



University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

This paper is made available online in accordance with publisher policies. Please scroll down to view the document itself. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our policy information available from the repository home page for further information.

To see the final version of this paper please visit the publisher's website. Access to the published version may require a subscription.

Author(s): Val Brooks and Nigel Fancourt

Article Title: Is self-assessment in religious education unique?

Year of publication: Forthcoming

Link to published article:

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/01416200.asp>

Publisher: This is a preprint of an article submitted for consideration in the British Journal of Religious Education © Taylor & Francis]; The British Journal of Religious Education is available online at:

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/01416200.asp>

Is self-assessment in religious education unique?

Val Brooks and Nigel Fancourt

Contact details:

VB: Institute of Education, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL

NF: Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY

v.brooks@warwick.ac.uk

nigel.fancourt@education.ox.ac.uk

Notes on contributors

Nigel Fancourt is a tutor in religious education at the Department of Education in the University of Oxford, and is also an associate fellow at the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, University of Warwick. Previously, he worked as a secondary religious education teacher for 13 years. His main research interests are in assessment and pedagogy in religious education, and practitioner research.

Val Brooks taught in the secondary sector for twelve years before moving into higher education to become a lecturer in assessment and evaluation. She is currently Director of Post Graduate Taught Courses at the Institute of Education, University of Warwick. Her main interests are in assessment and teachers' professional development.

Is self-assessment in religious education unique?

(Received [XX Jxy 2xx5]; final version received [XX7 AXXst 2XX6])

Abstract

This paper addresses the question: is self-assessment in religious education unique? It first presents an overview of some challenges for assessment from subject differences, and then reviews the generic literature on self-assessment. It builds on earlier empirical research on self-assessment in religious education, carried out in an English state secondary school (Fancourt 2010); this was used to propose a variant of self-assessment which is tailored to the demands of religious education – *reflexive* self-assessment. Its implications for more general understandings of the relationship between subject pedagogy and self-assessment are discussed, especially the recognition of values not only in religious education but in other subjects too, reinforcing the need to develop subject-specific variants of self-assessment that reflect the breadth of learning outcomes.

Keywords: reflexive self-assessment; religious education; values; subject differences.

Introduction

For many teachers, a major tension in their work is balancing the demands of teaching subjects with the demands of assessment, particularly as examinations and testing are

becoming increasingly important in many countries around the world (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005). At the heart of this dilemma is the relationship between pedagogy and assessment, especially in finding fruitful ways of developing formative assessment to aid learning.

Two earlier articles in this journal explored these issues for religious education. The first, entitled ‘Some challenges to self-assessment in religious education’, outlined some of the challenges in developing this form of formative assessment across the two attainment targets in England: learning about religion and learning from religion (Fancourt 2005). The second, entitled “‘I’m less intolerant’: reflexive self-assessment in religious education’, described empirical research into self-assessment in religious education (Fancourt 2010). It was based on doctoral research (Fancourt, 2008), and argued that self-assessment in religious education should take a specific form to do justice to the subject’s aims in terms of the values and attitudes that underpinned it; this was termed ‘reflexive self-assessment’. The present article considers the implications of developing a subject-specific form of self-assessment for generic theories of self-assessment, by asking if self-assessment in religious education is thereby unique. Firstly, the literature on subject differences in assessment is reviewed. Then, the wider literature on self-assessment is considered. These two discussions necessarily stretch beyond the confines of religious education into other research literature. They set the scene for the subsequent discussion of the empirical research on self-assessment in religious education in the light of these two fields of literature. Finally, the implications of this for an understanding of self-assessment in religious education within generic theories of self-assessment are put forward, especially in showing how research in religious education can inform these generic theories, rather than simply following them.

Assessing subjects: the context

The last decade has witnessed a ground swell of interest in formative assessment – both as a topic for research and within professional practice. Within the vast literature on formative assessment, it has been recognised that the inter-relationship between assessment and learning outcomes varies widely between different learning situations, for example, school learning, vocational learning, work place learning and higher education (Daugherty et al. 2008). Furthermore, much of the literature is generic, displaying limited attention to the particular subjects involved, even though the curriculum in most schools, further and higher education is subject-based. Subjects differ in important ways, for instance, their cognitive demands. Mastery of a hierarchy of knowledge, concepts and skills is a fundamental requirement of subjects such as Mathematics, whereas the content of others is less structured and delimited as well as emphasising different mental attributes. English Literature, for instance, fosters maturation, subjecting texts to repeated scrutiny to deepen insight. The rationale for religious education is increasingly seen in its contribution to the development of appropriate attitudes and values for life in a pluralistic society, e.g. respect, tolerance and open-mindedness, particularly in response to concerns about prejudice and conflict (e.g. Jackson et al., 2007; Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2007).

