

impact.

Impington action research journal



Editorial

Welcome to the first ever *impact* journal. As a group of staff who have done action research, completed further degree work or are in the process of professional learning through action research, we are committed to using in school research to improve our professional practice as effective teachers. By action research we actually mean any of the ways staff reflect on their practice and improve it by self, peer and student evaluation. This might mean bringing in and trying new ideas taken from critical reading. It might involve class observation, student or staff interviews or questionnaires or investigating what the quantitative and qualitative data we hold on students' shows. This journal is one of the ways we as staff sharing our findings with each other at Impington Village College. It is also about making it available to anyone who is interested through our website and our links to other networks.

Impact has emerged partly out of our longstanding work with the Faculty of Education in the University of Cambridge, in particular, with the SUPER (Schools University Partnership in Education Research) partnership. Our links to this Faculty have enriched many of our teachers' professional dialogues. In the past too few opportunities have been taken to share this work with our own staff and other practitioners. *Impact* is one of the ways we are putting this right.

Impact is not about the fully considered research many of our staff have done, although we hope that it leads staff to wish to read this work. It is about communicating the key findings and recommendations of research so that our busy staff recognise its relevance and importance provoking reflection on their own work. As such we hope to share only as much as is easily digestible at any one time, in a way which whets the appetite for more. We welcome comments on how to improve doing this.

Contributors

Christine Martin's article makes use of the academic idea of '**self-concept**' to show how students' ability to achieve is linked strongly to their belief in their ability to achieve. This poses the challenge of how we generate this belief and links well to the work we are doing: to make confidence to learn part of the ICE programme, to reflect as a whole staff on John Hattie's findings, to develop confidence through the House system and in our proposed research in the impact of mind-set on Year 8.

Suzanne Culshaw is starting to examine the way we as staff take on and use **feedback** on our teaching. We know in theory that good quality feedback is the route to improved student outcomes and good quality coaching of each other offers a similar route to improving our own practice. However, just as students find this hard to negotiate, especially given the element of summative judgement and accountability, so do we as staff. As we focus this year on giving effective feedback to our students and move to lesson observations based without grades, she raises vital issues for us to address if we are to make lesson observation act as an effective tool for staff development.

Rob Campbell makes us think carefully about the conflicts and contradictions we face between what our role demands and how comfortable we feel with this emotionally and ethically. While he applied these ideas to the often bewildering role of Headteacher, these conflicts over '**ethical labour**' face all of us involved in education.

The relationship between Academic emotions, Self-concept and Performance: An investigation of year 13 International Baccalaureate students' perceptions.

Christine Martin



The purpose of this research project was to look at the perceptions of year 13 International Baccalaureate (IB) students to identify if there were any relationships between academic emotions, self-concept and performance. These students were selected because the IB Diploma dictates that students must take six subjects from set categories, therefore the project was designed to understand more about students' self-concept and academic emotions towards subjects that they were interested in alongside those deemed compulsory.

Key research questions:

- **Is there a link between self-concept and performance?**
- **Is there a link between academic emotions and performance?**
- **Do students' self-concept and academic emotions towards a subject change after receiving post-mock examination results?**
 - If so, what do students perceive to be the reasons for those changes?

Literature Review

Burns (1979) describes self-concept as "evaluated beliefs a person holds about himself" (p3). Bong & Skaalvik (2003) develop this further by explaining that "self-concept is formed through experiences with the environment and is influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others" (p3). How a person sees themselves and the feelings that they have about themselves is therefore not only the picture that they have created from within, but also incorporates views from others in their lives and the environment which they inhabit. The role of a significant other (parent, sibling, teacher or peer) can therefore have a critical effect on how a person feels about themselves and on their self-concept. Purkey (2000)

states that after the home, the school is the single most important force in determining what students say to themselves about themselves and their abilities (p51).

Self-concept therefore is very much an evaluative process which is learned from a very early age but is not fixed in any way and can be modified by new experiences. Purkey (2000) reiterates this when describing the internalised conversations and their effects on the self. "Inside each reasonably healthy person, new voices appear throughout life while old ones fade away. This continuous change in private conversation creates flexibility in the *self* and allows for infinite modifiability" (2000, p23).

Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke & Füller (2008) hypothesise that "students compare their own academic abilities with that of their classmates and use this social comparison information as one basis for forming their own academic self-concept" (p510). Burns (1979) goes on to explain that "it is the individual's concept of himself that determines the kind and quality of the experiences perceived" (p31). Since a person's self-concept is a very personal matter, to have

"How a person sees themselves and the feelings that they have about themselves is therefore not only the picture that they have created from within, but also incorporates views from others in their lives and the environment which they inhabit."

any kind of understanding a researcher must take a phenomenological stance.

Burns (1979) describes how “educational institutes are the arenas in which all young persons are compelled to compete, and in doing so are forced to reveal adequacies and inadequacies in public contest, frequently on unequal terms with others in events not even of their own choosing, against externally imposed standards” (p275). This description makes me think of a quote which has been attributed to Albert Einstein: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”. Within the school context, students are constantly judged against set criteria and if they do not achieve, they are left feeling demoralised and start to believe that, just like the fish, they are stupid as they cannot complete a task which could be beyond their capability. Therefore the incorporation of assessment as well as target setting, which is given to students from the start of every academic year, can either enhance or diminish a students’ self-concept.

Burns (1979) goes on to explain that “the evaluations of others become self-evaluations, so that a successful student comes to feel competent and significant, a failing student comes to feel incompetent and inferior” (p275). Although it is believed that children enter school with an already established self-concept, as discussed earlier, this is not a fixed entity and can be modifiable. This therefore could lead a student with a previously negative self-concept being helped to become a more successful student with a higher belief in oneself; however it can also unfortunately result in the reduction of previously established high self-concept or the consolidation of a negative self-concept leading a student to continually believe in their failings. Purkey (2000) explains that “negative self-talk is often planted first by parents (sometimes unintentionally) and later by teachers who place unrealistic expectations on students” (p51). I find myself in agreement with this statement about unrealistic expectations being placed on students, however, I do not believe that it is solely the teacher who is

placing these expectations, but also the senior management of the school who are under pressure from the Government and league tables.

