption of behaviour, and assessment is not confined to tests that aim at error detection and correction but is more tightly interwoven with dynamic monitoring and progression (Baird et al., 2017). Contemporary understandings of teacher-based assessment draw on sociocultural theory (Katz & Gottlieb, 2012). From a sociocultural perspective, teacher-based assessment is distinguished from tests as expert instruments. Tests are usually formally administered procedures, which aim at measuring test-taker’s performance in a particular domain in limited time, while teacher-based assessment represents a much broader concept, which involves assessment practices that aim to promote students’ progress instead of judging them (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Assessment is given a more collaborative nature, and teachers are encouraged to collect information from a wide range of assessment tools in class, which are often integrated into everyday learning activities.

Among the assessment choices available to teachers, a distinction has been drawn between two types of assessment: assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment). For many years, the distinction between the two has been explicated by many writers (for example, Black & Wiliam, 1998; Mansell et al., 2009). They typically differentiate between the two groups either by purpose (helping learning versus reporting on learning) or by timing (during a programme versus after a programme). However, other writers challenge such a distinction. Black (1998) argues that the differences between formative and summative are essentially a matter of purpose. He identifies three types of assessment purposes, namely “support of learning”, “certification, progress and transfer”, and “accountability” (Black, 1998, p. 24). Black (1998) believes that similar assessment practices can be used for both formative and summative purposes, and if the two purposes are completely separated, teacher’s assessment practice would be devalued. Harlen (2016) makes a similar suggestion that information collected for formative purposes may be used for summative purposes and vice versa. To decide whether an assessment practice is assessment for learning, it is therefore essential to know what the purpose of the practice is.

Besides the purpose of assessment, the use of assessment results also has an impact on the effect of assessment. Harlen (2016) argues that the purpose of conducting the assessment and the use made of its results should be distinguished. Although assessment can be conducted for different purposes, the uses of its results may not match the purposes. Different assessment purposes may also conflict with each other, which could result in a divergence between the intended use of assessment and its actual use. Mansell et al. (2009) report on assessment being used for different purposes in England, where assessment serves as a proxy measure to evaluate the quality of elements in the educational system. In this case, assessment data is used for multiple purposes such as judgments about the performance of schools, the differences between teachers’ performance, and whether a teacher is qualified. There have been unintended consequences for such overuse of assessment data, as the mixture of purposes makes it

hard to identify which purpose should be prioritised. While the main purpose is to ensure the quality of education, the focus of the assessment becomes monitoring the institutions and teachers. This raises concerns that schools might take actions to merely improve students’ test performance, which goes against what was originally planned for the students’ long-term educational needs, and teachers might ‘teach to the test’, which can narrow curriculum goals. While the original intention is to ensure better teaching and learning, the outcome turns out to be impeding instead of facilitating learning.

Such conflict between different assessment purposes may require compromises to be made. Newton (2007) argues that when an assessment system is designed, the key purposes should be prioritised in advance. From his perspective, the problem would be reduced to how to keep the results from being used for inappropriate purposes, or having perverse effects in curriculum and pedagogy. This would be an effective approach to assessment design if different assessment purposes operate separately. However, it is often the case that the purposes of an assessment system do not work separately. The purposes of informing learning, of summarising progress and of accountability co-exist and influence each other in the same educational system. All these purposes are important to some extent, but these purposes have different amounts of influence on teaching and learning. In most cases, teaching inevitably focuses on what will be assessed, and summative assessment usually has a greater impact on students’ learning experience (Harlen, 2007). Such an impact can be positive if the assessment addresses all the intended goals and helps clarify their meaning, but the impact can be restrictive if there is a mismatch between the curriculum and assessment. The predictability of a test contributes to the perverse practices of teaching to the test. The process of learning and assessment for learning might also be neglected when high-stake summative tests dominate the context (Carless, 2011).

The conflict between multiple purposes also relates to the relationship between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy. There is a saying consistently mentioned in the literature: “the assessment tail always wags the curriculum dog” (for example, Broadfoot, 2007, p. 8). The metaphor

vividly describes the influence of assessment on curriculum and pedagogy: although assessment is designed to support the curriculum and teaching, more often it becomes the lead that steers the curriculum and teaching. This axiom corresponds with the challenges in implementing assessment for learning and achieving alignment between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy in classrooms. In many contexts, teacher-based assessment is expected to be implemented in classrooms so that the complex competencies of students can be assessed with in-depth and diverse tasks. It is also expected that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment should work together and target the same learning goals. However, central high-stake assessments usually have a greater influence on teaching and learning, which makes teacher-based assessment an approach of secondary importance (Nusche, 2016). The way high-stake assessment is practised often dominates how teachers and students behave in their contexts, and the dominant assessment practice becomes the hidden curriculum that drives what is taught, learnt and assessed in classrooms (Smith, 2016).