Empirical evidence suggests that the pedagogies of subjects differ too. A comparative study of the teaching of Mathematics and Social Studies in the USA found that even though the same 21 teachers taught the same fifth grade pupils in the same classrooms, the distinctiveness of the subject matter and the subjects' goals introduced a range of pedagogical differences:

When individual teachers shifted from one content area to the other, they varied cognitive goals, instructional formats, student behaviours, materials, and the extent to which pupils worked together ... individual teachers do not use a consistent instructional approach all day long. What they are teaching shapes the way they teach. (Stodolsky, 1988, p.74)

Students also behaved differently. For instance, they were ‘not consistently involved or uninvolved in a given teacher’s classroom’. Instead, ‘the average involvement levels of students in a teacher’s math class and the same teacher’s social studies class were completely uncorrelated’ (p.74). Whilst it would be misleading to suggest that all subject teachers teach in identical ways or that teachers cannot change, disciplinary influences do appear to be pervasive, affecting a host of factors associated with teaching and learning.

Assessment itself varies between subjects. As a teacher in the King’s Medway Oxford Formative Assessment Project observed: “‘We know why you started with maths and science. We’re the remedial group aren’t we?’” By looking at good formative practice in other subjects (especially physical education and art) they had realised that formative assessment was often well-established’ elsewhere (Black et al., 2003, p.74). Similarly James (1998) observed that secondary school Mathematics and Science teachers tended to favour end-of-unit tests and examinations, whereas English teachers preferred ‘continuous assessment’, using written and oral assignments as a regular feature of class and homework.

Most commentators agree that variations in assessment practices are affected by disciplinary differences. For instance, Black and Wiliam (1998, p.55) reasoned that: ‘[t]he nature of the epistemology, and so of the meta-cognition involved, in (say) aesthetic appreciation of poetry will be very different from that for (say) physics, and hence many

features of formative assessment will differ between these two fields of learning'. James (2006, p.48) argued similarly that assessment should take account of a subject's structure, key concepts, methods and processes. Summarizing Francophone research, Allal and Lopez highlight how the content structures of school disciplines determine the aims, means and functions of formative assessment' (2005, p.250). One of the few studies exploring this issue started from the observation that 'little has been done to examine subject differences' in formative assessment (Hodgen and Marshall, 2005, p.153). The original intention was to compare assessment in Mathematics and English, subjects chosen to represent 'contrasting disciplines, typifying the arts and sciences split in education' (2005, p.154). However, such were the disciplinary differences that their original plan for a paper involving 'a discursive attempt to say "in maths ... in English ..."' proved impossible to realise because they were 'often talking at cross-purposes' (p.155). Nevertheless, they concluded that what made lessons formative 'is largely the same' (p.172) and that the 'pedagogic principles of formative assessment appear to be generic'. However, they abandoned attempting a comparative analysis in favour of parallel accounts of assessment in each subject because of 'an urgent need to adapt the generic principles of formative assessment' to the 'more specific demands of each school subject' (p.172).

In this literature, religious education is poorly represented. This means not only that there is little critical development of assessment in religious education but also that its particular subject demands have not informed the development of general principles of assessment: it is not part of the wider discussion. Thus, whilst there is no doubt that there is an 'urgent need' in religious education to 'adapt the generic principles', there is also a need to reflect back on the generic principles themselves. Hodgen and Marshall may well have found

that the formative elements in English and maths are ‘largely the same’ as the subjects have been part of the development of general theories, but this may not be true for RE, and one particular area of difference may be in self-assessment, which must therefore be considered.