Numerous studies completed which focus on the effects of self-concept and the academic achievement of students show a positive correlation between students self-concept and performance, student possessing a positive self-concept in their ability to achieve will achieve, whilst a negative self-concept can predict underachievement or withdrawal from academic activities (Purkey, 1970; LeBenne and Green, 1969 both cited in Burns, 1979). Stenner and Katzenmeyer (1976, cited in Burns, 1979) also support this notion that self-concept plays an important part in predicting academic achievements. Gabbler and Gibby (1967 cited in Burns, 1979) concur, showing that failure and success affect a person’s self-evaluation (p281).

Academic emotions are defined as emotions that are directly linked to achievement activities or achievement outcomes (Pekrun et al, 2011). They can be grouped according to their valence and to the degree of activation (Pekrun et al, 2011, p37). Valence can either be positive or negative, whereas activation can either be activating or deactivating. Therefore, Pekrun et al (2011) puts them into four groups: positive activating emotions (e.g. enjoyment, pride), positive deactivating emotion (e.g. relief), negative activating emotions (e.g. anger, anxiety) and negative deactivating emotions (e.g. boredom, hopelessness).

Methodology

To carry out this project, a mixed method methodology with a phenomenological stance was adopted with the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect the quantitative and qualitative data. The statements used in the questionnaire were selected from the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ) designed by Pekrun, Goetz and Perry (2005), and the self-concept questions were taken from the German version of the Self-Description Questionnaire both used in the paper by Goetz, Cronjaeger, Frenzel, Lüdtke & Hall (2010) which

links academic self-concept and emotions in specific domains. A five-point likert scale was used to assess the students self-concept, and three academic emotions: enjoyment, boredom

and anxiety towards each subject prior to sitting a mock examination and after receiving mock examination results. Analysis of the questionnaire results lead to the selection of five students whose results showed the most changes after completing the second questionnaire. These students were interviewed to understand their perceptions of the changes that occurred in their responses to the questionnaires.

Findings

The results from the project showed a strong positive correlation between self-concept and performance (figure 1), as well as a positive correlation between the academic emotion of enjoyment and performance (figure 2).

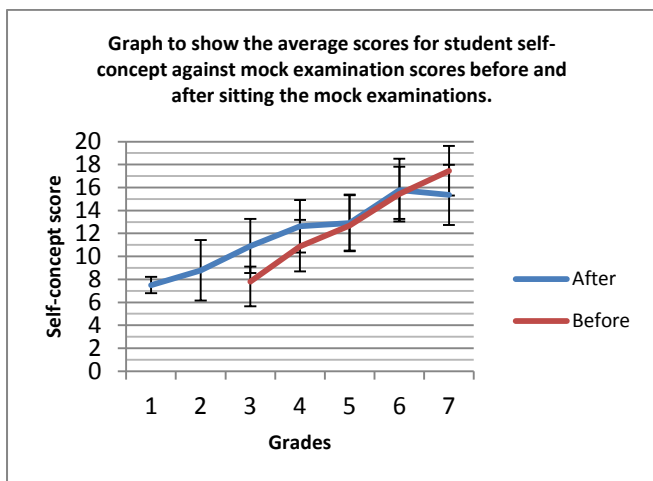


Figure 1

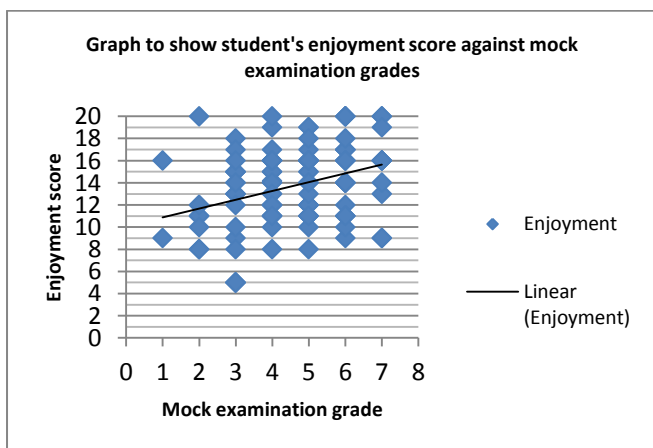


Figure 2

On the other hand, the results showed weaker negative correlations between the academic emotions of boredom and performance and anxiety and performance (figures 3 and 4). Therefore if a student believes in their ability and enjoys a subject, they are more likely to achieve within that subject.