The difficulties in reconciling purposes and uses of assessment and the conflicting assessment designs and realities explain the challenges in implementing assessment for learning from the assessment practice level. However, the nature of assessment is only one side of the Rubik's cube. Teacher-based assessment relies strongly on teachers' professional knowledge and judgments. Such knowledge and judgments are neither innate nor given abilities. Rather they are individual cognitive acts and socially situated practices (Allal & Mottier Lopez, 2014). To understand teachers' enactment of assessment for learning, teachers' role in assessment practices, their mediation of curriculum and assessment, and the interaction between teachers' belief, capacity and their working environment should also be understood.

III. TEACHER AGENCY IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

In this second section, the concept of 'teacher agency' is drawn upon to understand teachers' role in assessment practices. Agency is a term that receives extensive attention in social science. In social

theory, agency is often defined as "the capacity for autonomous social action" or 'the ability to operate independently of determining constraints of social structure' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135). It describes the ability to control one's actions or respond to a set of circumstances. Building on pragmatism, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) offer a three-dimensional way to understand agency, which, from their perspective, illustrates the complexity of the concept. The three dimensions are iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions, which represent "the influences from the past, the orientation towards the future and the engagement with the here and now" (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 23). Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 970) further define agency as "the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations".

As Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue, Emirbayer and Mische provide a useful approach to understanding agency at a descriptive level. The three dimensions make it possible to characterise individuals' agency with events in their lives and associated human agency with factors in the situated environment, such as context, time and history. However, Biesta and Tedder (2007) suggest that description is merely the first step to understanding agency. The differences within individuals over time and contexts and the differences between individuals in similar time and contexts should also be understood. Building on Emirbayer and Mische's approach, Biesta and Tedder (2007) propose an ecological approach to understanding agency. They argue that more attention should be shifted to "the ways in which agency is achieved in transaction with a particular context-for-action, within a particular 'ecology'" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). Rather than seeing agency as a possession individuals hold, Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue that agency should be understood as something achieved by individuals and an emergent phenomenon during the interaction between individual and context.

In recent years, teacher agency, which is agency theorised specifically regarding the activities of

teachers in schools, has received significantly increasing attention (Biesta et al., 2015). Drawing on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) three-dimensional perspective and Biesta and Tedder's (2007) approach to agency as a situated achievement, Priestley et al. (2015) develop their model to understand teacher agency. This model highlights three dimensions, which are similar to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) proposal: iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions. The iterative dimension refers to the influence of histories of a teacher, which include both general life histories and professional histories. The projective dimension looks at the teacher's short-term and long-term aspirations about their work which guide the teacher's future actions. The practical-evaluative dimension represents the influence of teacher's day-to-day working environment, which includes the practical conditions in the context and any judgments of risk. The model resonates with Biesta and Tedder's (2007, p. 137) idea that the achievement of agency relies on the "availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology". It also highlights how the exercise of agency is informed by the teacher's past experience, orientation towards the future, and engagement with the present, which provides useful guidance for understanding teachers' enactment of assessment practices.

Regarding the first dimension of agency, teacher's assessment practice is affected by the iterative dimension. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the iterative dimension refers to "the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time. (p. 971)". Teachers can draw on many experiences from the past while designing and enacting assessment practices. For example, their professional education experiences could equip them with assessment theories, skills and subject knowledge; their day-to-day experiences in schools could expose them to the assessment practices of experienced colleagues; their own schooling experiences could provide them with assessment examples from their teachers. Forsberg and Wermke (2012) reported in their study that German and Swedish teachers considered their

learning experience as an important source of knowledge of assessment. The teachers also claimed the roles of their colleagues were valuable in terms of observing and cooperating. Carless (2005) also noted that failing to build on past experience has contributed negatively to the assessment reform in Hong Kong SAR, China. Thus, to understand teachers' assessment practices, it is important to probe their past experience and explore the origin of their beliefs and what histories contribute to their agency in assessment practice.