The generic literature on self-assessment

The burgeoning literature on self-assessment reflects its unique importance in improving attainment, motivation and pupil autonomy. It is central to assessment policy in some countries, for example, Finland (Voogt and Kasurinen, 2005), and great claims have been made for it. Sadler, for instance, asserted it was ‘indispensable’ (1989, p.121). Similarly, Black and Wiliam (1998, pp.54-55) argued that it: ‘is not an interesting option or a luxury; it has to be seen as essential’. Their later study asserted that peer- and self-assessment ‘secure aims that cannot be achieved in any other way’ (Black et al., 2003, p.53). Their conclusions were partly based on a large-scale, international survey of the literature on formative assessment which paid particular attention to quasi-experimental studies. One study tested the assumption that whilst self-assessment may benefit adult learners, it was ill-suited to children because of their cognitive immaturity. Fontana and Fernandes (1994) conducted an experiment involving almost 700 Portuguese primary pupils who were assigned to either a treatment group (their teachers followed a professional development course on self-assessment) or a control group (their teachers followed an unrelated INSET course). The courses lasted two terms with treatment group teachers implementing self-assessment techniques with their classes, focusing on Mathematics because ‘improvement consequent upon the operation of self-assessment techniques would be most immediate in mathematics, which is a rule-governed subject and where constant monitoring of progress’ would be

particularly beneficial (p. 408). The results were striking: the average learning gain of the treatment group was approximately double that of the control group.

Fontana and Fernandes conceded that improvements linked to self-assessment 'are not confined to any one single area of the curriculum' (p.408). They nevertheless claimed a special role for self-assessment in teaching 'cognitively oriented areas of the curriculum' (p.415) where 'the prompt elimination of errors in concept and technique are particularly important' (p.408). Sebba et al's (2008) literature review offers qualified support for these claims. Covering peer and self-assessment at secondary school level, they found a positive effect on 'Pupil attainment across a range of subject areas' but 'no clear evidence to show whether peer and self-assessment works better in some subjects than others'. However, there was 'limited evidence' that 'practice-based subjects may respond more immediately' (p.2).

The finding that immaturity is not an insuperable barrier to the capacity of self-assessment to yield learning gains has been repeated by numerous studies. Arguably the most notable feature of subsequent studies is their diversity, emanating from parts of the world characterised by dissimilar educational systems, assessment policies, social and cultural contexts. The research also displays differences in the methodologies employed and the age of participants, as the following examples illustrate. McDonald and Boud (2003, p.215) undertook a large-scale 'Control Group Experimental Design' study with over 500 Barbadian students in their final year of school. Their results showed 'an overwhelming impact' (p.219) with students who had received training in self-assessment outperforming a control group 'in all areas of the curriculum' (p.217). The second example is a small-scale action research project to introduce a class of second grade pupils in New York to self-assessment (Desautel, 2009). Data collection in this qualitative case study entailed observation of pupil interactions

and written evidence of self-assessment such as entries in reflective journals. Desautel (2009, p.10) concluded that self-assessment became ‘a very powerful way to enrich specific learning experiences and strengthen student understanding of specific content’, promoting ‘self-directed learning’. Gains in learning and student autonomy have, thus, been found in diverse settings by studies with methodological differences that afford an element of methodological triangulation to their findings. However, arguably more important than these learning gains per se is Sebba et al.’s (2008, p.1) suggestion that: ‘characteristics of students such as ethnicity, gender or prior attainment made no significant differences’. Given that these factors have repeatedly been shown to be decisive in student attainment (Schagen and Hutchison, 2003), the suggestion that self-assessment negates their impact represents perhaps its greatest claim for making a ‘unique’ contribution to learning.

The reported benefits are not confined to cognitive gains but encompass a range of dispositions: motivation, engagement, self-esteem and self-efficacy. A recent Australian study explored the capacity of self-assessment across the curriculum to enhance engagement amongst primary pupils regarded as ‘hard to reach’ (Munns and Woodward, 2006). Schools in the Fair Go Project served catchment areas with high levels of socio-economic deprivation, unemployment, lone parenting, pupil mobility and ‘the largest concentration of Aboriginal people in the country’ (p. 196). The project investigated whether self-assessment could act as a catalyst for changing attitudes, values and beliefs derived from homes where prevailing attitudes were ‘characterized by school disaffection and resistance’ (p.196), fostering ‘the belief that “school is for me”’ (p.197). It was grounded in a pedagogic framework described as ‘the REAL dimensions of student self-assessment (Reflective Engagement: Authentic Learning)’ (p.201). This identified ‘levels’ of self-assessment, ranging from a ‘purely... procedural’ (p.194) which treats self-assessment as ‘a set of tasks to be completed by

students' (p.195), to a deeper level where 'students' internal processes are crucial' (p.198).