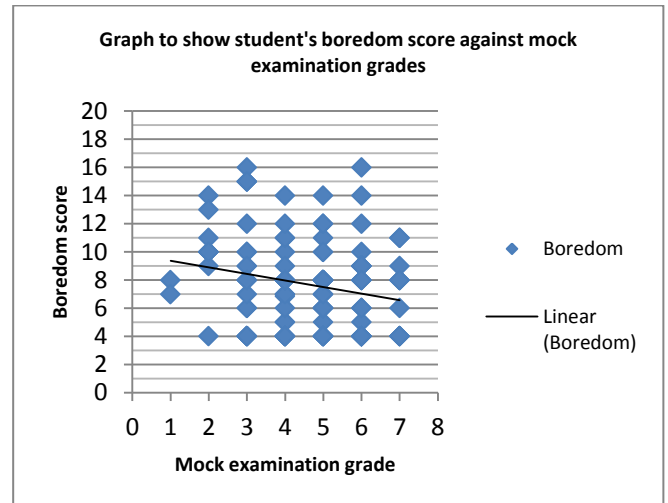


Figure 3

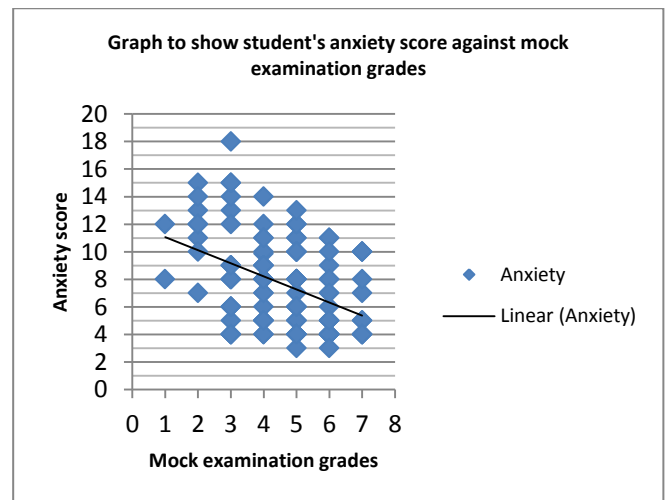


Figure 4

After completing the second questionnaire each student showed a change in at least two of their self-concept scores in different subjects. Some students' self-concept scores showed both an increase in some subjects whilst a decrease in others, whereas other students' scores either decreased or increased. At first glance this could be presumed to be related to the fact that the students had received higher or lower grades than they had previously predicted. For example, Matt's self-concept score after receiving a grade

lower than his prediction in English dropped by five points. In the three subjects that Laura achieved higher than she predicted herself, her self-concept score increased by five and when she achieved lower than predicted her self-concept score decrease by two. In both subjects where James achieved a level seven in his mock examination, which was higher than his predicted grades his self-concept score increased, more so in History where it increased by six points and his achievement was two grades higher than predicted.

“When I got more, not my predicted grade but more than I was expecting, I changed as I was like, actually I could be quite good at this subject... The fact I actually did well kind of boosted my confidence in that subject” [Laura]

From the student’s interviews, three main themes were evident that they perceived to influence their self-concept and the academic emotions they felt towards different subjects, these were: teacher’s influence, peer influence and revision.

Key findings:

- **The academic emotions of enjoyment, boredom and anxiety can be linked to performance**
- **After receiving the mock examination result there was a stronger correlation in anxiety scores and performance from the students**
- **Not enough evidence to make a concrete conclusion that every student’s self-concept or academic emotions are affected by receiving mock examination results**

Discussion

The results I obtained from this project support my prediction, and further support the work of Purkey (1970), LeBenne and Green (1969) and Stenner and Kalzenmeyer (1976), showing a strong positive correlation that there is a link between student’s perceived self-concept and their performance. When a student predicted or achieved a high level for their performance, they were more likely to possess a positive self-concept whilst those students who predicted or achieved a lower grade, possessed a negative self-concept. However, this was not as clear for those students who position themselves within the middle grade bracket.

From the students’ results it would seem that the academic emotions of enjoyment, boredom and anxiety can be linked to performance. The higher the grade predicted or achieved, the higher the enjoyment score, along with the lower the boredom and anxiety scores. From the results obtained, the academic emotion of enjoyment had a stronger correlation with performance than that of boredom and anxiety prior to sitting the mock examinations. However, after receiving the mock examination result, there was a stronger correlation in the anxiety scores and performance from the students. This supports the work by Pekrun, Elliot and Maier (2009) showing that positive activating emotions can help students to achieve academically.

To answer the question: Do students’ self-concept and academic emotions towards a subject change after receiving post mock examination results? I had to look at each student’s response individually before being able to identify a pattern. Although most students showed a change in their responses, there was inconsistency showing that the responses given by the students were very individual and depended not only on the grades that they achieved but also on the subject area. On average within each subject area there was either an increase or decrease with student’s self-concept and academic emotion scores. However, the error bars on figures 1 and 2 show that the results are not reliable enough to be able to draw

a concrete conclusion that every student's self-concept or academic emotions are affected by receiving mock examination results.

Conclusion

My study provides evidence that there does seem to be a relationship between student's self-concept, academic emotions and performance. The results showed that having a positive self-concept, high enjoyment within a subject and low anxiety levels could be good indicators for a high performance within that subject. Whereas having a low self-concept, being bored in a subject and having a high anxiety level could result in a

lowered performance. Although the results showed both positive and negative correlations, each student is an individual and therefore the experiences that they feel towards each subject are very personal. Therefore it cannot be generalised that all students who feel boredom or anxiety will not achieve, or that students who do not achieve do not feel enjoyment within certain subject areas. The importance placed on the role of the significant other in influencing not only a student's self-concept but also the academic emotions towards different subjects is a fascinating avenue that could definitely be explored further.

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Impact of lesson observation feedback on a teacher's sense of self-efficacy: A Review of the Literature.

Suzanne Culshaw



A significant part of any educational leader's job involves monitoring teams of teachers in terms of the quality of their teaching. Giving feedback – to trainee teachers, teachers new to the profession and those with many years of experience – is an everyday occurrence in schools across the country.

My particular area of interest is feedback for teachers' professional growth, in particular feedback arising from lesson observations. I have had a mixed experience of receiving feedback on my performance, and will readily admit that I do not always value feedback; it tends to depend on who is providing it. Equally, in my experience of providing feedback, I have not always been able to gauge the impact on the recipient.

As a researcher, my challenge is to adopt a critical stance to others' claims of knowledge; this enables me to develop a self-critical stance towards my efforts to produce knowledge. I want to enhance my understanding of theoretical and practical knowledge to develop my research knowledge; by linking the concepts of feedback and self-efficacy with an understanding of what constitutes skilful performance I aim to undertake a systematic and focussed investigation into if, how and why feedback has an impact on performance (Poulson & Wallace, 2011, 6; 17).

Key questions:

- **To what extent do the personalities and motivations of those giving and receiving feedback influence the quality and potential impact of feedback?**
- **To what extent is feedback a crucial element of a beginning teacher's journey and the development of their sense of self-efficacy, compared with the more experienced teachers?**
- **To what extent do beliefs [about the self-efficacy of teachers] arise from 'enactive mastery experiences'? Or 'vicarious experiences' based on a comparison with the attainment of others?**

Lesson observation

Lesson observations are a common feature of a teacher's professional life in the English education system; classrooms are full of evaluations (Watkins, 2000). Hattie suggests that direct observation is one of the most effective professional developments for teachers; a valid justification for observations, perhaps (2009, in Sandt).