Regarding the second dimension of agency, teacher's assessment practice is affected by the projective dimension. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the projective dimension refers to "the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future. (p. 971)". This dimension explains how teachers' long-term and short-term aspirations affect their assessment practices. On one hand, such aspirations could be a product of teachers' prior experience, their educational values and beliefs and their aims for students' development and welfare (Lasky, 2005). On the other hand, teachers' aspirations could be more narrowly instrumental, as they might be shaped by the fabrication of school image and the performativity goals in school settings (Ball, 2003). For Priestley et al. (2015, p. 105), performativity is a "demand on schools and teachers to 'perform', that is, to generate achievements in a clearly specified range of 'outcomes'". Teachers' assessment practices might be strongly influenced by the external purposes of assessment, which might conflict with their assessment values and beliefs (McMillan, 2003). Levy-Vered and Alhija (2015) pointed out that aspirations of assessment had a direct positive impact on teachers' assessment literacy in their study with Israeli teachers. They argued that if the accountability purpose of assessment is given priority in policy and practice, teachers' conceptions of assessment tend to respond negatively towards such pressure. Gu (2014), on the other hand, reported a high correlation between what is tested and what is taught, learnt and assessed in a language classroom in the Chinese mainland. The relationship between teachers' aspiration and their assessment practices

cannot be oversimplified. What drives their assessment practices is likely to be a mixture of, or a compromise between, their beliefs and such external demands. To understand teachers' assessment practices, it is therefore helpful to explore what the teachers' assessment values and beliefs are and what demands have been imposed on them.

Regarding the third dimension of agency, teacher's assessment practice is shaped by the practical-evaluative dimension. While the other two dimensions are associated with the past and the future, the practical-evaluative dimension considers the present conditions in which teachers work. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 971), the practical-evaluative dimension entails "the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations". For this dimension, Priestley et al. (2015) identify three aspects that contribute to the conditions through which teachers achieve their agency. The first is the cultural aspect, which refers to the culture of the situated contexts, such as the classes, the schools, and the wider society. Fleeer (2015), for example, identified the tensions that emerged while teachers worked against the discourse of traditional central assessment practices. The second is the structural aspect, which refers to the social and power relationships in a teacher's workplace. School-level policies on assessment, school managers' support for assessment, and expectations and demands from parents and the local community can also influence teachers' assessment practice (Liu & Xu, 2017). The third is the material aspect, which refers to the resources and the physical environment that encourage or impede teachers' agency. As Xu and Harfitt (2019) suggested, contextual factors such as large class size, limited opportunities for individual feedback and immense teaching and marking responsibilities could all determine whether a form of assessment practice could be successfully conducted.

Together, the three dimensions enable and constrain teachers' capacity for and achievement of agency, and shape their assessment practices in an ongoing ecology. These dimensions help to understand teacher's assessment practice and explore

how teachers interact with the past, present and future. Agentic teachers can identify opportunities to implement assessment for learning and exert their professionalism. Their practices are underpinned by not only personal dispositions but also the objective contexts in which their practices are enacted (Molla & Nolan, 2020). The discussion of an ecological context of teacher agency leads to another focus of this framework – the wider context in which assessment practices, in particular, innovative assessment practices interact with a taken-for-granted pedagogical nexus.

IV. PEDAGOGICAL NEXUS

In this third section, the concept of 'pedagogical nexus' will be drawn upon to understand the enactment of innovative assessment practices in a situated context and the interplay between innovative assessment practice and the established, historical *modus operandi* underpinning pedagogical settings. The notion of 'pedagogical nexus' was proposed by Hufton and Elliott (2000) in their study of patterns of educational phenomena in Russian schools. In their analysis, Hufton and Elliott (2000) noted that a consistent and steady framework that provided students with motivation and engagement was formed in these schools. The framework was constructed in elements in the schooling process, including the nature of lessons, assessment, curriculum structures, home-school relations and the continuity between school, class and teacher. These elements linked and interacted with one another over time and settings, and played mutually reinforcing roles, which set up a taken-for-granted nexus that could make reform of any element within the schooling system difficult. Hufton and Elliott (2000, p. 117) define pedagogical nexus as "a set of linked, interactive and mutually reinforcing influences on pupils' motivation to learn within and because of the schooling process ... some influences are in the deep background of the schooling process and could pass unremarked, because invisible to observation and so taken-for-granted by informants as to be beneath mention".

Although the main focus of Hufton and Elliott's (2000) study was learner motivation, the concept of 'pedagogical nexus' can also facilitate

understandings of teachers' assessment for learning practices within a situated schooling system. When an innovative assessment practice is introduced into an educational context, there are many contextual factors which might contribute to the acceptance or resistance of the new practices. For example, the local assessment system that has historically emphasised high-stake examinations might conflict with the promotion of assessment for learning practices (Tan, 2016). Although teachers might have faith in the innovative practices, they might also find it difficult to implement, as the system and other educational stakeholders in unspoken agreement require them to focus on exams. The established operative classroom culture might affect how teachers and students perceive and enact more innovative assessment (Carless, 2011). Whether exams and grades are considered important in the classroom culture could affect teachers and students' views and enactment of a new assessment practice. Parents' mindsets about how assessment and education might also influence teachers' enactment of assessment for learning practices (Ratnam-Lim & Tan, 2015). The combination of these factors represents the pedagogical nexus of an educational system and its tacit continuities. Whether and how innovative assessment practice could be embedded in the educational system will be decided by its interaction with the factors and the actors within the nexus.