The project strove to promote high level engagement, defined as 'when students were simultaneously:

- Reflectively involved in deep understanding and expertise (high cognition).
- Genuinely valuing what they are doing (high emotion).
- Actively participating in school and classroom activities (high behaviour)' (p.194).

An interesting feature of the REAL framework, therefore, is that in contrast to primarily cognitive models of self-assessment, focused on metacognition (e.g. Puntambeker and du Boulay, 1999), it offers an elaborated model which synthesises cognitive, affective and kinaesthetic dimensions.

Although the literature shows an impressive range of benefits, it also records widespread concerns about implementation. For instance, the Office for Standards in Education ('OFSTED' - the body responsible for the regulation and inspection of childcare and education services in England) surveyed practice in assessment for learning in Mathematics and English in 43 schools, concluding that peer and self-assessment, in particular, were 'insufficiently developed'(OFSTED 2008, p.4), and a few of the schools 'had abandoned these approaches because they took too much time' (p.16). Similarly, a study in New Zealand involving fifteen elementary school teachers concluded: 'despite the teachers having written substantive learning aims, these were not conveyed to the students and it was difficult for the observer, let alone the students, to deduce from activities during the lesson what was to be learnt or what mastery of this learning might look like' (Timperley and Parr, 2009, p.57). This was attributed to an under-estimation of the 'far greater demands' (p.57) that formative assessment practices make on teachers' expertise than a traditional performance orientation. Even though the Fair Go Project was meticulously planned by a

team of teachers and university researchers, after the first ten weeks the team was dissatisfied with the one-dimensional nature of their reflective probes: “children seemed to be merely “going through” the process of reflection ... without involvement in their learning processes’ (Munns and Woodward, 2006, p.202). Ironically, the project needed rescuing from the very pitfalls it was set up to overcome.

It seems that both the difficulties inherent in self-assessment and its unique benefits can be traced to the same source: moving learners beyond routine levels of cognition. The captions ‘thinking about thinking’ and ‘learning to learn’ provide deceptively simple descriptions of a conceptually sophisticated activity involving two key elements: metacognition as a process and metacognitive knowledge as the product. Together these are ‘important components of cognitive development and signs of intellectual maturity’ (Desautel, 2009, p.1997). Metacognition is an esoteric process involving self-reflection and self-regulation ‘that can result in a nuanced understanding of oneself as a thinker and a learner’ (p.1997). It entails strategies aimed at self-examination and self-regulation: identifying relevant prior learning; goal setting and action planning; self-monitoring to reinforce or modify behaviour; reviewing progress. The resulting metacognitive knowledge combines a heightened awareness of learning itself with increased self-awareness: one’s own cognitive resources; factors influencing performance; the demands of the task in hand; the range of possible learning strategies and when and how to use them. Thus Laveault suggests that there are in fact two allied processes: self-regulation of learning, and learning of self-regulation (Laveault, 2007, p. 205). Pupils need to learn to self-assess as much as they need to self-assess their learning.

High level self-assessment is also challenging because it demands that teachers and

students relinquish conventional roles and identities and forge a new ‘interdependent relationship’ (Sebba et al, 2008, p.1). For teachers, this means a willingness to exercise ‘power with’ rather than over students (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003, p. 482); students are required to move from teacher dependence to increasing personal responsibility. This shift requires a concomitant development in pupils’ abilities to judge their own performance, which depends on the internalisation of relevant success criteria and standards. Radnor highlights the importance of this in Art, where individual creativity is set at a premium (Radnor, 1994). Thus, self-assessment poses numerous challenges, ranging from the conceptual to the practical, and sometimes conditional upon the fulfilment of prerequisites. Consequently, it is often depicted as a hard-won pinnacle to which other formative assessment activities lead. The OECD (2005, p.65), for instance, presents students’ ability ‘to evaluate and revise their own work’ as the ‘ultimate goal of formative assessment’. Cowie (2005, p.138), in a study of pupils’ attitudes to assessment in science, concurs that self-assessment is ‘the ultimate aim of feedback and formative assessment’. Thus, although the benefits of self-assessment may be ‘unique’, they are also elusive. Indeed, studies demonstrating an impact have often been resource-intensive, involving training plus ongoing external support.