So, different observations at different times have different purposes (Koerperich, 2008).

Observations essentially serve two key roles: quality assurance (monitoring/judgemental) and/or professional development. These are clearly 'conflicting purposes' (Peake, 2006 in O'Leary); where observation strives to fulfil a combination of summative and formative purposes, I contest its value (cf Metcalfe). In any case, monitoring appears to take precedence (Hardman, in O'Leary, 2012).

As a formative assessment tool, observation can support professional development; arguably then, more value should be attached to it (Peake, 2006,

as cited in O’Leary, 2012). Teachers, however, are more inclined to regard observation as a system of surveillance and control than as a means of supporting their professional development (Metcalf, 1999).

Questions surrounding the accuracy and usefulness of data arising from observations abound; how can we be sure the observer is reliable? How can we best mediate his/her presence on the teacher and/or the students? (Harrop, 1979; Wahler & Leeks, 1973). Indeed, the observer can be seen as an intruder into the otherwise autonomous realm of the classroom (Watkins). Teachers are often ‘isolated’ in their classrooms; teachers resist observations as they may be seen by some as an interference with and intrusion into that sense of autonomy (Sandt, 2012; Metcalfe, 2012).

When not stated clearly from the outset, the observee might rightly worry about which purpose of observation it will serve (Williams, 1989). When observations are seen to be high-stakes, the performative nature of graded observations has resulted in a decline in the creativity and innovation of teachers’ work in the classroom; teachers avoid taking risks during an observation (O’Leary, 2012). With a focus on the teaching rather than the learning, observations can become a focus on teacher performance. In this case, observations may not actually elicit the best performance of a teacher. If unannounced and without a specific, pre-agreed focus, the observer may become a ‘hostile witness’ (Watkins, 2000) – hardly an environment conducive to professional development!

The ‘biggest obstacle’ in classroom observations over the years has arguably been grading; the grade can undermine dialogue and feedback (O’Leary, 2012). Observation becomes a surveillance mechanism and fulfils a monitoring

function rather than stimulating professional dialogue (cf Metcalfe). Teachers fear being judged; they find the process of being observed stressful and nerve-wracking (Sandt, 2012). There is an element of artificiality in lesson observations (Cockburn in O’Leary, 2012), with teachers tending to ‘put on a performance’ (Sandt, 2012). Despite reviewing and changing the observation process, Williams’ research found that the ‘nervousness factor’ had not changed.

A systematic and objective approach to observation is essential; too often, leaders lack the expertise, effort and time to develop such an approach, merely paying lip service to the power of observations as a tool for professional development. Too often, short, subjective and unproductive observations prevail; a coherent,

If unannounced and without a specific, pre-agreed focus, the observer may become a ‘hostile witness’ (Watkins) – hardly an environment conducive to professional development!

longer-term programme is needed (Sheal, 1989). One-off visitations should be avoided (Metcalf, 1999); when perceived as a one-off activity and not embedded in the CPD process, observation cannot promote critical debate and

discussion, nor does it necessarily lead to improved teaching (Byrne, Brown & Challen, 2010, Sandt, 2012). The ‘fetishisation’ of the one-off observed lesson is time-consuming and has no discernible value nor learning (O’Leary, 2011); it is undoubtedly more effective when part of a continuum (Kluger & DeNisi 1996, in Hattie & Timperley).

With the focus now more than ever before on the quality of teaching and learning and on raising standards of achievement, middle and senior leaders are expected to know what is happening in classrooms, to identify strengths and areas for improvement and put in place training and support to further improve teachers’ professional practice. These leaders need the confidence and skills in observation as well as the means to use

the information gained in order to help colleagues to improve their teaching. Without training in how to observe, observers are arguably unaware of their own biases and subjectivity (cf Metcalfe; Sheal). Where leaders observe teachers, there is an inherent imbalance of power; the observer is perceived as possessing greater power (Cockburn 2005, as cited in O'Leary; O'Leary; Wragg). Where the giver of feedback sits in judgement, asymmetric power relations are inherent (Copland); the feedback recipient waits for wisdom from the feedback giver, clearly a one-directional and non-collaborative approach. In a novice-expert relationship, for example, the 'expert' may dominate (Waite, 1995; Hyland & Lo, 2006 in Copland).

Drawing on the work of Wiliam (2011) and others in the field of 'Assessment for Learning', it is reasonable to argue that non-graded, comments-only observation feedback is of more value to teachers; there is considerable evidence that written comments are more effective than grades (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Crooks, 1988 in Hattie & Timperley). Feedback through comments alone leads to learning gains (Butler, in Hattie & Timperley).

The literature also points to the potential of collaborative lesson observation - known commonly as peer observation (Byrne et al) - in contrast to teachers having observation 'done to them'; they take proactive responsibility for their professional learning and engage in collegial dialogue (Gordon, 2004 in Sandt). Classroom observation can work well when colleagues choose to work together on a voluntary basis, identifying and focusing on the issues they have agreed to address; it is a professional development activity (NUT). At the other extreme, peer observation systems can be seen as overly introspective, promoting mutual back-slapping, providing feedback which is not worthwhile and offering no real potential to improve practice (Byrne et al). In any case, some participants feel uncomfortable about providing critical feedback for their peers (O'Leary).

Furthermore, with the introduction of performance-related pay in England, such sharing of good practice might be undermined if teachers are competing with each other for higher pay. If classroom observation in part, determines the pay of teachers, it may colour how it is seen for wider developmental purposes (Metcalfe). The current climate in English secondary schools is tense; already driven by standards and results, teachers are being observed in their classrooms more and more. In some schools, hardly a day passes without a visit from someone monitoring teaching and learning in classrooms. Twitter is full of discussions of teachers' experiences of lesson observations (inter alia @learningspy @teachertoolkit @MaryMyatt @#SLTchat).