As Schweisfurth (2015, p. 262) argues, "any imported or novel approach interacts with this nexus and needs to embed within it to thrive". To understand how an innovative assessment concept could embed itself within a pedagogical nexus, it is important to understand the nexus and investigate the compatible or incompatible factors within it. Schweisfurth (2015, p. 259) suggests that "teaching and learning are deeply embedded in the cultural, resource, institutional and policy contexts in which they take place". These factors are pertinent to understanding enactments of innovative assessment practices in a situated context and should be explored to achieve a full picture of how innovative assessment practices interact with the particular pedagogical setting. For the cultural context, how teachers and students perceive their teaching, learning and assessment should be explored. For the material context, the material resources and

educational resources available in the pedagogical settings should also be investigated. For the institutional context, any school-based assessment policy regarding how assessment is managed and how the social relationships are formed in the schools should be explored. For the policy context, the policies regarding high-stake assessment, classroom assessment, institutional monitoring and resource allocation warrant close examination. Most importantly, how the actors in the pedagogical nexus, namely students, teachers, parents and school leaders, interact with one another and with the context itself should be explored, as their tacit assumptions constitute an indispensable part of the situated nexus.

To balance the accumulated history and actors sustaining the pedagogical nexus, the transfer of assessment for learning ideas and the enactment of innovative assessment practices should also be addressed. Such practice transfer and enactment are influenced not only by the factors and actors within the pedagogical nexus but also by teachers' agency, which is guided by teachers' own experiences, commitments and needs. To understand teachers' enactment of assessment for learning, the relationship between practice transfer, enactment, teacher agency and the context should be jointly recognised.

V. PRACTICE TRANSFER AND ENACTMENT

In this fourth section, the transfer and enactment of new practices will be discussed to illustrate how assessment for learning can be transferred and enacted in a situated context under the combined influence of teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. Transferred educational ideas and practices often experience a "mismatch between the global agendas and the indigenous norms" (Schweisfurth & Elliott, 2019, p. 4). Although pure practice transfer rarely exists, the search for and adoption of 'better practice' continue globally. Cuban (1994, p. 2) offers a vivid metaphor to encapsulate the situation that takes place constantly when policymakers plan to bring a policy and practice change: "Hurricane winds sweep across the sea tossing up twenty-foot waves; a fathom below the surface turbulent waters swirl while on the ocean floor there is unruffled calm". The

metaphor captures how, at the policy level, a discourse of innovative change may appear disruptive, urgent and ambitious, while at the classroom level, the actual practices continue to be calm and stable, showing little or no impact from the policy changes. The local pedagogical nexus remains intact and unaffected by the attempted changes, and the original practices continue to thrive.

To understand the transfer and enactment of assessment for learning idea and practice, it should be borne in mind that educational changes do not happen on an empty stage. Rather, the practice transfer and policy enactment are filtered through teachers' agency and the context around them. Teachers could have little say in the design of the curriculum, assessment, or the educational policies they are involved in. However, at the same time, teachers are not naïve conduits of curriculum, assessment and policy – they can be creative and pragmatic practitioners, whose practices are shaped by their own interests, values, and external translation and interpretation of any educational idea and practice (Ball et al., 2011). Policies including the transferred assessment for learning idea and practice will not be seen as an unproblematic solution to a problem but will be contested by parties from different backgrounds and interpreted by them according to their own values and needs. This process leads to the recontextualisation of the assessment for learning in any enactment of transferred practices (Braun et al., 2011).

Braun et al. (2011) propose four contextual factors that could influence policy enactment in education. These factors are parts of the ecology that shape teachers' enactment of assessment for learning and are deeply intertwined with the influence of teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. The first factor is the situated context. This context refers to the locational and historical aspects of the educational settings, which could contribute to the translation and interpretation of policy from a broader perspective. The situated context of an educational setting could complicate the policy enactment if the transferred assessment for learning ideas and practices are adopted from a context with a different pedagogical nexus. To understand such a complication, the contextual factors within the pedagogical nexus that contribute to the

compatibility or incompatibility between the transferred ideas and practices and the situated context should be identified. The second factor is the professional context, which relates to teachers' values, experience and policy management within schools. Educational professionals, especially teachers and school managers, could determine how the transferred ideas and practices are enacted in classrooms, as they play a key role in translating the new ideas into reality. In this vein, professionals' understandings of and attitudes towards assessment for learning ideas and practices are crucial for the final transformation and enactment of the practices. The agency of teachers and school managers should be emphasised to understand this context.