There are two important themes in these discussions: the effect of subject pedagogy on assessment, and the degree of pupil autonomy in the subject. The identification of a ‘learning from’ attainment target in the English policy framework for assessment in religious education (Qualifications and Curriculum Agency, 2004) means that the subject itself embodies a reflexive element which intersects with a similar element inherent in most models of self-assessment, and supports autonomous thinking. Assessment in religious education needs to be aligned with the requirement for autonomous thinking, and indeed with the

subject's wider pedagogical aims.

Reflexive self-assessment in religious education

The assessment of religious education poses some distinctive challenges. For instance, the national assessment framework (Qualifications and Curriculum Agency ['QCA'], 2004) identifies two attainment targets: 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'. Although the second attainment target requires the development of self-awareness and the ability to evaluate different beliefs, there is no explicit reference to attitudes and values in either attainment target. Nevertheless, the national framework has emphasized these as integral elements of the subject.

The problem of including values is partly one of definition. As Afdal notes, the paradox of tolerance is that there is a 'high level of formal agreement on the importance of tolerance...but a high level of disagreement on what tolerance actually is' (Afdal 2006, p.86). This poses difficulties in developing the shared assessment criteria which are usually regarded as fundamental features both of teacher assessment and of student self-assessment (Sadler, 1989, p.124). Although there are psychological models of ethical reasoning (e.g. Narvaez, 2005), values and attitudes are not amenable to assessment through classroom tasks in the same ways as knowledge or evaluation. They are nevertheless fundamental to a full assessment of 'learning from religion'.

The empirical work which forms the basis for the proposed variant of self-assessment in religious education was a practitioner study that drew on pupils' views of pedagogy and assessment as a method of reflectively monitoring and thereby improving curriculum practice

(Elliot, 1991) (for a full account, see Fancourt, 2010). It drew on other action research in religious education (O'Grady, 2003), on ethnographic studies of pupils' religiosity in school (e.g. Ipgrave, 2002), and studies of pupils' attitudes to classroom assessment (e.g. Cowie, 2005). It took pupil voice seriously, as a commentary on teaching and learning, but pupils were not actively involved as co-researchers (unlike Leitch et al., 2007).

The main research involved a class of thirty mixed-ability Year 9 pupils (13-14 year olds) in a comprehensive school in a small, affluent town in south-east Oxfordshire. There were fourteen boys and sixteen girls. One boy was Arab Muslim, the only member of an ethnic minority in the class; a few pupils were regular members of local churches, others were nominally Christian, agnostic or atheist. Semi-structured group interviews were used on three separate occasions across the school year to investigate pupils' perceptions of various self-assessment techniques:

- pupils were introduced to module objectives at the outset and used a traffic lighting system to monitor their attainment and progress at the beginning, middle and end of the module;
- lesson-specific objectives were identified at the start of each lesson and pupils evaluated their achievements at the end, again using a traffic lighting system;
- pupils used national level descriptors (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004) to self-assess their written work, identifying what and how to improve;
- dialogue, through group and class discussion, was used to explore progress and attainment, including attitudes and values

These techniques were trialled across the year during modules on the existence of God, Jewish and Christian understandings of the holocaust, and women in Islam.

From analysing the data, it is argued that pupils were able to self-assess their ability in the two current attainment targets; this is not surprising. Significantly, they were also able to reflect on how their learning contributed to the development of the attitudes and values that underpinned the subject. Moreover, pupils could not only work with this element, they were also 'able to connect the three elements: knowledge and understanding; reflection and evaluation; attitudes and values. Indeed, pupils often conceptualised them as a whole' (Fancourt, 2010, p. 300). It was their encounter as learners with the facts about the holocaust or wearing *hijab* to which they automatically responded. Classroom activities were embedded in this process too, such as discussion. Importantly, this grounding allowed pupils to go on to reflect on changes to their attitudes and values, recognising the role of religious education in developing tolerance and respect. Thus, different types of learning were intertwined in pupils' self-assessment. They connected self-assessment of values, self-assessment of knowledge and self-assessment of reflection. The three elements were harmonised and integrated in their comments, combining both intellectual and ethical qualities within metacognitive knowledge. Following Jackson (2004, p.88), the term 'reflexivity' was borrowed from ethnography to describe this process (e.g. Giddens 1993; Reimarz 1997; Nesbitt 2004): '[i]t captures pupils' reflection on *all* aspects of their learning, both intellectual progress, and changes in their attitudes and values' (Fancourt, 2010, p. 301). Generic models of self-assessment needed to be refined in order to take account of all the dimensions of learning in the subject.