Teaching unions have developed protocols and guidelines for observations, emphasising the need for feedback to be constructive, equating to professional dialogue (NUT, ATL, NAHT); both parties should benefit from the process. In their recent guidance to schools (Sept 2014), Ofsted clearly state that inspectors will **not** grade the quality of teaching, or enter such a grade on the evidence form for individual lesson observations, learning walks or equivalent activities (page 3); individual lessons will not be graded. Whilst in theory I welcome this move away from graded observations, it remains to be seen how it will work in practice; this is a key question for my research, in which I aim to investigate how one school plans to move from summative to formative observations of teaching and learning.

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Feedback

Classrooms around the country are full of teachers teaching to the best of their ability. Yet how do these teachers know whether their performance is good or bad? What – if anything – motivates them to seek out ways to further improve their practice? Teachers in the English education system are expected to be self-critical, keeping their knowledge and skills up-to-date (Teachers' Standards, DfE). Furthermore, teachers should take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues.

In its most general terms, feedback is simply dialogue to support learning in both formal and informal situations (Askew & Lodge). A 'consequence' of performance, feedback provides information regarding aspects of performance or understanding. Feedback happens second and can only *build* on something; it is of little use when there is no initial learning. In such circumstances, instruction can arguably be more effective (Hattie & Timperley). When aligned with learning, feedback can help students (and to my mind, teachers) develop their skills as autonomous learners; getting feedback right can help support the learning process and achievement (Swaffield). It is given and received in the belief that the recipient will be able to adjust subsequent performances (Askew & Lodge). It is assumed to be helpful and can be used to improve future performance; yet it is only of use if used formatively (William).

The virtues and 'power' of feedback are widely extolled (William, Swaffield, Hattie & Timperley). It sets the learner on a journey to become 'owners of their own learning' (William), to construct and co-construct dialogue for effective learning; both parties engage in and benefit from the feedback process in the spirit of collaboration (Askew & Lodge). Yet, it is also a judgement about the performance of another which is given and received, in the belief that the recipient is capable of making the requisite amendments to improve

subsequent performances (Askew & Lodge; 2000).

Feedback is differentially given and differentially received (Hattie & Timperley); it can be accepted, modified, or rejected (Kulhavy, 1977, in Hattie & Timperley). Feedback is one-directional and seen as a 'gift' (wanted or otherwise) from an expert (Askew & Lodge). Yet when feedback is presented in ways that do not allow the receiver to interpret, engage with and reflect upon it appropriately, any resultant learning will be limited (Reed & Stoll). The impact of feedback is always subjective, depending on the person's goals and 'translation' processes (Watkins). Some of us have a tendency to ignore negative accounts or those that differ from our own; the receiving of feedback is personality-dependent (Hattie & Timperley). Certain traits might lead to further engagement to remedy the 'deficiencies' or conversely to an avoidance of further feedback. Whilst feedback can help unearth the causes of (in)effective practice, seeking help can be seen as a weakness; one might feel unable or unwilling to ask for help (van de Rijt et al).

'Nothing is ever influenced in just one direction' (Senge, 2006); feedback is most effective when it is more than one-way communication. The 'loops' model of feedback has been found to be effective; feedback is constructed through loops of dialogue and information. A reinforcing feedback loop should lead to making something happen more frequently; a balancing feedback loop is where responses should happen less. Also called 'thinking in circles', consequences of our actions come back to us and so influence what happens next (Askew & Lodge; Johnstone, O'Connor & McDermott in Reed & Stoll). In these models of feedback, the discourse is much less concerned with judgements; blame and criticism give way to problem-solving and extracting learning from the dialogue. Feedback and reflection become entwined. Yet the notion of feedback as a 'gift' continues to dominate discussion (Askew & Lodge).

So, when feedback is effective and high quality there seems to be little doubt that it enhances professional capability, professional relationships and even fosters a learning climate within schools (Tang & Chow, Sergiovanni, Kullman, Watkins). Where feedback is delivered in a spirit of co-participation, there is mutuality of learning; feedback is non-judgemental and constructive (Gosling in Bennett & Barp, 2008, O'Leary). It is important to ensure that feedback causes a cognitive rather than an emotional reaction (Wiliam, 2011). Dialogic conversation is most likely to support lasting learning (Watkins); a lack of depth to discussion leads to 'shallow collaboration' and a lack of meaningful learning (Sandt). The underlying assumption appears to be, however, that the person giving the information knows more than the person receiving it. In fact, one might claim that feedback actually tells us more about the values of the person giving it (Swaffield; 2008).

As learners (including teachers) develop their feedback-seeking behaviour, they become more experienced at self-assessment, knowing how and when to seek and receive feedback from others (Hattie & Timperley). Where dialogue and collaboration are commonplace, feedback-seeking behaviour is an integral part of an organisation's learning culture; organisational learning starts with understanding feedback (Senge; 1990).

In conclusion then, feedback can aid or hinder learning; dilemmas and tensions can arise due to different perceptions of feedback and its functions. It certainly is 'a complex notion' (Askew & Lodge).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is essentially an element of our professional identity, our perception of our abilities and worth. When we have sufficient regard for our abilities and ourselves, we may consider ourselves efficacious; we may be more inclined to persevere (Pollard, 2014). Our belief in our ability to organise and execute an action, or

accomplish a task, is a vital component of self-efficacy; it is a key feature of effective teaching (OECD, 2009).

Beliefs about one's ability can predict whether individuals are oriented towards developing their ability or documenting the (in)adequacy of their ability. These differing personality and motivation stances have different implications for professional growth (Dweck & Leggett). What 'success' means differs from person to person. The levels of challenge and impediment to successful performance are affected by differing levels of ingenuity, exertion, accuracy, productivity, threat, self-regulation and motivation (p43). Perceived self-efficacy is not a measure of the skills one has but a belief about what one can do under different sets of conditions with whatever skills one possesses (p37). Whilst a person's beliefs about their efficacy constitute a major aspect of their self-knowledge, those beliefs are not simply inert predictors of performance (Bandura, p79, 38).

Inexperienced and trainee teachers may struggle to gauge their professional competence, let alone develop a strong sense of self-efficacy; their reflections on teaching can be unproductive unless 'specific lenses' are provided to guide them (Santagata & Angelici). I would argue that one such 'specific lens' is feedback, a potentially powerful tool to trigger reflective thinking - a 'lens' to stimulate critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995 in O'Leary). Meanwhile, others argue that self-reflection is a more crucial determinant of self-knowledge and efficacy (Sedikides & Sktrowronski 1995 in Watkins); the power of self-feedback, perhaps, rather than feedback from someone else?