The third factor is the material context, which refers to the physical aspects of schools, including available technology, the level of staffing, the available infrastructure, and budgets. These contextual factors could influence teachers' management of assessment activities, and decide whether an assessment for learning practice could be successfully enacted. This is an important source that contributes to the formation of pedagogical nexus and the achievement of teacher agency and thus deserves more thorough investigation. The final factor is the external context, which is concerned with the possible pressures and expectations from the educational stakeholders and the local authorities. This factor could be rather distinctive in the implementation of assessment for learning practices, as when external test, selection or accountability pressure is imposed on teachers, they might have little choice but to prioritise these purposes and to put formative aspects of learning and assessment aside. Working together, the four aspects of context are pertinent to teaching and assessment practices and may result in various pedagogical and managerial decisions and enactments in classrooms of different contexts. To understand teachers' enactment of assessment for learning practices, the four contextual factors should be jointly considered with the nature of assessment, teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. They offer a structured theoretical framework, which facilitates the understanding of teachers' assessment for learning practices from multiple perspectives.

VI. CONCLUSION

To understand and theorise teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in situated contexts, this paper built four imbricated layers of theory, namely, theories of assessment, teacher agency, pedagogical nexus and practice transfer and enactment. Firstly, the paper drew on the relationship between purposes and uses of assessment and the alignment issue between curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It explained the possible conflicts between assessment purposes and uses and how they contribute to the challenges in implementing assessment for learning. This theoretical layer contributed to the understanding of assessment practice itself. It argued that it is the purpose and the actual use of assessment that determine the nature of teacher-based assessment. It also acknowledged the influence of assessment on teaching and learning, as how assessment, especially high-stake assessment, is arranged can determine how teaching and learning are performed in classrooms.

Secondly, the paper drew on the teacher agency model proposed by Priestley et al. (2015) to understand teachers' role in assessment practices. The definition of agency was articulated, and the three dimensions of teacher agency – iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions – were explained. This theoretical layer focused on the interaction between teachers and assessment practices. As the meaning-makers and agents of change in educational assessment, teachers draw on multiple resources, including their experiences in the past, their orientation towards the future and their engagement with the present, to design and enact teacher-based assessment practices. Assessment practices become teachers' socially situated practices, which are based on their professional knowledge and judgments. To understand teachers' assessment for learning practices, it is useful to refer to these multiple dimensions and explore how teachers' past, present and future contribute to their assessment design.

Thirdly, the paper drew on the concept of pedagogical nexus proposed by Hufton and Elliott (2000) to emphasise the connection between the teacher's assessment practice and the context in which it is performed. While teacher agency plays an important role in designing and enacting assessment

practices, the pedagogical nexus provides a consistent and steady operational framework within the educational system and will enable or constrain teachers' practices. Teachers' assessment practices are embedded within the situated context, and the interplay between assessment practice and the context nurtures the design and enactment of the assessment practices. To understand teacher's assessment for learning practice, it is important to understand its embedded pedagogical nexus and investigate the compatible or incompatible factors that contribute to the interplay between the assessment for learning practice and the pedagogical nexus.

Finally, the paper drew on theories of practice transfer and policy enactment to understand how innovative assessment practices can be transferred and enacted in a situated context after being filtered by both teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. Acknowledging the fact that ideal practice and policy transfer rarely exist, the potential resistance to change and the mismatch between intended changes and longstanding practices need to be understood. The contextual factors that could influence the policy enactment in education, including the situated, professional, material, and external contexts, should be accounted for to achieve an overall understanding of teachers' enactment of assessment for learning.

This paper is concerned with understanding and theorising teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in situated settings. It proposes a theoretical framework to help explain teachers' enactment of assessment for learning from multiple perspectives and calls attention to the influence of these perspectives on teachers' assessment practices. It is argued by this paper that teachers' enactment of assessment for learning is not merely a practice of an individual but rather is a product shaped and transformed by teachers' professional knowledge, agency, and the wider educational contexts. To better understand assessment for learning in situated contexts and the recontextualization of assessment for learning idea and practice, these factors and dimensions should not be overlooked. More research is needed on investigating teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in their situated contexts based on this framework.

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