Implications for generic theories of self-assessment

This has three main implications for a wider understanding of self-assessment. Firstly, it suggests that pupils can make quite subtle judgements about the wider effects of their

learning and therefore assumptions about pupils' capabilities for self-assessment should be widened. Following Fontana and Fernandes' finding (1994) that children are capable of self-assessment, it shows that they can do this through forms of epistemological and ethical metacognition. It asks for an awakening in pupils to a sense of the values that underpin their learning. This is more an assessment *of* the self than simply pupil assessment of individual tasks against set criteria. Laveault suggests that 'progressively authentic learning activities will demand taking into consideration more fully the regulatory processes that intervene at the level of the self, that is to say at the level of the system of values and beliefs of the pupil'ⁱ (Laveault, 2007, p.234). Superficially, this seems to run counter to much advice in assessment for learning, that pupils should switch from being ego-focused to being task-focused (Black and Wiliam, 1998), and should understand success at school as being dependent on their effort and not as a result of innate personal qualities (e.g. Butler 1988; Dweck, 1999). However, pupils are not being asked to judge their *success*, but rather to reflect on the implications of their learning for themselves: to begin to value the values in their learning. This is different from values education, which often includes the development of ethical reasoning (Narvaez, 2005), because it is embedded within subject pedagogy. It is also different from taking the non-cognitive aspects of the process of learning into account (Munns and Woodward, 2006). However, it obviously shares with both these two differing concerns an appreciation of the role and effect of values and attitudes in learning.

Further, the teacher is unable to arbitrate directly over this process of self-assessment in its entirety; there may not be an object of assessment for the wider goals, such as a written task or performance. It therefore adds to the argument that self-assessment requires pupils and teachers to develop new roles and identities (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003; Sebba et al., 2008). It is generally accepted that a fundamental prerequisite for the self-regulation that is a

core activity in self-assessment is a well-developed appreciation of the standards and criteria by which performance is judged within the discipline. However, Marshall (2004) argues that subjects such as English, where there are multiple ways of performing well, are better served by the notion of working towards a broad horizon than a fixed goal. This paper contends that beyond these horizons, are even more ineffable criteria. They are ineffable because they are not located within a particular object but are the consequence of an individual's sustained engagement with the subject's content and skills. They are, by their nature, uniquely suited to reflexive self-assessment. Teachers can have a more direct role in aspects of the process, but for wider judgements, they can only make the process explicit and share the meanings of the terms – e.g. tolerance or respect, like the concept of creativity in art (Radnor, 1994). This is not therefore simply transferring the teacher's task to the pupils. Ultimately it relies on the pupil's own judgement of the impact of their learning on themselves. This process is unlikely to be reflected directly in examinations, which will probably only reflect epistemological elements, but it may contribute indirectly by giving pupils a wider sense of what their learning has ultimately achieved.

Thirdly, this model is not *radically* different from self-assessment in other subjects. Self-assessment in religious education is not unique, but the generic stock can be adapted to grow more subject-specific sub-species. This is also a question of alignment: the basic principle that pedagogy and assessment should correspond. Thus, neither should it be assumed that generic models of self-assessment can be applied uncritically in religious education, nor that reflexive self-assessment has little to contribute to the development of self-assessment across the curriculum. The issue is the interrelationship between a subject's overall educational purpose and the judgement of any particular task or performance. Whilst the particular combination of elements in religious education is unique, these elements exist