It is sometimes argued that established teachers feel 'they have nothing more to learn' (Sheal, 1989). They are comfortable with their style and reluctant to change, they perceive no professional need to participate in initiatives such as peer observation; indeed, they fail to 'see the point', questioning the value of such approaches (Sandt). In their mind, they already have effective

skills and feel no further significant improvement is required. Conceiving one's intelligence as a fixed entity, having a lack of internal motivation, avoiding challenge and fearing failure are indicative of a fixed mindset; a fixed view where individuals choose not to engage in opportunities for professional growth (Dweck & Leggett).

Where people are unable or unprepared to challenge underlying assumptions, they may be unable to learn (Morgan in Senge); they may adopt a 'helpless' stance. Teachers with eroded levels of efficacy may tend to view new ideas and approaches as futile. Especially if the approach is not made 'specific' enough for them, they may be unable to apply it to their own situation. (Bandura, 256). Indeed, teachers' beliefs in their efficacy can affect their receptivity to, and adoption of, educational technologies (Gibson & Dembo in Bandura).

This is in stark contrast to the concept of the 'learner teacher' which Watkins suggests can apply to any teacher at any point in their life or career; to engage with feedback and develop professionally, teachers need be open to feedback and willing to be challenged. With a growth mindset, they can see the benefit of learning (Dweck & Leggett). When feedback is focussed on the process rather than the person, whether criticism or praise, recipients display significantly less 'helpless' responses (Kamins & Dweck, 1995 in Watkins). Thus, the challenge is to seek ways to encourage ourselves and others to become more adaptive and willing to engage.

A strong sense of self-efficacy and high levels of resilience are often viewed as going hand-in-hand; such individuals are able to do extraordinary things in the face of obstacles (White, 1982 in Bandura, p37). Strong efficacy beliefs are about being able to do things well regularly – not just occasionally - in spite of unfavourable conditions (p43). Interestingly, a high sense of efficacy in one area of professional practice is not necessarily accompanied by high self-efficacy across other realms (DiClemente, 1986; Hofstetter, Sallis & Hovell, 1990); for

example, an effective French teacher may not be effective in a maths classroom. In schools across the country, there are teachers who have developed a strong sense of self-efficacy, based on a judgement of "good" or "outstanding" in one of more lesson observations. However, with ever-changing criteria for what constitutes good teaching and learning - and the criteria used to measure this - some teachers have failed to raise their game; they have created their own standards for judging their talents. When confronted with evidence that disputes their self-beliefs, they question its credibility, dismiss its relevance, or twist it to fit their views. However, most eventually alter their self-beliefs, especially if the evidence is compellingly persuasive (Bandura).

It is easy to delude ourselves about our performance; people with high self-expectations can run themselves down, those with low self-expectations may hold inflated views of their performance (Martin). Self-doubts can mean that even highly talented individuals make poor use of their capabilities under circumstances that undermine their beliefs in themselves. Even when they know full well what to do – and crucially possess the skills to do it – some individuals fail to perform optimally (Schwartz & Gottman, 1976; Bandura & Jourden, 1991; Wood & Bandura, 1989a in Bandura, p37).

When people choose to ignore uncomfortable evidence, self-deception may arise; they make a choice about whether to avoid or even shun the evidence. In the extreme, staunch self-believers waste no time scrutinising critical appraisals of them as they are convinced that the evaluators are misinformed or hopelessly biased (Bandura).

In order for the recipient of feedback from a lesson observation to believe, accept and/or value that feedback, the giver of feedback must undoubtedly appear credible. It will be imperative for me to investigate the potential sources of self-efficacy beliefs; to what extent do beliefs arise from 'enactive mastery experiences'? Or 'vicarious experiences' based on a comparison

with the attainment of others? What impact does 'verbal persuasion' have, especially if 'significant others' express faith in one's capabilities, rather than conveying doubts (Bandura).

I am keen to investigate the extent to which the personalities and motivations of those giving and

receiving feedback influence the quality and potential impact of feedback; for example, to what extent is feedback a crucial element of a beginning teacher's journey and the development of their sense of self-efficacy, compared with more experienced teachers?

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'Ethical Labour': a concept for those who work in education

Robert Campbell



Key questions:

- **Can the concept of 'ethical labour' be useful in describing features of work in education?**
- **To what extent do headteachers feel that the concept of 'ethical labour' resonates with them in their work?**
- **Is 'ethical labour' a condition prevalent across education, where values and principles collide with policy, management and issues?**

Context

In October 2012, I commenced the two-year part-time 'Educational Leadership & School Improvement' Masters of Education at the Faculty of Education. I had wanted to undertake further professional study since moving to headship in 2003, but somehow, the day job kept getting in the way. In 2012, IVC had just been subject to its long-awaited Ofsted and knowing this was done with a very positive view of the College, I felt confident and ready to embrace a Masters' programme.

From the outset, my interest was the work of headteachers, in particular a question posed by Crawford, 'what does it feel like to be the role?' (of headteacher) (2009, p.21). It is a unique position and Crawford's question is one that has defined my time in the role in both schools I have led. It is not (always) a comfortable role and the challenges of aligning one's own values and principles with that of the school, its context and community, Governmental policy and multiple stakeholders is a challenge. I was initially interested in researching 'emotional leadership', but with increased interest in education policy and in joining the Headteacher's Roundtable, my focus turned towards policy impact and response.

A Review of Some Literature

For Ball (2013), a new paradigm of public management has emerged that has instigated a culture of performativity which has, according to him, imposed a system of terror upon those in public services especially education. The language of school improvement and the focus of education has become 'raising the bar' for what is achieved in examinations or tests (Peim & Flint, 2009). As Blackmore (2009) also contests, education has become increasingly penetrated by the logic of managerialism and the market, in which the dominant values are competition, advantage and individualism. It became possible therefore for schools to be set and to set for themselves targets for improvement in performance much like a company might prepare a business plan indicating economic growth.