elsewhere in other subjects which may seek to develop attitudes and values in some way. For instance, Richardson shows how different views of the pedagogy of citizenship affect attitudes to its assessment, especially the challenge of avoiding a 'test is best' approach in developing active citizens (Richardson 2009, p.20). In geography, environmental awareness and fair trade issues are significant in studies of extreme environments and development issues (Hopwood 2007), and in history, anti-racism may be important in the study of Black peoples or the Holocaust (Husbands et al., 2003, pp.122-127), but not in a study of the Tudors. Further, in science, a module on eco-systems may be underpinned by environmental ethics, whereas one on materials would not. Religious education is not unique, and the question is whether and how pupils are explicitly invited to consider these values when they arise within their learning, amongst more identifiable learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This paper builds on previous empirical research showing how pupils in one school had been encouraged to self-assess their progress in religious education more widely, in a reflexive way. This research was used to explore the question: is self-assessment in religious education unique? Reviews of assessment in various subjects and of the generic research into self-assessment revealed some surprising differences between subjects and the complex nexus of elements in conceptions of self-assessment. Finally, the implications of reflexive self-assessment in religious education for more general understandings of the relationship between subject pedagogy and self-assessment were explored. What are the implications of this? For research, further studies in religious education are necessary to gain a clearer picture of its potential and challenges, for instance, in more multi-cultural settings, or in primary schools. Studies in other subjects are also needed to identify more clearly the similarities and differences between them, to see how it might apply there, for instance a comparison between

religious education, history and science. For policymakers, it also has implications for identifying the underlying assumptions about the formulation of attainment targets in any subject; it may be a mistake to assume that one model of assessment will automatically apply across the curriculum equally successfully. For teachers, it is about developing their own more nuanced approaches to classroom assessment, reflecting the multiplicity of dimensions of their subject; they may inculcate deeper forms of learning in their pupils if they can entwine these dimensions in their practice. Overall, it is a question of nurturing subject-specific sub-species, recognising the features required for particular conditions, rather than assuming that the basic stock will always grow and flower equally well across the curriculum.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Culham Educational Foundation for their financial support for the research

References

Afdal, G. (2006) *Tolerance and Curriculum: conceptions of tolerance in the multi-cultural unitary school Norwegian compulsory school*. Münster: Waxmann.

Allal, L. and L. Mottier Lopez (2005) Formative assessment of learning: a review of publications in French. In Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (ed.) *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*, 241-256. Paris: OECD.

Black, P. and D. Wiliam (1998) Assessment and classroom learning. In *Assessment in Education*, 5: 1, 7-78.

Black, P., C. Harrison, C. Lee, B. Marshall and D. Wiliam (2003) *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Butler, R. (1988) Enhancing and Undermining Intrinsic Motivation: the Effects of Task-Involving and Ego-Involving Evaluation on Interest and Performance. In *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 58, 1-14

Cowie, B. (2005) Pupil commentary on assessment for learning. In *Curriculum Journal* 16:2, 137-151

Daugherty, R, P. Black, K. Ecclestone, M. James, and P. Newton (2008) Alternative perspectives on learning outcomes: challenges for assessment. In *Curriculum Journal* 19:4, 243 - 254

Desautel, D. (2009) Becoming a thinking thinker: metacognition, self-reflection and classroom practice. In *Teachers College Record* 111: 8, 1997-2020.

Dweck, C. (1999) *Self-Theories: their Role in Motivation, Personality and Development*. London: Psychology Press

Ecclestone, K. and J. Pryor. (2003) 'Learning careers' or 'assessment careers'? The impact of assessment systems on learning. In *British Educational Research Journal* 29: 4, 471-488.

Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Fancourt, N. (2005) Challenges to Self-Assessment in Religious Education. In *British Journal of Religious Education* 27:2, 115-126

Fancourt, N (2008) Self-assessment in religious education. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Warwick

Fancourt, N. (2010) 'I'm less intolerant': reflexive self-assessment in religious education. In *British Journal of Religious Education* 32:3, 291-306

Fontana, D. and M. Fernandes. (1994) Improvements in mathematics performance as a consequence of self-assessment in Portuguese primary school pupils. In *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 64, 407-417

Giddens, A. (1993) *New Rules of Sociological Method* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hodgen, J. and B. Marshall. (2005). Assessment for learning in English and Mathematics: a comparison. In *The Curriculum Journal* 16: 2, 153-176.

Hopwood, N. (2007) Values in geographic education: the challenge of attending to learners' perspectives. In *Oxford Journal of Education*, 1-20 (iFirst Article)

Husbands, C, A. Kitson and A. Pendry. (2003) *Understanding history teaching*. Buckingham: Open University press

Ipgrave, J. (2002) Inter faith Encounter and Religious Understanding in an Inner City Primary School. PhD dissertation. University of Warwick

Jackson, R. (2004) *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy* London: Routledge Falmer

Jackson, R. (2005) Intercultural education, religious plurality and teaching for tolerance: interpretive and dialogical approaches. In R. Jackson and U. McKenna (ed.) *Intercultural Education and Religious Plurality*. Oslo: The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion and Belief. 5-14

Jackson, R., S. Miedema, W. Weisse and J-P Williame (eds) (2007) *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, Münster: Waxmann.