For MacBeath (2004), the focus on performance in schools has led to gaps in democratic practice. He asserts that a highly effective school is in itself and in its operation undemocratic, typically led by a hierarchy of leadership that exerts a powerful discourse of school improvement often built around Ofsted measures. This view is shared by Wrigley (2003), for whom school improvement is undemocratic, by Woods (2011) where the transformational nature of leadership espoused in official literature by Ofsted is lacking in ethics and by Fielding and Moss (2011) whose model of the High Performing Learning Organisation is one where the standards agenda predominates and where a totalitarian regime seeks the subordination of the personal to the functional. These all assert the powerful argument that the pursuit of standards and a regime of accountability has come at the expense of democratic and ethical ideals and values. In such domains, headteachers become instruments of governmentality and wielders of

disciplinary power. They may be seen by staff in the school to control the field of judgement that assesses the worth, quality of value of an individual (Ball, 2003). Yet these may rest uneasily alongside the ethical values of headteachers, many of whom will share the lexicons of belief and commitment, service and love, mental health and emotional well-being of the children and teachers they are obliged to submit to the culture of performativity; they too might suffer from the “values schizophrenia” that Ball identifies in teachers (2003, p.221). This therefore places the headteacher at the centre of the ethical challenge facing secondary schools.

Headteachers started their professional careers in the classroom and “Most teachers become heads for idealistic reasons – they want to make a difference to the lives of children and young people” (Thomson, 2009, p.11). For Fullan (2003), it is imperative that headteachers possess a moral compass that enables them to steer the right course through demands, expectations and overload. To lose this or to have it off-set is cataclysmic. In this state, “the principal’s role becomes overloaded with emptiness” (Fullan, 2003, p.20). Thus headteachers are often idealists who are underpinned by (democratic) values that assert the primacy of learning and the uniqueness of the individual. Yet these will often be challenged by policy that simplifies, regulates and dictates the configuration of schools and schooling around that which can be measured simply and readily by the accountability regime. In this way, headteachers can be subjected to what I theorized as ‘ethical labour’.

Ethical Labour

In her work on flight attendants, Hochschild (2012) first introduced the term ‘emotional labor’ (sic) to describe the challenge that they faced in smiling to passengers in the face of fear, anxiety, resentment and even ennui. The theory has been researched widely in many different occupational settings to apply to the management of feelings in any given context, whether the judge facing revelations of brutal facts during a trial to the (relative) poverty of a salesperson working in an

expensive shop sublimating feelings of envy.

Hochschild explains that:

This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality. (Hochschild, 2012, p.7).

On reading her work, it struck me that headteachers engage on a daily basis with a different kind of labour, namely that which is ‘ethical’.

Headteachers will have their own individual values, their ethical systems, which will have evolved through their experiences in school to their early classroom careers, informed and developed through interactions with peers and in their work as emerging senior leaders. As they become headteachers though, they move into a “creaky social assemblage” (Ball et al., 2012, p.69) where values are contested by differing groups and subjects and challenged by the imposition of governmental policy, which will, of course, be gilded with its own values.

Headteachers are still generally appointed by representatives of the governing body to perform a specific role and whilst, as Thomson (2009) notes, advertisements sometimes suggest the preference for charismatic leaders, Sergiovanni (2001) reminds us that both bureaucratic and personally-based leadership may be unsuited for schools that are fundamentally communities.

...their own individual values, their ethical systems, which will have evolved through their experiences in school to their early classroom careers, informed and developed through interactions with peers.

Negotiating and determining the right passage through any decision-making will mean the headteacher aligning their values with those of the community (which may not always agree with its own definition of values) and beyond. In the same way that Hochschild's flight attendants had to suppress individual feelings, headteachers may have to suppress deeply-held ethical values to perform the role they have been appointed to, and with the trajectory of governmental policy increasing the focus on standards and on the hegemony of measurement (Wrigley, 2003), this may be increasingly challenging for some headteachers.

Methodology

In researching this topic, I wanted to employ a methodological approach that enabled me to engage individually with other headteachers and to get them reflecting upon and talking about their work, the impact of education policy upon them as practitioners, their response to and resistance of policy and finally their views on the theoretical concept of 'ethical labour'. Such a design clearly necessitated qualitative research which centres on "a curiosity about social life, and an interest in writing about human activities" (Travers, 2001, p.14). I further identified that a case study was appropriate to a broadly interpretivist paradigm and to answer the fundamental question of 'Is it just me?', as well as the research questions I had proposed. For Stake, case study is 'personalistic' work (1995, p.46).

Most significant amongst the methods I employed was interviews which Kvale and Brinkman (2009) assert underline the importance researchers place in understanding the world and lives of those they research. As both a fellow headteacher and also someone known to each of the interviewees, I felt I would be able to conduct the interviews with trust and mutual respect to "obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.124). Supporting this was documentary analysis of the blogs, articles and, in one case, book of the Headteachers' Roundtable, the case I elected to study. In total, I interviewed eight headteachers.

Findings and Discussion – Does 'Ethical Labour' Resonate?

The key question I explored was the extent to which the headteachers felt that 'ethical labour' resonated with them in their work and all but one openly made it clear that it was a characteristic of their work as school leaders that they felt the pressure upon their values and principles in response to a range of policy enactments. Significant in three examples was the accountability and assessment regime that forces headteachers to adopt reactive practice in order to position their schools favourably within league tables and in comparison to other schools. One such example which resonated with my own situation was the 'Early Entry' announcement by the Secretary of State regarding GCSEs in September 2013. For HT4, this similarly created an anxiety and a short period of 'ethical labour' resulting in "two sleepless nights" (HT4), whilst he came "close to throwing out what I believed in" (HT4). What surprised HT4 was that his leadership team supported his initial stance of withdrawing the students from exams, even though "it was against their values to" and it gave him too "a cameo into their compliance" (HT4). Ethical labour, it would seem, is not something that solely affects headteachers. For HT6, it was academisation that represented the greatest example of ethical labour. He stated that this policy (an early example by the Coalition Government and given royal assent in July 2010, just two months after the election) was "a complete betrayal of academies under Blair" which were, he claimed, "about socio-economic deprivation" (HT6).