James, M. (1998) *Using Assessment for School Improvement*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Laveault, D. (2007) De la «régulation» au «réglage» : élaboration d'un modèle d'autoévaluation des apprentissages [From regulation to monitoring : the elaboration of a model of self-assessment by learners]. In L. Allal and L. Mottier Lopez (eds) *Régulation des apprentissages en situation scolaire et en formation* [The regulation of learning in school situations and teacher education]. Brussels: de Boeck, 205-234

Leitch, R., J. Gardner, S. Mitchell, L. Lundy, O. Odena, D. Galanouli and P. Clough (2007) Consulting Pupils in Assessment for Learning classrooms: the twists and turns of working with students as co-researchers. In *Educational Action Research* 15:3, 459-478

McDonald, B. and D. Boud. (2003) The Impact of self assessment on achievement: the effects of self-assessment training on performance in external examinations. In *Assessment in Education* 10: 2, 209-22.

Marshall, B. (2004) Goals or horizons—the conundrum of progression in English: or a possible way of understanding formative assessment in English. *Curriculum Journal*, 15: 2, 101 - 113

Munns, G. and H. Woodward (2006) Student engagement and student self-assessment: the REAL framework. In *Assessment in Education* 13: 2, 193-213.

Narvaez, D. (2005) Integrative Ethical Education. In M. Killen and J. Smetana (eds.) *Handbook of Moral Development*, 703-733. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Nesbitt, E. (2004) Intercultural education: ethnographic and religious approaches. Brighton:

Sussex Academic Press

OFSTED (2008) *Assessment for Learning: the Impact of National Strategy Support*.

Document Reference No. 070244.

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/Assessment-for-learning-the-impact-of-National-Strategy-support/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/Assessment-for-learning-the-impact-of-National-Strategy-support/(language)/eng-GB)

O'Grady, K. (2003) Motivation in Religious Education: A Collaborative Investigation with Year Eight Pupils. *British Journal of Religious Education* 25:3, 214-225

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005) *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*. Paris: OECD.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (2007) *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*. Warsaw: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Puntambeker, S. and B. du Boulay.. 1999. Design of MIST – a system to help students develop metacognition. In P. Murphy (ed.) *Learners, Learning and Assessment*, 245-257. London: Paul Chapman.

Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (2010) Exemplification for foundation subjects [<http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/assessment/exemplification/>]

standards-files/re/religious-education-level6.aspx]

Radnor, H. 1994. The problems of facilitating qualitative formative assessment in pupils. In *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 64, 145-160

Reinharz, S. (1997) Who am I? The Need for a Variety of Selves in the Field. In R. Hertz (ed.) *Reflexivity and Voice* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications), 3-14

Richardson, M. (2009) Assessing the assessment of citizenship. In *Research Papers in Education*, First published on: 13 August 2009 (iFirst) 1-22

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2004) *Religious Education: the non-statutory national framework*. London: QCA.

Sadler, R. (1989) Formative Assessment and the Design of Instructional Systems. In *Instructional Science* 18, 119-144

Schagen, I. and D. Hutchison (2003). Adding Value in Educational Research – the Marriage of Data and Analytical Power. *British Educational Research Journal* 29: 5, 749-765.

Sebba, J., Deakin Crick, R. et al. (2008) *Systematic review of research evidence of the impact on students in secondary schools of self and peer assessment*. Technical report. In: Research Evidence in Education Library. London: EPPI-Centre.

Stodolsky, S. (1988) *The Subject Matters: Classroom Activity in Math and Social Studies*.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Timperley, H. and J. Parr. (2009). What is this lesson about? Instructional processes and student understandings in writing classrooms. In *The Curriculum Journal* 20: 1, 43-60.

Voogt, J. and Kasurinen, H. (2005) Finland: emphasising development instead of competition and comparison. In Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (ed.) *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*, 149-162. Paris: OECD.

ⁱ Translation NF : [les] activités d'apprentissage de plus en plus authentiques exigeront de prendre davantage en considération les régulations intervenant au niveau du self, c'est-à-dire au niveau du système des valeurs et des croyances de l'élève.