The interviews revealed that policy cultivated 'ethical labour' but, surprisingly, given the focus of my questions, they were not the only source. Headteachers gave examples of this labour when discussing issues or dilemmas that were rooted in the day-to-day management of their schools. For PHT, this meant not being able to comment personally on staffing matters, even though she stated that those involved were known to be speaking openly in the staffroom about her role (as headteacher) in the proceedings. Such an imbalance was described as frustrating (PHT). Similarly for HT2, he noted that he had to "repress

principles” when in the “middle of issues but you can’t comment publicly on things when they’re rumbling along” (HT2). Staffing matters and student discipline (concerning the use of exclusion) appear to be other key sources of ethical labour. Most intriguingly was the acknowledgement by HT3 that this was also located in the apparent lack of “fit between me as a person and the school I represent. I’m not absolutely, absolutely at ease” (HT3). For him, the school’s traditions, status and religious character all challenged his values and principles and suggest that as well as affected by policy and practice, ethical labour can be principally generated by context.

Through thematic analysis I identified four broad effects on and responses to ‘ethical labour’ from the headteachers:

- ‘Harden up’ – for PHT leading a school is hard so simply toughening oneself is the way ahead
- ‘Suppression’ – headteachers are servants of the Government and the values of the headteacher are below that of the students, school and community
- ‘Defeat’ – which was stronger than suppression and led to ‘frustration, anger, stress’ (HT1)
- ‘Protest’ – coming up with something positive and adopting a course of principled resistance

Key findings:

- **Headteachers gave examples of this [ethical] labour when discussing issues or dilemmas that were rooted in the day-to-day management of their schools.**
- **Ethical labour, is not something that solely affects headteachers.**
- **Significant in three examples was the accountability and assessment regime that forces headteachers to adopt reactive practice in order to position their schools favourably within league tables and in comparison to other schools.**

Conclusions

I began this thesis asking the question ‘Is it just me?’ who experiences ‘ethical labour’ and reassuringly, on one level, the answer came back as a resounding no. I hope this research will be picked up by others and further work undertaken in this domain. At best, I have offered a concept that may have application elsewhere.

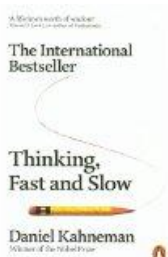
Headteachers are placed in the most challenging position to experience, sitting as they do as gatekeepers for their schools, but I would assert that ‘ethical labour’ is a condition prevalent across education, where values and principles collide with policy, management and issues. If nothing else, perhaps understanding its existence will suffice. From there, responding to it positively may alleviate its most debilitating effects.

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Recommended reads

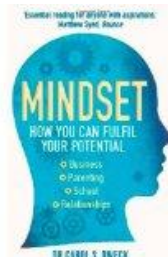
Daniel Kahneman
Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow
(2012)



Rating ★★★★★

The Nobel Prize winning psychologist shows how we naturally misconceive many situations because of the brain's tendency to jump to quick stereotyped conclusions. While this has helped fast reaction and survival, it means that we naturally resist the effort of **thinking deeply**. It we can disrupt the stereotypes the brain tends to become more analytical and think more slowly and deeply. Lesson fascimators, the way we turn many lessons into problems to be solved, the way research problematizes our everyday practice would be examples of this. Good education and good research is usually about thinking slow.

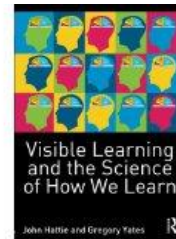
Carole Dweck:
Growth Mindset
(2012)



Rating ★★★★★

Carol Dweck shows how students and teachers who believe in a growth and not fixed mind-set are more likely to succeed and face new challenges successfully. She emphasises praising effort and not level, encouraging the making of mistakes. Again the ICE programme and our IMP stamp are all about growth. It poses the question we are going to investigate in Year 8. Do mind-set differences help explain some of our gaps? If so, can we change someone from fixed to growth mind-set? Are we fixed in some areas but growth in others? Can we overcome socialised differences by psychological self-awareness?

John Hattie: Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn (2013)



Rating ★★★★★

John Hattie has done a meta-analysis (combined study) of thousands of pieces of research on what impacts on achievement and measured effect size. Virtually all teacher interventions produce some positive outcome but some seem to be proven to have greater impact: high quality feedback, having a mastery mindset, establishing strong student teacher relationships and high parental involvement seem to be among the most effective. Our emphasis on improving written feedback through the IMP stamp and beyond, the ICE curriculum, our research in Pupil Premium, mindset and improvement in the use of the moodle to involve parents more in home support for learning are seeking to use these powerful levers on achievement.

Recommended links

visible-learning.org (Hattie and Dweck)
dylanwilliam.org (formative assessment)

Top Teaching Tips: a summary

1. Use different coloured felt tips in group work: see who contributes, making progress visible
2. Give out answers and ask: what is the question?
3. Open books and stamp to save time; collate marking errors to feed into next teaching
4. Photograph good and poor examples of work: project them as models or to correct
5. Look after your voice: drink water, eat pineapple and be relaxed, speak quietly, use a microphone
6. When mentoring: ask about time spent out of school, conditions for working, negotiate an effective time and a short term measurable target weekly
7. Build a set of notes from a group by assigning each a part using learning with others
8. Teach memory techniques: chunking, auditory, visual and physical as you teach revision: encourage through your cycle of lessons
9. Use analogies to allow students to scope a task and reduce the anxiety over difficult concepts or structures
10. Use stars as motivators to build to merits
11. Use speaking strips to balance or prompt contributions
12. USE KEYWORDS AS STARTERS: Create a list of all the key words of a topic and get students to RAG it. Adapt your teaching from there.
13. Pick 3 keywords (memory works best in associations of 3s and maximum 5s). Ask students to a) Spell them, b) give the meaning, c) apply to a context as a differentiated starter and recap on prior learning.
14. Offer cake as a reward.